

## *EDITORIAL*

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In these straitened times, staff and graduates of the Faculty of Arts will have welcomed remarks made on behalf of the Vice-chancellor at the November symposium of the Academy of the Humanities. The national press reported a spirited defence of the humanities and a veiled attack on the Minister for Education for rejecting several proposals put to the Australian Research Council. Professor Gavin Brown's address (read on his behalf by Professor John Hearn, the Acting Vice-chancellor) criticised 'utilitarian thinking', and the poor quality of 'instrumental' debate about higher education policy. The address, seemingly in the spirit of Newman's classic *The Idea of a University*, asserted 'Universities have long believed that the exploration of the human spirit—through literature, art, philosophy, music or our history—promotes and sustains a healthy society. Today, however, job-readiness through skills training is praised more often than is excitement and emancipation through humane study'. Some years ago, Professor Brown recalled, there was a tacit assumption that the humanities were a good thing and that the universities should be funded as repositories of higher culture. The Arts Association hopes, though with some cynicism, that Canberra was listening.

Annual meetings of academic bodies like the Arts Association tend to be routine affairs. This year's AGM accepted with regret the resignation of Emeritus Professor Angus Martin as President, after many years of leading the Association. His energy and commitment, his diplomacy and care of detail, have ensured our renewed health and our important role in presenting the Faculty's scholarship not only locally but, through this journal, world-wide. The vote of thanks to Angus Martin was very much more than routine. We are fortunate in that he continues as a Vice President. He supports his welcome successor Emeritus Professor

Paul Crittenden, a former Dean of the Faculty.

This volume of *Arts* again shows the range and depth of that scholarship. It includes also addresses by Professor Walther Ludwig of the University of Hamburg, and by the distinguished novelist Kate Grenville. A valedictory by Professor Virginia Spate, 'The Dream of the Body as Nature: Themes in Nineteenth-Century French Painting' (not able to be included in this issue), ended the year's lectures.

Other occasions in 2005 included the presentation to Dr Elizabeth Bonner of the order of Les Palmes Academiques, by the Consul-General of France, Monsieur Laurent Delahousse. This honour marked Dr Bonner's distinguished historical work on Franco-Scottish relations. The Palmes, the oldest of French civil distinctions, dates from 1808 and was instituted by Napoleon. And at the end of the year, we were pleased to offer Summer Drinks in the Quad, together with the Nicholson Museum's exhibition 'Unearthed Tales'. The festivities took place near to the jacaranda tree pictured on our back cover.

Alert bibliophiles will notice that *Arts* has changed its typeface, from staid Times to the sharper Palatino. We trust you approve.

*G.L.L.*