Section 1 - Defining Genre

1.1 Memoir, Memory and the Energies of Anecdote

We cannot divorce the act of remembering from the act of communicating, nor can we treat an autobiographical memory as something distinct from the discourse itself. Recollections arise not from the depths of a storehouse in the head, but from a desire to communicate with others about the personal past.¹

Mediated through memory and language, ‘experience’ is already an interpretation of the past and of our place in a culturally and historically specific present.²

In this chapter I explore the possibility that, as Gallagher and Greenblatt suggest, although anecdotes from memoirs might not be consistent in detail across sources they have the ability to introduce a sense of energy and immediacy to otherwise bland and distant historical discourse.³ To do this, I focus specifically on extracts from the memoir sections of Addy Bowler’s writings.

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson talk of the contextual nature of remembering, and remind us that what is remembered and what is forgotten, and why, changes over time. Cultural issues at the time of writing also influence what is recalled and what is left unsaid or marginalised. They point out that memory, as it is textualised in autobiographical form with a specific audience in mind, is always intersubjective. That is, it consists not only of recollection of a past by a subject, but also the recollection for another subject. Memory is, they say, evoked by the senses and emotions, and encoded in objects or events, original trauma being a strong driving

force behind recollection. However, while the experience represented in autobiographical narratives may seem simply personal, it is anything but. Mediated as it is through memory and language, ‘experience is already only an interpretation of the past and of our place in a culturally and historically specific present’. In other words, the individual experience is not uniquely individual but socially produced.4

Joy Hooton speaks of the immediacy of women’s life writing and notes that, when writing autobiography, women were not impelled, as men often were, to present experience as a sequential story. She looks at childhood memories that emerge through colonial life writing, and notes certain events that are emphasised, such as women’s loneliness and hard work in the midst of masculine values and achievements.5 The authors of the essays in Remembering our Past take a more in-depth look at the irregularities of memory, reminding us not to expect exact ‘truths’ from memoirs. Gillian Whitlock enlarges on these themes, pointing out that ‘autobiographic writings are among the most powerful forms which contribute to the social production of memory, the consensus view of the past and personal experiences which are significant and memorable’. She warns, however, that ‘although autobiography seems to stabilize truth and the subject who utters it, this is an illusion’.6

I will be guided by the work mentioned above as I examine the sections of Adelaide Bowler’s writing that depend upon memory. Addy’s memories are recalled, in the most part, from the point of view of an older married woman looking back over some thirty years of her life, as she fills in gaps left in her diary. For comparison and contrast, and in order to locate gendered differences in perspective, I also look at the memoirs of her two brothers, Adolphus (Dop) and Ernest Bowler.

In January 1859, twenty-seven years after Addy began her diary, she appears to have reached a stage in her life when she felt it necessary to look back and describe some of the events that had not been covered in the diaries by herself or by her mother, Frances Bowler. According to Katie Holmes, returning to earlier diaries is a common habit of diarists in their later years, ‘as if in recognition of the concluding

4 Smith and Watson, Reading Autobiography 16–25.
life cycle and desire to recapture earlier moments. Addy appears to have begun recording her memories around 1886, although it is possible that even the first block of memories were written over a period of several years.

In 1893 Addy’s brother Ernest was writing his own memoirs, although there is no indication of when he finished them. We do know that brother Dop completed his life story in 1899. He concluded his memoirs with the following passage:

[As] my dear [second] wife, Mary, knows all about our doings from then till now, it is little [use] my writing any more as she can tell our dear children all about our ups and downs to the present time.

This is important, as it shows that Dop’s memoirs were intended more as a family record than for possible publication. It also shows a lack of sustained dedication to his memoirs. In fact, his life-story is approximately half the length of that of his brother Ernest. It is relevant, for the purpose of comparison, that the bulk of the memoirs from all three siblings were completed within an overlapping thirteen-year time period when the writers were in their late forties to late fifties. This helps to minimise variables that may otherwise account for differences in the discourse, such as time of writing and the social and cultural context in which the memoirs were written. There are, however, gender matters to consider, for example, the education Addy received in relation to that of her brothers. Collaboration, or at least encouragement, between siblings is also a possibility.

I now turn to Addy’s childhood memories of life in the Bathurst region:

My first recollection is of living at Belle View which is about 5 miles up the vale near Bathurst – I do not remember very much there, I know the house was on a hill with a garden in front and one day a man fell down a well and was not killed and I remember old Dr. Busby coming out there to vaccinate me and being taken into the drawing room in great terror – then my next recollection is

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of Beaudesert, near Carcoar. I remember papa driving us there in an inside [?] with two horses named Bob and Charley he ran on a stump and turned us all out – a carpet bag fell upon me and I was quite sure I was killed and Doph was carrying a [?] full of butter and was picked up covered with butter and dust and not any of us were really hurt but I daresay Papa and Mama were frightened – I have several recollections of journeys to and from there to Bathurst we used to stay at Woodstock with a Mr. and Mrs. Dark he was a big fat man and used to [frighten?] me by saying I should be his second wife. Mrs. Dark had a pet goat called Bejou which used to chase everone I shall never forget my terror one day upon opening a door and seeing this creature in the passage between me and all help.⁹

In this virtually unpunctuated stream of consciousness Addy recalls traumatic events which obviously left a lasting impression. This complies with Smith and Watson’s findings that original trauma is a strong driving force behind recollection. A man falling down a well; having to have an injection; an accident from a horse-drawn vehicle; a big fat man frightening her; and a butting goat (which incidentally is mentioned again on the next page) all appear to have left a marked impression.

A remark on memory by Craig Barclay is relevant. He writes that: ‘The subjective experiences of trauma and atrocity often lack the essential narrative elements needed to give coherence to those experiences’.¹⁰ There is certainly a lack of coherence in the narrative structure of the above extract from Addy’s memoirs. However, I am more inclined to put the disjointed telling down to Addy’s inexperience with writing, and consequently her inability to gather her memories into a narrative form in the early stages of remembering. Barclay’s findings should be kept in mind, however, along with the education of the writer, and also, as is the case of the Bowlers, possible editing during transcription.

Hooton, in her review of the text Life Lines, points to similar radical parataxis in women’s diaries and letters. This, she says, is ‘reflected often in their free-flowing, unpunctuated sentences’ and in the ‘indiscriminate mix of significant and trivial events and topics, the juxtaposition of modes and moods … the eruptions of intense feeling crossed by formalised rhetoric or mundane observation’. Addy Bowler was

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obviously not alone in the way she wrote. As Hooton observes, this disjointed form of writing avoids many of the conventions and restrictive practices of mainstream literary culture.\textsuperscript{11}

While Addy frequently recalls incidents that affected her personally, her brothers take a less personal approach – although Ernest does recall a whipping he received for tipping over some pig feed. About halfway into his memoirs he gives a comprehensive, but rather bland, account of Bathurst in 1837 when the Bowler family first arrived. This particular account breaks with the usual chronological narrative, and may have been added later, perhaps when a member of the family reminded him he had overlooked describing the early days of Bathurst.

Bathurst in 1837 only consisted of a few houses, the principal ones were Government property, the military barracks that are now used as a Police Station and a house that was called Government House, which was standing when I was last in Bathurst, where my father lived as he was Commander [sic]. I remember being whipped and shut up for upsetting a tub of pig’s feed that stood on the brick wall as the sty was made of bricks. The other building was a women’s [sic] factory (and it stood just above the gasworks near the Vale Creek) which the convict women were kept in. At Government House there was a fine fruit garden that ran down to the Macquarie River. In this year the old gaol was commenced, the contractors name was White, this has been pulled down and a park has been made and public markets built, which have not turned out a success.\textsuperscript{12}

Here the lack of a sustained formal education can be detected in the rather erratic grammatical structure. Choosing a particular time frame, Ernest describes the buildings already constructed in Bathurst when the family arrived, and where they were situated. It is interesting to note, however, that the very personal and traumatic whipping episode has remained firmly in his mind, and becomes, for a moment, part of the more public scene. The fact that he remembers the name of the contractor who built the old gaol indicates his boyish interest in a man’s public world of progress and development.

\textsuperscript{11} Hooton, ‘Life-Lines in Stormy Seas’ 6–8.
\textsuperscript{12} Ernest Ulysses Bowler, ‘Memoirs 1830–1899’ (private collection, Sydney) 29.
Dop (Adolphus) centres his memories around rural concerns and the treatment of convicts. Writing mainly about his father he begins:

We were first quartered at a place called Richmond and then removed to Windsor. From there we went to Bathurst, which was then the central place of operations in the Western Districts. At that time there were given grants of land to people with means enough to improve and occupy the land ... At that time the use of the Lash was allowed and great numbers of men [convicts] took to the bush through the cruelty of their masters... About this time my father sold his Commission and turned landholder.  

Progress on the land is the driving force behind Dop’s memoirs, with some social and political comment. His perspective mirrors that of his father who, when appointed magistrate at nearby Carcoar, refused to resort to the indiscriminate use of the lash. Unlike his brother Ernest, Dop does not allow any comments directly involving himself to infiltrate this rather fragmented, but seemingly objective account.

Fig. 1   Ernest Ulysses Bowler and Adolphus (Dop) Chorley Robert Bowler. (Bowler, ‘Memoirs 1834 –1899’ 1. Photographer: unknown.)

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14 Ibid.
It would appear that both brothers were involved in what Smith and Watson call the contextual nature of remembering. In other words, writing in the 1890s, they selected certain memories and recorded them in the context of what they felt would benefit a new generation. This selection process is also described by William Hirst and David Manier. They cite works that examine the effect of a specific audience on autobiography, and the social conventions of autobiographical writing or speaking. They also refer to ‘ordinary language assumptions, the embeddedness of meaning in context. [and] the social interactions between speaker and audience’, which shape the form as well as the content of remembered texts.15

Before examining the memoirs of Addy Bowler further, a brief mention of her mother’s more immediate diary is useful for comparison. Frances Bowler touches on day-to-day life in Bathurst, concentrating on domestic matters rather than on the colonial development and progress that were to be the focus of her sons’ memoirs. On 1 June 1837 Frances writes:

How much enjoyment a sporting character would have in our present quarters, Bow [her husband Major John Bowler] often shoots six brace of quail in our own garden before breakfast, and this morning came into the house with that number and a wild goose in addition.

The River Macquarie runs at the foot of our garden, and abounds with shrimps and craw fish; my pet boys contrive to catch a good number, they are very nice eating, and the children are quite as proud, when looking on, as if each were a salmon.

I am trying to arrange a nice dairy, bzing allowed the use of some cows. I hardly ever go into it, but sundry sights are wafted home, it brings Mama completely before my eyes, when skimming the milk, and I am sure she would fancy she saw Ernest and Dopy again could she but see my pretty Addy licking the cream bowl.16

16 Frances Mary Jane Bowler, ‘Diaries, 1837–’ (private collection, Sydney).
This account of domestic matters lacks any sense of the building and other activities that must have been proceeding noisily around the family home, concentrating instead on motherhood and the provision of food for the family – a strictly gendered reaction. The only overlap with the boys’ memoirs is the mention of the Macquarie River below the house, where Ernest has gone so far as to state that ‘there was a fine fruit garden that ran down to the Macquarie River’. This was perhaps fixed in his mind because, as a small boy, food was important. This supports what Smith and Watson say about the senses playing an important part in the mechanics of memory.

Fig. 2: Discussions with locals suggest this building is the original Government House, Bathurst. If so, this was the home of the Bowler family when Major Bowler was transferred to Bathurst from Windsor in 1837. However, there is now a busy road and public park between the house and the Macquarie River where the Bowlers had their ‘fine fruit garden’. (Photographer: M. Vivers December 2005.)

Addy’s memoirs continue in a disjointed, non-chronological manner. As things come to mind she jots them down, and it is useful to note that the structure appears not to have been interfered with too much during transcription. For example, for a while in the transcription each fragment of text is divided by a line as though the writer could think of no easy way to link the passages together.
Then I remember being chased by a gander and my brother Henry coming to
the rescue and putting me on his shoulder for safety.

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Sitting beside an onion bed eating with great enjoyment and not at all
understanding my dear Mother’s horror when she found me.

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Holding a candle while my brother Ernest sealed a letter with wax and he
dropped some on my finger the mark of which I have now.

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Being in a large tub in a pond in the creek, while some bullocks were being
yarded to kill and in their effort to escape they jumped into the creek and nearly
swamped our tub.\(^\text{17}\)

The brevity and disconnection of these delightful images tend to make them more
sharply focussed as sensory impressions. Then, as Addy becomes more accustomed to
remembering, or at least more comfortable in writing the memories down, her entries
become longer and more detailed. She changes from a shorthand style to a more
flowing, narrative style.

Playing with my brother Dop one day – he ran away and hid behind the front
door and a small toy Cannon [sic] fell from somewhere on his head – finding
that in spite of all I could say every one believed I had done so, I knew I should
be punished for it so made my escape and hid under the bed of a woman on the
place who was always very good to me. After a time Julia came looking for me
and said I was to go to papa and she led me home in great terror. My dear
Father held forth to me upon the wickedness of telling a lie and promised if I
would say I had done it he would not whip me. He little knew how he sorely
tempted me to tell a lie and I suppose i. was more obstinacy than love of truth
for I was not 5 years old, that made me still say I did not throw the cannon.

I was then given some hours to repent and confess my fault and whether it was
that they could not whip me in cold blood or that their common sense had
shown them that a child of 4 years coul not throw a weight of 5 lbs over a high

\(^{17}\) AB book 1: 1–2.
front door however I did not get the whipping – tho Dop declares to this day I deserved it.  

As with brother Ernest, the fear of a whipping appears to have triggered this memory, and the prolonged wait for possible punishment to take place has permanently fixed the event in Addy’s mind. There is also a slightly rebellious element, as her story undermines the notion that a Victorian father was always right.

As she recalls other things Addy begins to form a sequence of events into a story. A more deliberately shaped narrative structure evolves, the text sometimes appearing under short concise headings:

“Early in the forties”

Travelling in a gig with Papa and Mama to our new home near Orange and being met at the gate by Henry, Ernest and Dop. I can picture so plainly the small bark hut and slab walls and rugs hung at the openings instead of doors and windows.

Of course to my childish idea there was nothing dreadful in it but what must my dear Mother have felt who had been used all her life to every comfort and yet how braily she bore it all – always cheerful and gentle, no loss of temper no impatient words or cross looks – the greatest blessing I could wish for my children is that they should inherit their grandmother Bowlers temper – I have seen her sorely tried – tried her sorely myself in my childish fits of naughtiness and yet was never met by a rude or cross word and yet I always felt there was a limit beyond which I dare not go or I should incur her grave displeasure.  

These variations in discursive style result in a more informal and irregular narrative approach than that of her brothers, who usually maintain a rather flat, impersonal commentary, within a more contrived narrative structure. Recalled at a time when Addy was herself a mother, the comment ‘what must my dear Mother have felt’ shows an empathy with her mother’s predicament that may not have been present from the perspective of a small girl. Structuring the past through the writer’s own experience is something on which Whitlock comments. She sees the past as

\[18\] Ibid. book 1: 2.
\[19\] Ibid. book 1: 3.
'negotiated continuously', being subject to revision, amplification and forgetting. She writes that: 'the social, cultural and intellectual histories that surface in autobiography are constantly on the move' as the writer attempts to represent her past from a new perspective.\textsuperscript{20}

Fig. 3 The Meadows in 1848, just before it was sold and the Bowler family moved back closer to Bathurst. Windows and doors had, by then, been added. (Hawksford, The Bowler Family 1239–1987 10. Artist: unknown.)

There could be several reasons for the differences in style between brother and sister. First, Addy’s education was even more limited than that of her brothers. The note-form that some of her writing takes is perhaps a result of simply trying to remember what happened, without feeling compelled to comply with a more carefully structured way of writing. As such, events are not shaped within a narrative style, but rather the writer concentrates on preserving facts, while exploring her own attitudes and behaviour.\textsuperscript{21} Addy’s lack of education meant her writing was less contrived, and thus her discourse introduces new dimensions to our consultable record of the past.

Bruner and Felman say that the way in which a narrative is constructed, its form or pattern, provides us with 'a basis for understanding or interpreting it'.\textsuperscript{22} By recording her memories in the way she does, Addy provides us with a means by which we can begin to understand a small girl’s sense of self as seen through the eyes of an older woman. At the same time, we gain an insight into what impacted most

\textsuperscript{20} Whitlock, The Intimate Empire 180–81.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid. 291.
heavily upon her as a child, and we are reminded also of the hardships and dangers that were part of colonial life in general.

Comparing the writings of the Bowler siblings we are reminded that education for girls and boys at the time varied in emphasis and content. Generally, a formal education was not thought to be as important for girls as it was for boys, especially at a time and place when tutors were scarce. This was certainly the case with the Bowler family. Addy received a very spasmodic schooling, while her brothers’ education was taken more seriously, at least until they were forced to leave home to help supplement the family income. There are certainly times when a lack of ‘finished’ education can be detected in the brothers’ writing, while Addy’s haphazard schooling is more obvious. In any case, irregularities in the writings suggest that editing during transcription may not have altered the structure and language of the original texts to any great extent. This is important if we are to discern anything meaningful from a close examination of the extant documents.

I now look at extracts from the memoirs of Addy and brother Ernest in which they attempt to describe the same event – the discovery of a child’s grave. Or, in the words of Smith and Watson, I look at how ‘competing versions of personhood overlap and intersect at a given historical moment’. I do this, not only to explore the reliability of memory, but also in the hope that I will ultimately be able to look beyond individual texts to the ‘formation of the subject in relation to larger collectivities’, and thus consider the significance of such texts as historical sources.23

Addy begins:
I remember one amusing thing when we lived at the Meadows near Orange – it was early in the forties and I think my brother Henry was with us. I know I was a very small child and we all went for a walk and about a mile from home we came upon a heap of logs and old wood which my brothers decided was a plant [hiding place for stolen goods] of some kind and they set to work to move the wood and then to dig.24

23 Smith and Watson, Reading Autobiography 83.
Ernest begins:
My brother one day when he was tailing cattle, thought he found a plant in a
gully about a mile and a half away from the house, so telling me when we went
to bed, I went with him next day to see what was in it as we did not tell
anybody about it until we knew what was in it and you can imagine how
anxious we were to find out the contents as my brothers dog drew his attention
to the place by scratching.\textsuperscript{25}

The most important differences in these two versions centre around who was
actually present when the grave was discovered. Addy remembers she was there,
although she admits she was a very small child at the time. She even entertains the
thought that a third brother, Henry, was also present. Ernest, however, says that only
he and his brother Dop knew about the ‘plant’.

David McCooy suggests that childhood memories in autobiography are
reliant upon acts of imagination in the narration of memory. He says the protagonist is
‘more obviously concerned with himself or herself than with other people and their
stories’.\textsuperscript{26} Such self-interest is apparent in the writings of Addy and her brothers,
although more so with the brothers. However, as I discuss in later chapters,
nineteenth-century women were more prepared to allocate equal status to other people
in their stories than were men. This is reflected in Addy’s more thoughtful: ‘I think
my brother Henry was with us’. Addy, an adult and a mother at the time of writing,
was perhaps more aware of others, and thus wrote in a less autonomous and self-
centred way than her brother Ernest.

It is useful to note that McCooy’s observation relates to more recent
Australian autobiographies. Rather than conflicting with my findings, this could
reflect instead the growing independence of women as they moved beyond the role of
the self-sacrificing ‘Angel of the House’ and became more active in the public sphere.
McCooy’s comment on self-interest might also indicate his failure to significantly
adopt gender as a fundamental category of historical analysis.\textsuperscript{27} Interestingly, he notes
how ‘most autobiographers ignore siblings’, but says an exception is Jill Ker Conway
who, in The Road from Coorain (1989), ‘describes her early childhood not in terms of

\textsuperscript{25} Bowler, ‘Memoirs 1830–1899’. 32.
\textsuperscript{26} David McCooy, Artful Histories: Modern Australian Autobiography (Melbourne: Cambridge
\textsuperscript{27} See Ann Curthoys and John Docker, Is History Fiction? (Sydney: University of New South Wales
self-absorption, or metaphysical speculation, but in terms of a feeling of oneness with her brothers’. McCooey’s explanation for this is that Conway may have been so deeply affected by the death of one of her brothers that she then grew closer to her other siblings. He does not, however, appear to have entertained the possibility that, being a woman, she may have already been culturally conditioned to consider others in relation to herself.

In the two descriptions above of what turned out to be a grave, as well as differences regarding who was remembered as present, the way the child’s grave was discovered also demonstrates variations in recall. However, the description of the location is remarkably similar in the accounts of both Addy and Dop, as is the sense of horror. Addy says the site was discovered during a walk, ‘about a mile’ from the house – Ernest’s story has Dop discovering the grave when out with cattle, remembering the site as approximately ‘a mile and half away’. The common experience and horror of finding a body obviously triggered recall of the incident by both parties, but is represented and dealt with in different ways.

There are, however, similarities in the descriptions of what was dug up from the grave, although Ernest’s version is more detailed.

Addy:
and [we] came to pieces of old bark and then bits of blanket and old rags and as there had at one time been blankets stolcn from Father amongst other things, of course we thought we should soon come upon some treasure. At last there was an exclamation from some one and a grave look on all faces and up came a childs knee – Oh!

Ernest:
... and when he went to see what he was scratching after he [Dop] saw a piece of coloured rag and at once thought there was something good under it, as there had been two or three robberies just before this. So he and I cut two sticks and commenced to dig, and you can imagine how anxious and excited we were when we got coloured pieces of print as it was folded or rolled up, thinking of course that it contained valuables and all the time we were unfolding it we kept our breath wondering what the next turn would expose to our anxious gaze; but

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we were doomed to disappointment as it was only a piece of coloured print. [Here they appear to have gone away and returned later.] So upon going back to the hole to see if there was anything more we found a piece of bark and under it a piece of blanket, so up jumped our expectations again, thinking this time that we had come upon the right thing whatever it might be and after some trouble in getting it out, as we only had two sticks sharpened at one end to dig out the dirt with, we did not like to take a pick or spade away from home as we would be asked what we wanted them for and so upon opening our piece of blanket, we found, what do you think?, a dried up infant or child which so astonished us that we ran leaving it as we unravelled it and never said a word about it.\textsuperscript{30}

The ways in which the siblings describe dealing with this unexpected situation differ a little, as the scene becomes a place of guilt and fear, and the unfamiliar concept of death overwhelms the children.

Addy:
The horror that came over all and the silence in which all was put back as before and we all went home feeling we had done a dreadful deed.\textsuperscript{31}

Ernest:
we ran leaving it as we unravelled it and never said a word about it \ldots \textsuperscript{32}

Ernest ‘remembers’ that the grave was left in its disturbed state, while his sister says that all was put back as it had been before. Addy’s recollection is perhaps informed by what she, by then an experienced housekeeper and more thoughtful adult, may have done, rather than what actually happened at the time.

The lasting impression the event had on brother Dop is an important part of both stories, although differing again in detail:

Addy:
But the amusing part was that some time after Dop was looking for horses and suddenly found himself near the grave and declared he saw a black gin looking

\textsuperscript{30} Bowler, ‘Memoirs 1830–1899’ 33.
\textsuperscript{31} AB book 1: 7.
\textsuperscript{32} Bowler, ‘Memoirs 1830–1899’ 33.
at him from behind a tree – he came tearing home as white as a ghost and nothing would ever persuade him to go near the place alone again.\footnote{\textit{AB} book 1: 7.}

**Ernest:**

Some time after my brother went to catch a horse … not thinking of our plant [he] walked right up to it when all at once he remembered and at once turned for home every now and then looking back until he got to the top of the ridge where there was big fallen tree, so getting behind the log … while waiting and watching our plant as we thought it was, he was frightened by seeing as he says, something move and saw it get up and shake some rags and start towards him; he at once sprang up and ran for home and was so exhausted when he got to the house that he could not speak. … he said he had been chased by a woman in rags for a mile or he thought it was like a woman, he saw it get up and come out of the ground and make towards him.\footnote{Bowler, \textit{Memoirs 1830–1899} 33.}

Now the supernatural has become an integral part of the process of recall. There are some similarities between Addy’s account and that of Ernest, including the fact that Dop was looking for horses when he re-discovered the site – although Ernest’s account is again more dramatic and detailed. However, in Addy’s story the ghostly apparition remains behind a tree; in Ernest’s version it chases their brother – the excitement of a chase perhaps considered to be of more interest to an audience. In Dop’s own memoirs he does not mention the event at all, perhaps still embarrassed by his reaction, even as an older man.

Significant differences can be found in the two descriptions of how the burial site was discovered. Addy’s ‘we all went for a walk … about a mile from home we came upon a heap of logs and old wood’ and Ernest’s ‘My brother … when … tailing cattle, thought he found a plant in a gully’ introduce strange anomalies which invite further examination; as does Ernest’s description of a carefully planned expedition the day after his brother’s discovery, and then another visit later on. Ernest’s careful consideration as to whether it was safe to take a pick or spade also contrasts strangely with Addy’s version of setting to work immediately to uncover the site.

Are there cultural implications here, in that Ernest remembers more manly activities like the planning and the tools, whereas Addy only remembers an ‘amusing
thing’ that happened, as her mind goes straight to the excitement of the digging itself? Does Addy forget any forward planning that may have taken place because it was essentially ‘man’s business’ involving outside work, or was it because she was only a small child at the time? Further, is Addy’s ‘all was put back as before’ a reflection of a tidy female mind conditioned by later life, as compared with a certain boyish carelessness, carried over into manhood, in Ernest’s ‘leaving it as we unravelled it’? If so, perhaps we can conclude that there were cultural forces informing and controlling the telling of the story – a story that was probably passed down and elaborated on over time.

In a later chapter, I observe how Addy Bowler and Lucy Gray are more inclined to mention body parts and personal details than the male counterparts. Anticipating that discussion, I should mention here that it is a child’s ‘knee’ that Addy remembers in the above extract, while Ernest describes the whole ‘as a dried up infant or child’.

Perhaps the most puzzling thing in the Ernest account is that Addy is not mentioned as being present at all. Addy was only ‘a very small child’ at the time, and one might expect that her remembering would be inaccurate. But would that include a mistake as to whether she actually witnessed the event? William Brewer cites work done by W. von Leydon on childhood memories. Concerning what he calls the ‘childhood test case’ he writes:

Person A is told by another person about some event from person A’s childhood and person A comes to have a constructed recollective memory of the event that they believe to be an authentic recollection.35

Memory images, according to Brewer, can be a combination of imagined events and recollective memories, and sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between the two. It is possible that Addy, as a small child, simply absorbed parts of the story as told by her brothers and came to believe she had also witnessed the finding of the grave.

Whitlock observes a tension between history and myth where childhood memories are concerned. She notes that ‘the translation of the sweet places of childhood into history and the present is fraught with difficulty for many

autobiographers’. Ernest Bowler was a good story-teller, and this particular family story had obviously gained mythical status by the time the memoirs were written. Perhaps Addy’s own imagination embellished the myth, as she attempted to bring the past to life for the benefit of her own children.

In the end, the only commonality of any real substance that emerges from the brother and sister accounts is that a child’s grave was discovered by certain members of the Bowler family, and that the discovery had a traumatic effect on Dop. Of importance, however, is the fact that both siblings felt it necessary to record the event at all, indicating its strong impact on them -- whether as an actual experience or as an exaggerated family story.

The following extracts are also of interest, as they introduce gendered perspectives and differences in recall. They concern the period in the early 1850s when gold was first discovered near Bathurst. Addy writes that her two brothers took off to seek their fortunes, leaving her behind to do their outdoor work as well as helping their mother in the house. Addy writes:

In 1851 the gold was discovered ... My brothers went off to the gold fields hoping to make their fortunes and without boasting I may say I did most of the work of the place – we had two old men to mind the sheep and I had to bring wood and water and garden and mind the ewes and lambs and look after the cattle and horses in the paddock. Mother of course was always with Father and my brothers would come home for a day or two once a month.

Addy’s father was recovering from a shooting accident, which explains why Mrs Bowler was ‘always with Father’. However, although Addy says that Dop left home, it is possible that both brothers did not desert the family farm, at least in the early stages of the rush. This is suggested in the following extract from Dop’s memoirs:

While living here [Woodside], the goldfield of Ophir was discovered by a Mr. Hardy, in the year 1851, about twenty five miles west of Bathurst and there was

36 Whitlock, The Intimate Empire 182.
great excitement throughout the district. Ernest, Mr Hawkins, Mr Acre and some of the Suttors made up a party of about eight or ten and went out to mine and as everyone thought, to make their fortune and poor me was left at home to help father look after the stock and farming and that was no joke as the men were leaving every day… Ernest and his party made 50 pounds each and then gave it up.

The only common facts that emerge from the above two accounts are that the gold rush started near Bathurst in 1851 and that the Bowler family did not profit from it. It is useful to note that both Addy and Dop felt it necessary to emphasise how much harder they had to work because of the exodus to the gold fields – a hardship no doubt shared by many others who were ‘left behind’.

Dop’s failure to include Addy in his account of the hard outdoor work at Woodside, when considered alongside Ernest’s exclusion of Addy from the discovery of the grave, demonstrates perhaps a cultural conditioning which situated females as peripheral to men’s work or play. Exciting outdoor adventures and hard manual work were traditionally seen as unsuitable for girls or women, and thus not worth mentioning. On the other hand, the brothers may have simply forgotten to include Addy in their self-centred description of events. Alternatively, Addy may not have worked as hard outdoors as she remembered she did – and she may not have been present at the discovery of the grave either. Incidentally, brother Ernest does not include Dop in his description of his own gold mining adventures, but does mention several other men, including John Suttor. This appears to support Dop’s story that he was left behind. Meanwhile, Addy’s exclusion of Dop may have simply been a way of promoting her own importance and participation in an area not traditionally defined as ‘hers’.

The above extracts are good examples of individual representations of colonial space, and they alert us to the complex nature of memory and memoir. Through them, we are reminded of the Smith and Watson comment that what is remembered and what is forgotten, and why, changes over time, and that this happens for various reasons. There are gender and cultural implications, as the Bowler siblings write back

39 See David Goodman, Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s (Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1994); in particular, 149–219 for the excitement and independence of the gold fields for young men.
to a past that has scripted them as particular kinds of subjects. For example, as Joy Hooton says, the absence of female participation from male accounts of colonial life cannot be seen as proof that female participation did not actually take place. There is much evidence to the contrary in my primary sources, and Hooton notes numerous narratives that describe the successful efforts of women to sustain the family in the face of a husband’s or a father’s failure or inadequacy, or absence.

Hooton points out that certain remembered events from a girl’s childhood are sometimes emphasised, such as loneliness and hard work, in the midst of the more dominant discourse describing colonial life that highlights masculine values and achievements. In that context, Addy’s emphasis on her work beyond the private sphere might be seen as an unconscious attempt to undermine cultural scripting. In any case, as Hooton says (citing Linda Anderson) cultural scripting can be undermined simply by a woman writing about herself at all as, by doing so, she is ‘violating an important cultural construction of her femininity as passive or hidden’. Addy could certainly be seen as ‘guilty’ of that violation on several counts.

Although more questions can be asked than answered when analysing life writing based on memory, anecdotes from memoirs like those of Addy Bowler can provide a significant female perspective on what is normally seen as male territory. I now discuss this further, using anecdotes from the gold rush days as told by Addy and considered alongside those told by male counterparts.

Gold was discovered at Sofala just before Addy moved with her parents to live with their older daughter Julia Sutor and husband John at Wyagdon on the Bathurst-Sofala road in 1852. Addy writes:

Gold had been discovered at Sofala some months before we went to Wyagdon and there was a continuous stream of people passing the house all day long. Any one knowing us would call so we did not feel at all dull – then after a time crushing machines were started on the Wattle Flat and [we] could hear on a calm day the stampers going day and night.

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30 Smith and Watson, Reading Autobiography 176.
31 Hooton, Stories of Herself When Young 19.
It was a busy scene in those days and the noise of many workers some with cradles and others puddling and crushing machines and others digging out the earth and all with the cheerful happy look of those who expected fortune to smile upon them.\(^{43}\)

![Image](image-url)

**Fig. 4** The view today from just in front of the old Wyagdon house. The new Sofala/Bathurst road still passes just below the house and can be seen marked by white posts. In the distance (far right) are the Wyagdon Hills up which travellers had to climb on their way to the gold fields at Wattle Flat and Sofala. (Photographer: M. Vivers, December 2005.)

For Addy the gold rush was seen and heard, but not actually participated in, apart from the interesting influx of visitors to the Sutter home. The rush to Sofala provided Addy, as an adolescent woman, with new sounds and sights, and social stimulation, whereas the earlier rush to Ophir had simply meant extra work. Her description of the activity and cheerful optimism surrounding the Sofala and Wattleflat goldfields brings a sense of immediacy to what might otherwise have been a bland historical account of when and where gold was discovered. Not only does Addy recall the sounds and excitement, she also recalls changes in landscape caused by the mining.

\(^{43}\) AB book 1: 7.
The country on the Flat [Wattle Flat] was so pretty from the beautiful Wattle trees in full bloom. They were nearly all destroyed ... after years by the diggers.  

Fig. 5 The village of Sofala today. The present road to Wattle Flat, via Wyagdon to Bathurst can be seen in the background weaving its way out over the hills. On the right in the middle-distance is a cleared paddock and row of trees near where the racecourse used to be. The space is now used as a showground. (Photographer: M. Vivers, December 2005.)

Descriptions of the Australian countryside and bush are common in the memoirs, diaries and journals of both Addy Bowler and Lucy Gray, although more so in Lucy’s writings as she was viewing it all for the first time as an adult woman. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that the Bowler brothers do not dwell on the aesthetics of the landscape. If mentioned at all, nature is not described in detail, nor is ‘feminine’ language such as ‘pretty’ and ‘beautiful’ used.

Ernest describes his adventures on the gold fields at Ophir in a very different way to his sister, gold itself being the central subject. There is a detailed description of how he and his mates pegged out their claims, and then struggled to hold them against increasing aggravation from other miners.

So after having a snack, we were shown where Hargreaves had got the gold and washed out the speck at a large waterhole just at the junction of two creeks ... 

so we all decided to peg out and take our piece of block above this bar ... After washing all the surface on our ground, as we only washed the loose gravel and sand down to the clay bottom and examined all the bar, we thought we had worked it all out. … One man and woman wheeled a hand barrow and all their things and among his tools was a garden rake and a large colander to wash the sand through … After we had been at work a week we had the greatest difficulty in retaining our piece that we had pegged out as everyone was equal, as it were, and no one had any legal right to hold it.45

This is an insider’s view of action on the gold fields, which introduces issues of proprietorship and competition. Trees destroyed and changing landscape are of no interest to men intent on making their fortunes. This account complements the female version very well, enabling dialogue between ‘marginal’ female representation and the male concept of progress and development. We are reminded that the discovery of gold not only affected those who took part, but also had a direct impact on those who lived in the vicinity of the goldfields.

The need for extra Government control and law enforcement around the gold fields was an important issue. Two perspectives on this are presented through the memoirs of Ernest and Addy. Ernest writes of Ophir:

Then came the Commissioner with an orderly sent by the Government to issue licences to each digger, giving him a right to dig and wash for gold on any Crown Lands, the fee for such licence being 30/- per month and a merry time Mr T.H. Hardy had the short time he remained. All those that had good claims paid up at once, but others who had only arrived lately, many without a penny in their pockets, would defy him.46

The hustle, bustle and tensions of life in and around the goldfields, and the constraints placed upon miners by the Government, are well portrayed in this extract. However, this ‘manly’ account does not describe personal feelings or individual actions or reactions.

On 22 December 1857 a policeman named Codrington was murdered in an ambush on the road between Bathurst and Sofala as he went to escort the coach to

46 Ibid. 22. See also H.H. Neary, Ghosts of the Goldfields (Bathurst: Mitchell College Printery. n.d.) 86–89.
Bathurst. This incident has been well documented and was reported in contemporary newspapers. A reward of one hundred pounds was offered and advertised in the *NSW Government Gazette*, several days later, on 29 December.\(^{47}\) Describing the incident in 1990, historian Matthew Higgins writes (and I quote in full to demonstrate matters chosen to be emphasised by a twentieth century historian, apparently not so concerned with personal details such as those included in Addy’s memoir extracts that follow):

One serious crime that has remained a mystery to this day is the killing of Trooper Robert Codrington. Codrington was based at the Cheshire Creek barracks, established on the Bathurst road in 1853 to safeguard the passage of both travellers and the gold escort. It was his duty to meet the escort with its guard of troopers as they came out of the Turon valley and to act as an advanced guard by riding some distance ahead of the coach as it made the formidable Wyagdon descent and travelled on to Bathurst. While riding up Wyagdon three days before Christmas in 1857, 25-year-old Codrington was shot dead before reaching the escort. To all who saw the site of the killing, it seemed obvious he had been shot by bushrangers waiting to rob the escort. Bushes had been piled next to the road right at the spot where the driver always stopped the coach to put on the drags [brakes made from logs] for the steep run down to Wyagdon; at this point the troopers also dismounted from the escort coach. Yet the escort had gone on unmolested, and it was assumed that the robbers must still have been busy hiding the body when the coach went past – the driver and troopers being unaware of poor Codrington’s fate.\(^{48}\)

However, one hundred years earlier, Addy recalls, not only the event, but personal and family details as well:

It was in the fifties – about the middle I think tho [sic] I cannot quite remember the year that there was an attempt to rob the escort from Sofala to Bathurst.

There was a Police Station at Cheshire Creek about three miles from Wyagdon where we then lived and the Sergeant had been in the 80\(^{th}\) my Fathers old regiment, his name was Kershaw – and the trooper under him was a son of

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General Codrington who had as a younger son come out here to make his fortune on the gold fields – the fortune did not come so he joined the Police and married the Sergeants daughter a bright pretty looking girl of 17. It was his duty to ride up every Tuesday morning to meet the gold escort on the top of Lowes Hill and go with them to Bathurst – on one Tuesday morning about Christmas time he went up as usual and arriving near the top before the escort came was shot through the heart and did not fall from his horse for some yards and was then dragged down a gully and was not found for two or three days –

It was not till the next morning that his wife found his horse standing at the gate of the Police Barracks with the saddle on and then search was made for him – from the evidence it appeared there had been a party of three or four people whose intention was to rob the escort and they had hidden in bushes and stumps beside the road ready to fire upon the troopers as they passed – and thought to get poor Codrington out of the way before the others came.49

Addy’s mother and brother happened to be in close proximity when the murder occurred.

My brother and Mother had gone to Sofala that morning and could only have been about a quarter of an hour ahead of Codrington. As the hill was very steep Mother had walked and almost brushed against one stump where the man was hidden who a quarter of an hour later shot poor Codrington – when my Mother got into the buggy a few yards further on she remarked to my brother “Did you hear a curious whistle?[sic] and he said “oh I expect it was a bird” – when they had gone on a short distance they heard a shot – and afterwards met the escort which passed safely past the spot where the men a few minutes before had been ready to shoot them down. When they the next day began to examine the place they found 4 or 5 places where men had been standing hidden and the remains of a bottle of whisky in each place.50

Because Addy recounts the event through the eyes of her family, and also sees things from the perspective of the young widow, there is a sense of drama and immediacy that effectively closes the gap between the past and the present, and between public

49 AB book 1: 11–12.
50 Ibid.
and private experience. Not just facts, but feelings are involved in the poignant mention of the riderless horse found at the gate by the wife. This familial point of reference encourages today's reader to pause and reflect on a period of time and an event that might otherwise be easily be passed over. Such reflection enables a better understanding of Australia's colonial past.

Recently, my husband and I drove up the new bitumen road that winds up the hills to Sofala from Bathurst. I remarked on how difficult it must have been for horse-drawn vehicles to travel back and forth up such a steep incline. Some bush still remains on the side of the hill, in which one could hide while looking out over the road and Wyagdon valley. In the valley, beside the road, the old Wyagdon homestead where Addy Bowler once lived is still standing, although presently unoccupied. With this experience fresh in mind, it was easier for me to imagine, after reading Addy's memoirs and the Higgins account, the ambush taking place. It was also easy to imagine the Bowlers and Suttors living at Wyagdon and Brucedale on the Sofala-Bathurst Road, amidst all the bustle of the gold rush.

Fig. 6 A side view of the old Wyagdon homestead. Note the double doors opening out onto the veranda and the remains of a garden. (Photographer: M. Vivers, December 2005.)
The opportunity to experience personally historic landmarks where time seems to have stood still is rare nowadays. In most places European progress and land clearing have changed the landscape forever. For most people, encounters with the past can only exist within the textual landscapes produced by those who were there. Of these landscapes, the most vivid are those populated by people who were close to the writer. Being familiar with the locational, and with the various texts, for me the murder on Wyagdon Hill might have recently occurred. Strange sounds, the difficulty of the climb, and the signs of men standing in ambush with their bottle of whisky to give them courage, combine to promote a sense of eeriness and an emotional thrill. This is strengthened by the fearful proximity to danger in Addy’s ‘Mother … almost brushed against one stump where the man was hidden’. Senses such as hearing (the shot), taste (the whisky), and physical exertion (the climb), together with the reproduction of direct conversation, add a touch of realism to the account. This is accentuated even further when Addy asks the reader to imagine with her the feelings of Coddington’s widow.

It is easy to imagine the poor young wife was almost out of her mind with grief – they could not allow her to see the body when found as it had been exposed to the summer sun for two days – she had one fine little son at this time and I think another was born some months after but fortunately did not live.\(^{51}\)

Addy brings an historic incident to life by adding a personal touch and a sense of immediacy to what would otherwise have been a much less vivid account of ambush and death. Her writing introduces an emotional and very human aspect that not only establishes the character of the writer within a particular colonial context, but also provides a unique representation of a particular historical event. Addy’s memoirs might not mirror past events exactly. No memories, or historical writing for that matter, ever can. She may also have been influenced by a desire to romanticize a time she knew would not be repeated. However, without representations like hers, the reconstruction of colonial situations must depend upon impersonal accounts, such as those found in official documents, or in the more scientific memoirs and diaries produced mainly by men, where subjectivity is often carefully avoided.

\(^{51}\) AB book 1: 12.
Adding another dimension, artist George Lacy attempts a visual representation of the gold escort on the Bathurst–Sofala Road (Fig. 7). This picture emphasises the drama and excitement of the gold rush. However, the artist has struggled with the leg action of the horses, as did many artists of the period, and the unrealistic impression of trees, supposedly eucalypts, is a reflection of the artist’s European heritage. Lacy arrived in Sydney 1842 and had a varied career as a painter, illustrator, writer, teacher and taxidermist. His early paintings of the gold fields were often somewhat comical, making light of the hardship and danger that often surrounded gold diggings.52

![Watercolour painting by George Lacy of the Sofala escort, ca. 1852. (National Library of Australia (nla.pic-an3103549).)](image)

caricature of a dog huddling against the rain, and the title ‘Moist weather – road to the
diggings’ comically understates the gale force winds and pouring rain. The woman
on the left is barefoot like the two men, and her delicate tip-toe approach makes a
mockery of reality. These light-hearted, somewhat comical pictorial representations of
the gold rush ignore the thoughts and more intimate feelings of the protagonists,
situating them instead as objects of ridicule.

Fig. 8 ‘Moist Weather – Road to the Diggings’, George Lacy’s watercolour of travellers on
what appears to be Wyagdon Hill, painted in 1852. (National Library of Australia.)

Although the Lacy paintings offer an extra dimension, albeit a comical one,
they do little to provide an insight into the hearts and minds of men and women in the
colonies. Together with the male descriptions of the policeman’s murder on Wyagdon
Hill, they comply with findings by Joy Hooton that men’s texts lack ‘the same
immediacy, vitality and even individuality’ as similar texts produced by women.
Further, and of particular relevance here, Hooton suggests that ‘women’s narratives
are more likely to appeal to the twentieth-century [and presumably the twenty-first

century] reader’s preference for inwardness and frankness’. Men’s colonial narratives, she says, ‘generally cultivate accuracy and impersonality’ and are committed to ‘a public usable past, submerging the personal in the official or functional role’. To that I could add, in the case of Lacy’s paintings, submerging the personal in the ridiculous.

Memoirs like those of Addy and her brothers can increase our understanding of two periods of time – the time of writing and the time written about. I have already mentioned the context in which the Bowler brothers wrote, which was to record, for the benefit of their children, memories about early colonial life, a popular activity at the time. In that sense, their writing is intersubjective in that it consists of an autobiographical form with a specific audience in mind.

There were cultural influences that would have encouraged the Bowler siblings to join others in writing about their colonial past. During the 1880s and 1890s the Australian pioneer legend was coming into being. Originally the term ‘pioneer’ referred to all those who came as immigrants to the colonies. However, soon only those who settled and worked the land were regarded as real pioneers, a representation which owed much, particularly later on, to the poets Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson. J.B. Hirst suggests that the creation of the pioneer legend can be explained by the growth of nationalism in the 1880s and 1890s and the need to find new national heroes and symbols. This was a period when frontier experience, except in the far north of Australia where Lucy Gray lived for some years in the 1860s and 70s, was becoming a thing of the past. As such, there was a great desire to record and even romanticise memories of unique times before they were lost forever with the death of the participants.

In a local sense, prominent people, including graziers, politicians and clergymen, were feeling the need to identify themselves and their families with the development of specific regions of colonial Australia. By making a conscious effort to write down something of their lives, they left part of themselves and their

accomplishments behind, also leaving individual representations of the spaces they occupied. Those who managed to publish memoirs felt they ‘derived authority and a revered status as guardians of an intimate and extensive knowledge that was otherwise unrecorded and irretrievable’.

Amongst such memoir writers were various members of the Suttor family, into which Addy Bowler married. The patriarch of the family, George Suttor, who was born in England, began the Suttor family’s tradition of memoir writing. Writing in a light-hearted but precise style, he commences with:

On the 11th June, 1774, my good mother introduced me to my honest father, I being the third and youngest son, born at Chelsea, near London.

He continues, with descriptions of life in Australia which take into account both the political and social scene. He discusses the military, governors and convicts, and notes that convict behaviour often left a lot to be desired. He writes:

Happily the scenes have changed and new and beautiful beings and characters appear, particularly among the feminine youths of Australia, who will be the future mothers and will be an honour to the British race from whom they sprang.

Some of the cultural and imperial ideologies of the period are clearly reflected in this passage. Women are ‘beautiful beings’ whose principal duty it is to mother the next generation. The British race stands as something elite, to which it is an honour to belong. It is interesting to note the difference in style and emphasis in the later writings of the Bowler brothers, a later generation knowing only life in Australia, and less concerned with emphasising British honour and female ‘duty’.

In any case, there is no doubt that the Bowler brothers, together with the Suttors, and perhaps even sister Addy, saw themselves as pioneers or trail blazers. Addy writes about domestic problems, visits by bushrangers, and the passing of gold
diggers, viewed from a space which, or her, centred upon the homestead. Her brothers describe active participation in the diggings and in pastoral management. Encounters with Aborigines and the outwitting of bushrangers flavour their writing, as they promote their involvement in the dangers and challenges of colonial development and progress.

There is a certain romanticism in the Bowler brothers’ memoirs, as they speak somewhat nostalgically about the rough and tough activities in which they took part. However, as I discuss elsewhere, their writing generally adheres to what was seen to be ‘manly’ writing, with the emotions held firmly in check. On the other hand, when recalling past events, sister Addy openly romanticises her childhood, emphasising her personal freedom and sense of adventure, after touching briefly on some unpleasant incidents. Later, her memories reflect the social and cultural milieu of the Bathurst and Condobolin regions at a time when the ‘frontier’ was fast disappearing and the need for written records of the past was being recognised.

Multilayered ‘truths’ concerning colonial life and colonial experience emerge from a careful reading of the Bowler siblings’ memoirs. Social historian Elizabeth Cohen notes that many cultural historians already adopt a multilayered approach to reading such texts. They recognise that ‘culture defines the words, the gestures, the units of meaning, the patterns of arrangement, through which people … package their experience’. Like many traditional historians, cultural historians examine multiple texts emanating from a variety of writers and genres, comparing them ‘in order to distil a collective meaning’ while keeping in mind, and learning from, the constraints defined by the culture within which each text was produced. Individual texts can refract meaning but not yield truth straightforwardly. Or, as Raymond Williams says, ‘there are times … when there is so high a tension between experience and description’ that ‘we are forced to examine the descriptions, and to seek beyond them for new descriptions’.

Truth, if there is such a thing, is problematic in memoir. However, as Smith and Watson say, although life writing might not always represent the exact truth, it can be seen and exploited as an historically situated practice of self-representation.

60 See also Roberts, “Binjang” or the “Second Vale of Tempe” 274.
62 Cited in Gallagher and Greenblatt, Practicing New Historicism 63.
that can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the historical period in which, and about which, it was created.\textsuperscript{63} As such, when anecdotes are embedded in historical discourse they have both historical and discursive value. Alan Atkinson has shown this in his \textit{Europeans in Australia} series, where anecdotes from ordinary people punctuate the mainstream, introducing a personal touch and sense of immediacy, which energises the telling of Australia’s past. By inserting anecdotes, the historian is forced to change genre mid-stream but the familiar narrative structure is maintained overall.\textsuperscript{64} Encouraged by revolutionary work by people like Hayden White, who advocates the use of a variety of genres in the telling of history, it has been suggested that the past can only be explored more fully by occasionally abandoning the formal discourse of history in order to re-capture the event.\textsuperscript{65}

Although Whitlock reminds us that a utopian sense of the past ‘sits uneasily on the boundaries between fact and fiction’,\textsuperscript{66} I would argue that anecdotes, once embedded in historical discourse, have the advantage of provoking their own contextualizations divulging different realities, realities that might not be assimilated otherwise into a typical, or coherently ‘significant’, narrative structure. Or, in the words of Gallagher and Greenblatt, anecdotes which have not ‘been carefully cooked up … to exemplify an abstract point’ can be used to insert individual representations and experiences across a mainstream historical narrative.\textsuperscript{67}

Memories are influenced and controlled by many factors, bringing with them complex energies that are an important part of understanding Australia’s colonial past. We must, in the words of Homi Bhabha, give the nonsequential energy of lived historical memory and subjectivity its appropriate narrative authority.\textsuperscript{68} Many people have left behind written accounts of their colonial experiences as they remember them. However, texts by women like Addy Bowler appear to have special advantages. Often openly and unashamedly subjective and personal, their writing allows easy access to the hearts and minds of those who shaped colonial Australia. Such writing

\textsuperscript{63} Smith and Watson, \textit{Reading Autobiography} 14.
\textsuperscript{66} Whitlock, \textit{The Intimate Empire} 180.
\textsuperscript{67} Gallagher and Greenblatt, \textit{Practicing New Historicism} 22. 50–51.
has the potential to inject a sense of immediacy, energy and empathy not so readily evoked in the more objective source material generated by their male counterparts – or indeed by later historians.