

EDITORIAL

We can claim another successful year for the Arts Association and its contribution to the Faculty of Arts. There has been a full programme of lectures and other academic functions, and it has been pleasing to see that audiences have included appreciative town as well as dutiful gown. There has been a modest rise in membership (though we could do with a more than modest rise) and a widening of interest through and beyond the Faculty.

The outstanding event was *Celebrating the Faculty of Arts*, a major contribution to the University's sesquicentenary celebrations. A lightly edited account is given below. Association lectures have included 'To the Heart of Chaos: Nobel Laureate 2000 Gao Xingjian' (Dr Mabel Lee), 'What is Contemporary Art?' (Professor Terry Smith), 'The Language of Sport' (Dr Barry Spurr), 'Globalisation and the Genesis of Values' (Professor Diane Austin-Broos), 'Evil: the Making of the Psychopath' (Professor Stephen Garton), 'George Eliot on Stage and Screen' (Professor Margaret Harris) and, at the end of year annual general meeting and reception, 'Journalism and University Communication and Media Courses' (Ms Anne Dunn). The Arts Association has joined with the Centre for Human Aspects of Science and Technology (CHAST) and the Postgraduate Representative Association (SUPRA) to introduce a new interdisciplinary series 'The Human Aspects of University Research'. This series has included a lecture 'Consciousness: Psychoses and the Brain' (Professor Max Bennett) and a panel discussion on 'Genetically Modified Food' (Emeritus Professor Stewart Truswell, Associate Professor Elspeth Probyn, Dr Peter Sharp). We have co-operated with The Friends of the Library in the launch of the electronic version of the John Anderson lecture notes and to present a lecture by Dr Ian Willison, 'Histories of the Book in the English Speaking World, with Reference to

Australia', have supported the programmes of the Sydney Medieval and Renaissance Group, in particular a lecture 'New Insights into Renaissance Masters: Raphael' (Professor Konrad Obehuber), and have joined with the Religion, Literature and the Arts Society in a conference on Seeking the Centre. Together with the Curators of the University Museums we have arranged a programme of guided tours of the Macleay Museum, the War Memorial Art Gallery and the Nicholson Museum, and 'University History' tours. All of this has involved a great deal of patient background organisation, for which we express our grateful thanks to the Secretary, Ms Yvonne Chamberlain. We thank also the Alumni Relations office for their assistance.

An impressive programme for 2002 including the distribution of a Newsletter is in preparation, and with this a membership drive. We need to make membership grow in keeping with our activities and to increase income to support this journal. In this we seek the help of present members.

The Association wishes the retiring Dean, Professor Bettina Cass, well in her new position in Australian Studies at Georgetown University, and congratulates Professor Stephen Garton on his appointment as Dean of Arts. Times are still hard for the Faculty as staff numbers fall and there is little funding for replacements: good will seems to be the main currency. The formation of a committee of students and graduates under the leadership of the President of the Students Representative Council for a Campaign to Defend Arts is a sign of the times.

It is with deep regret that we record the deaths of three greatly valued members of the Faculty. Kevin Lee, a graduate of the University of Newcastle, Professor of Classics and the Dean's representative on the Association's committee, died suddenly on 28 May 2001. He took up his chair in 1992 and became Head of the School of Archaeology, Classics and Ancient History. Before coming to Sydney he had held appointments at the University of New England and the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. In recent years Kevin Lee served the Faculty as Chair and pro-Dean. Among his initiatives at Sydney were the establishment of the annual Latin Summer School and the Classical Languages

Acquisition Research Unit. He worked with the Board of Senior School Studies and was President of the Classical Association of New South Wales, and in 2000 became President of the Australian Society for Classical Studies. He was a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. His research and principal publication was on Euripides. A colleague at Yale wrote that Kevin Lee 'was one of those rare, very special people who truly valued other people and was not afraid to let them know he valued them. He was a voice of humanity and sanity in an academic world that seems at times to have gone a little mad'. A memorial poem by Dr Noel Rowe appears in this issue.

Professor Bernard Kilgour Martin died suddenly on 1 April 2001. He graduated from the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, in 1950, went on to Cambridge for postgraduate studies, and was then appointed to Sydney. He rose to Associate Professor in the Department of English, and from 1978 to retirement held the chair of English at the University of New South Wales. At that time he chaired the committee for English for the Higher School Certificate. Retirement was in name only. As an Honorary Associate in English from 1992 onwards he was daily at his desk, and continued to teach, to supervise postgraduate students, and to write and publish on a wide range of topics, not only on his special interest in English linguistics. In recent years, for example, Martin contributed to a collection an essay on Browning, gave an invited lecture on Dylan Thomas and Surrealism, and jointly edited a collection of papers on Celtic Studies. Martin was a member of the Arts Association committee. His colleagues will remember him affectionately for his independence of mind, dramatic gifts and penetrating sense of humour, as well as for his impressive scholarship. Dr Barry Spurr's paper in this issue is dedicated In Memoriam Bernard Kilgour Martin.

Associate Professor John James Nicholls, a life member of the Arts Association, died on 27 June. He graduated in Sydney in Latin and Greek in 1938 and was awarded the University Medal. At St John's, Cambridge, he graduated in 1940 at the head of his tripos. He taught at Newington College for five years before appointment to the Department of Latin in 1945, where he remained

until his retirement in 1981. His publications were held in high esteem. He was an enthusiastic supporter of the student Classical Society, wielding hammer or paintbrush for its dramatic productions while fielding questions about pronunciation or quantities. He will be remembered affectionately both for his unfailing assistance to his students and to his colleagues less learned in classical literature (I recall once presenting him with about forty unsourced Latin quotations; he needed to track down only two), and for his wit and sociability.

Celebrating the Faculty of Arts

On 16 May around 200 graduates from the 1930s to the 1990s came together at a reception in the MacLaurin Hall to renew memories and friendships and to celebrate the Faculty. They heard distinguished Faculty graduates from the arts, politics, business, journalism and the academy offer light-hearted thumbnail recollections of what their education in the humanities and social sciences had meant to them and of how it provided foundations for their careers.

Professor Gavin Brown, Vice-Chancellor, introduced the celebration. He spoke warmly of the achievements of the Faculty despite the present straitened circumstances, and offered some comfort in the imminent filling of the vacant chair of French Studies. The Dean, Professor Bettina Cass, spoke of the underpinnings of the good life and the good society, and introduced the speakers.

John Bell, BA Hons, AM, OBE, Hon. D.Litt Newcastle and Sydney, is the co-founder of the Nimrod Theatre Company and founder of the Bell Shakespeare Company. No Australian has performed in or directed as many productions of Shakespeare to as much acclaim. Bell recalled:

This Hall holds strong memories for me. To an eighteen year old undergraduate its very architecture was the romantic expression of a great tradition of scholarship. It was the repository of all

knowledge and wisdom since it was, at that time, the Library. It was the site of many romantic trysts as well as feverish last-minute cramming for exams.

Arriving for the first time in Sydney fresh from a Catholic country school, I was confident that I knew the One True Faith, the One True Party (the Liberals) and the One True Interpretation of *Hamlet*. This place gave me the great gift of uncertainty. For the first time away from people of my own kind, I experienced a terrifying but exhilarating collision with people my own age from many different backgrounds—people as varied and opinionated as Robert Hughes, Germaine Greer and Mungo McCallum—and saw every idea and sentiment I held sacred scorned, trashed and dissected over endless cups of muddy coffee in the Union. We Arts students were the scorn and envy of all other undergraduates: scorn because we had taken the soft option and would never get a real job; envy because we had the best time, with our theatrical productions, the annual Revue and our total domination of *Honi Soit*.

The authors' names on the English Department reading list were respectable and predictable, but it was the extra-curricular ones that set my mind in a whirl. I had no yardstick to measure them by, but they excited passionate disciples. I was to hear Clive James holding court in Manning House, espousing the causes of Scott Fitzgerald, e.e. cummings, Dos Passos and William Carlos Williams. I was to be subjected by the Film Society to a weekly onslaught of Eisenstein, Bergman, Kurosawa and Cocteau. I was to join the ranks of Sydney University Dramatic Society and Players and to encounter names that were new to me: Sartre, Anouilh, Beckett, Brecht, Arrabal, Ionesco, Brendan Behan, Webster, Wycherley, Goldoni and Congreve. This was all as significant as the stuff we had lectures on.

Sydney University made it manifest that an Arts education was priceless; something of no commercial value whatsoever, yet beyond measure in encouraging us to think for ourselves in confronting fundamental questions. Who are we and how should we live? How do we evaluate things, and which ones are of lasting worth?

Kate Grenville, BA Hons, MA, has written six works of fiction and recently was awarded the Orange Prize. She has also written about writing. She has been Writer in Residence at Sydney and currently is an Honorary Associate. Grenville admitted that she might never have become a writer without the Faculty of Arts:

Here's how it happened. It was my first day. There I was, in my suitable, though ugly, dress—pale yellow with an unfortunate paisley pattern—packed with hundreds of other brand-new English students into the Wallace Lecture Theatre for our Welcome Address. So many heads. And, just incidentally, so many boys. I'd been a bit of a goody gumboil at school and I was smugly preparing to go on being a goody gumboil at uni. I felt I'd cracked the game of 'doing English'—you just gave the teacher back what she said, only you dressed it up in different words. It was like putting Lego together—you just clicked each idea tidily into the one before. You got an A+, everyone went away happy.

I had my brand-new folder and my brand-new pencil case full of every colour of biro. As I squashed into the Wallace, I couldn't help noticing the girl next to me. She didn't have her nice folder and pens out. Nor was she wearing a suitable dress, no matter how ugly. She was wearing denim overalls with a white t-shirt that someone had obviously washed along with the darks. I felt sorry for her, a bit—she so clearly didn't have a clue about how to do this going-to-uni business.

Professor Wilkes's Welcome Address ranged over English studies from Beowulf through Chaucer to D. H. Lawrence. The English language was celebrated for, among other things, its ability to change. The Professor reminded us that it had been pronounced differently in Chaucer's day. This was a new idea to me but I accepted it without question. I think I even made a note in my lovely new folder. The first little block of Lego.

But the girl next to me was suddenly calling out. Right there and then, calling out into the respectful hush of the Wallace Theatre. How do we know, she was calling out. How do we know it was pronounced differently? Every head down in front of us swivelled around to stare. Up on stage, the Professor wheeled around,

academic gown floating out behind him, and pointed dramatically up at us. I shrank into my seat. Not me, my body language shouted. Not me, her.

Aha!, he cried. *That's* the sort of student we want!

That was the sort of student they wanted? There was an uneasy titter from the assembled heads. He had to be kidding ... didn't he?

When he explained, the tittering stopped. We know the words were pronounced differently because of the way some of the lines don't rhyme.

Simple once you'd been told. But to be told, you had to ask. And to ask, you had to use some part of your brain that I wasn't even sure I had. This girl next to me, now folding her arms and nodding—she had it. It was something to do with being willing to ask the stupid question. And before her, some other person had had it too, reading Chaucer one day and wondering why it didn't rhyme. They'd looked at the words on the page, but then they'd made a huge leap from what they *were*, to what they *might* be, what they could be. I suddenly realised that this must be what you called inspiration, or imagination.

Well, that was the green light for me. Forget goody gumboils in paisley dresses! Forget the Lego model of learning—even forget the A+s if you had to. Go for the leap in the dark, the inspired guess, the endless stupid questions—what if? Doing that has become my life as a writer of fiction. And for that, I'm eternally grateful to the Faculty of Arts. Thank you, for opening my mind to the power of imagination.

Jill Hickson, BA Hons, MBA, worked for Qantas and established a literary agency representing a list of distinguished Australian writers. She is Chair of the Historic Houses Trust, a Director of the Centennial and Moore Park Trust, a member of the Centenary of Federation Committee and of the Musica Viva Board, and sits on the boards of several companies. She is the wife of Neville Wran, former Premier of New South Wales. Hickson reminisced:

I recall Patrick White defining the place of a politician's wife, which meant knowing one's place: hence, my amazement at being

among the present distinguished company. I became a literary agent because I never quite got over the experience of studying English at Sydney, and wanted to go on studying books and writing, which meant, not riches, but a rich life. Now I am revisiting the MacLaurin Hall, where examinations were held; and revisiting the Quadrangle and remembering its characters. These include the wise, benign, owlish Ken Cable, and Tony Cahill, both from History; and Liz Fell from Psychology, in which there was a first year class of 1200. I wandered into Philosophy, the fashionable subject then with its memories of John Anderson, and into Anthropology, which I failed. But then came the bliss of studying English, which included Tim Kelly on Blake's 'Sick Rose' and Axel Clark on Christina Stead; the high point of topping third year honours; and the turmoil of the English Department schism, recorded in Andrew Riemer's *Sandstone Gothic*.

Of course I have regrets—not pursuing Philosophy, not taking Economics. But what I have learned here, and believe fervently, is that the humanities are the best foundation for getting along in the world; for thinking; for learning how to reflect on society instead of just reacting to whatever force is turned against you. The humanities, a true liberal arts education—and no one did it better than Sydney did in my day—make one rich in life.

Hugh Mackay, BA Sydney and Macquarie, holds honorary doctorates from Macquarie and Charles Sturt universities. He is a psychologist and social researcher and a student of the attitudes and behaviour of the Australian community. He is the author of four books in social psychology and of three novels, publisher of a quarterly research series, and a weekly newspaper columnist. He is an honorary professorial fellow at Macquarie and Chairman of Trustees of Sydney Grammar School. Mackay said:

I clearly recall riding on a tram from Central Railway to the University, proudly holding my copy of *Honi Soit* aloft, until I came across an article criticising brash freshers who hold their copies of *Honi Soit* aloft on public transport. I had made a false start in 1955, enrolling in the Faculty of Economics and hating it.

Now it was 1957 and, as one of those despised evening students

in a suit, carrying a brief case from office to university, I was filled with a sense of anticipation: I was enrolling in Psychology and Philosophy and looking forward to sitting at the feet of that controversial philosopher, Professor John Anderson. As things turned out, the combination of his thick Scottish burr and his drooping moustache made it impossible for me to understand much of what he said for the first couple of weeks, but I finally cracked the code.

Of course I'm grateful to the Faculty of Arts for providing me with some of the most stimulating intellectual experiences of my life, particularly in the Philosophy Department. I am grateful to the Psychology Department for having provided me with an intellectual framework for a very satisfying professional career. But, above all, I am grateful to the English Department for having opened my mind to the world of language and literature in a way that had never occurred at school. My all-too-brief exposure to the English Department sowed a seed which is still growing within me: I treasure and nurture it.

Bill Peach, BA, MA, Dip.Ed., was the popular host of the ABC current affairs programme *This Day Tonight*. He is the author of ten books and of many articles and radio presentations on Australian history and travel. Currently he runs a specialty tour company. He was awarded the Australia Medal for his services to the media and to tourism. Peach remembered that:

I came to the University in 1952 as a raw country oaf, and the first thing that caught my eye, apart from the female freshers, was *Honi Soit*. It was not so much the front page stories as the letters and the attitudes expressed in the letters. They were, as Ned Kelly put it, fearless, free and bold. And the classified ads were even bolder. I read one that said, 'If Lucky Mike will contact the girl he met at Spredaeagles last Saturday night, he'll hear something that will wipe the grin off his face'. Well, I thought, this isn't going to be like boarding school at all. And, I'm glad to say, it wasn't.

I lived on campus at St. John's College. Arts students were a definite minority there, but I discovered there were things you

could learn even from medical students. For instance, one of my first tasks as a fresher was to go over to Sancta Sophia College and tell the senior student, who was a medical student, that the senior student at John's, who was also a medical student, required the loan of her fallopian tubes. As I flew out of the front door of Sancta and landed in a crumpled heap on Missenden Road, I learned that a fallopian tube was not, as I'd imagined, some kind of stethoscope.

One of the joys of studying Arts was that it left you time for extra-curricular activities, and I was so keen on them that I sometimes forgot to do any intra-curricular activities. Sydney was very strong in sport at that time. We won the first grade Rugby Union and supplied an amazing percentage of the Australian team, the Wallabies. We also played Australian Rules, and I played rover in that team, but my chief value was elsewhere. The captain said to me, 'You're an Arts student, you can organise our pie night'. He believed that was at the top level of an Arts student's competence.

Some of you will remember the Bevery and the Buttery in the old Union building. We had our pie night in the shed under the old grandstand at number one oval, which naturally we called the Ovary. I still recall the captain's instructions. He said, 'Go over to the Grose Farm Hotel and pick up the eighteen-gallon keg. While you're rolling it back through Prince Alfred Hospital tell about twenty nurses they've got to come to our pie night at the Ovary. Don't tell them you're an Arts student. Say we're all medical students about to graduate. And there is one other thing', he said. 'What was it? Oh, yes. If you can think of it, see if you can pick up about half a dozen pies'.

Intellectually, some people think of the '50s at Sydney as a graveyard, but it wasn't that bad. The president of the Students Representative Council was an Arts student, Jim Wolfensohn, who later disappeared into obscurity as the head of the World Bank. Another Arts student called Bill Deane eventually got a job which took him into the shadows at Yarralumla.

There was a series of quite brilliant student revues. One that many of us remember was 'Into the Woods'. The theme was of the innocent girl ravished by rakes, along the lines of the popular

student song 'Sweet Sixteen on the Village Green, Pure and innocent was Angeline'. There were many good lines, as when the heroine squeaks, 'I'll tell the vicar', and the villain who's carrying her into the woods growls, 'I am the vicar'.

There were some outstanding professors and lecturers, as well as some who were not so hot; two I particularly remember as excellent were Gerald Wilkes on literature and Alec Mitchell on the Australian language. The Chancellor was Bickerton Blackburn, who gave us all an interest in Australian History since he was there when most of it happened. We believed that Governor Phillip offered Bickerton Blackburn the Chancellor's job as they both stepped ashore from the First Fleet. Our Australian History lecturer, Duncan McCallum, forgot to mention this, but he went into tiring detail about the number of picks and hoes and shovels which were packed by the Fleet. Fortunately, there was a lovely blonde who sat in front of me during these lectures and she had beautifully clear handwriting, so whenever I woke I could peer over her shoulder and see what I'd missed.

My other majors were Latin, which I enjoyed although I don't meet a lot of people talking it in the streets, and English. I did a Master's degree on Thomas Love Peacock, who wrote novels about people with fanatical opinions who advanced them without listening to anyone else, and I found this very useful training when I later compered *This Day Tonight*. Actually the MA degree helped me to get that job, and I'm very grateful to the Faculty of Arts for that.

I'm even more grateful for that lovely blonde whose history notes I copied, because later I married her and we had 37 very happy years together. She'd have been happy that our children are here tonight—Meredith, who took first class honours in marine biology and is just completing her doctorate here, and Steven, who graduated BA here with a blaze of distinctions in Australian literature. Our family is part of this Sydney University family, and proud to be a part of it and proud to be here.

Hsu-Ming Teo was born in Malaysia and came to Australia in 1977. She took first class honours and the university medal in

History in 1994, completed a Sydney doctorate, and has taught at Sydney and Macquarie Universities and at the University of Southern Denmark. Her novel *Love and Vertigo* won the Australian/Vogel literary award for an unpublished book in 1999. Currently she is working on a monograph and on her second novel. Hsu-Ming Teo introduced herself modestly:

This is the way the speeches end this evening, not with a bang but a whimper. Those who have spoken before me have all achieved so much. I, on the other hand, am just at the start of my career as an academic and novelist. I'm the smallest among the speakers tonight, both physically and figuratively.

I am the first and only person in my family to have done an Arts degree, and that nearly didn't happen. I finished my Higher School Certificate in 1987 and, much to my parents' delight and my utter dismay, managed to scrape into the Faculty of Medicine by one mark. I'd put down Arts as my preference but my father pointed out the long tradition of doctors in his family. Chinese don't do Arts unless they can't get into anything else, he argued. What could you do with an Arts degree? Wait on tables? I succumbed to family pressure and started in Medicine. Then one afternoon in Anatomy class, as we were studying the marvels of the male perineum, I had a Road to Damascus experience. I walked out midway through the class, quit medicine and enrolled in Arts.

The way my relatives felt about an Arts degree is pretty much summed up in a passage from my novel about Chinese girls in Singapore studying Renaissance poetry. My father's family had the same attitude towards me doing Arts; my grandmother didn't speak to me for two years after I dropped out of Medicine. To this day I am grateful to my parents for their support against wider family pressure. But because of this experience, having the luxury of choice and the privilege of enrolling in Arts was not something I ever took for granted.

I wish I had all kinds of interesting anecdotes to share about my undergraduate days; but there were no passionate student protests, weekly pub crawls, nothing that happened in either a grunge novel or a David Lodge book ever happened to me. When I wasn't studying I was working to support myself, and that kind

of lifestyle doesn't make for nostalgic stories.

What did an Arts degree do for me, then? Firstly, if it hadn't been for the experience of having to say something in countless tutorials, I wouldn't be standing here speaking tonight. When I left school I was excruciatingly shy, and I still remember stuttering and stammering my way through History and English tutorials, feeling all the blood rushing to my face, feeling as though my head would explode every time I had to say something in public. More importantly, however, an Arts degree opened up new worlds of thought, feeling and understanding to me. I owe a great debt to my lecturers, tutors and fellow students in the Departments of English and History, who listened patiently to my incoherent and fumbling attempts to come to terms with Marxism, feminism, post-structuralism and all the other -isms that you encounter along the way. They encouraged me and took the time to talk about things that are of no economic value, and these were not always high-minded intellectual discussions either. In fact, some of the arguments I remember most clearly ran along the lines of whether we preferred the word 'pernickety' to the American variant of 'persnickety'; whether the opposite of being 'disgruntled' was being 'gruntled', whether you had to be tall to have poise. Where else but in the Faculty of Arts could you engage seriously in such absurd discussions? Where else could you find the time and inclination to explore the world?

Through my study of History and Literature I slipped into the skins of people in ages past and present. In doing so, I was humbled to touch humanity. And I suppose that is why our discipline has always been called 'the humanities'. Because ultimately an Arts degree is not just about training for a career—although why a society that wants to become a 'knowledge nation' in the 'information age' doesn't really value people who are trained to think critically and creatively remains a mystery to me. An Arts degree prepares you for a way of life that is all about connecting—both with the social, intellectual and artistic worlds, and simply connecting with other human beings. And I could ask for no better foundation than that to start writing fiction.

I don't know where my career path will go from here. But I

know that I've never once regretted dropping out of Medicine, and I hope that I never take for granted what a privilege it was for someone from my background to study in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Sydney.

All good events have a happening. The distinguished poet *Les Murray* was in the gathering. He mounted the stage unplanned and read, unexpectedly, appropriately, and to great applause from his collected poems.

Emeritus Professor Dame Leonie Kramer, as Chancellor of the University, thanked the Association and the distinguished speakers for the occasion. She remarked upon the diversity of the approaches and the different values accorded to an Arts education, judging that diversity to be among the persisting strengths of the Faculty in difficult times.

After the speeches there was every sign of an old fashioned undergraduate party developing. Regrettably, the caterers put on the towels.

G.L.L.