

THE AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF THE HUMANITIES

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THE IDEA OF AN ACADEMY

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On 25 June 1969, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, having received a report of a Committee of the Lords of Her Most Honourable Privy Council – so the formal announcement from Buckingham Palace ran – agreed to the granting of a Charter of Incorporation to the Australian Humanities Research Council under the name and style of ‘The Australian Academy of the Humanities for the Advancement of Scholarship in Language, Literature, History, Philosophy, and the Fine Arts’. A warrant had accordingly been prepared (so the court announcement went on) for Her Majesty’s Royal Signature. And with a flourish of the royal pen, the new Academy was born. It is this foundational event and its consequences over the past four decades that we have come together to celebrate and to discuss this week.

The Australian Academy of the Humanities was conjured into existence through the persistent efforts of the Australian Humanities Research Council, an interim body that had been set up thirteen years earlier, when each of the then-existing Australian universities was invited to nominate five of its most distinguished scholars to serve as the Council’s foundation members. This job had taken some time to complete. Between 1956, when the AHRC was created, and 1969, when the Academy was finally achieved, Australian society (like the world at large) had changed in a number of dramatic ways, as the founding fathers themselves were uneasily aware. Some aspects of the grand scheme that had seemed appropriate in the mid-1950s may have seemed more open to question by the end of the following decade. By 1969 the very idea of an Australian Academy created by royal edict from Buckingham Palace may have seemed to some observers a little quaint. These were stirring times in Australia, as most of you here will recall. Just a few weeks before our Royal Charter was approved, the Governor of New South Wales, distinguished recipient of the Victoria Cross, had been pelted with fruit by the Students for Democratic Change as he tried to review a military guard of honour on his way to addressing a graduation ceremony at the University of Sydney. A few days after that event, students from the same group had presented the Governor of Tasmania with six rotten tomatoes, declaring all State Governors to be ‘redundant and distasteful symbols’ of an outworn system of political rule. Students at Monash, exercised over questions of discipline, had camped in the University’s Council chamber to press home their demands, in emulation of the actions of fellow students in Europe, North America, and Argentina. The interminable conflict in Vietnam dragged on, fuelling riots in campuses across the United States, and determined bouts of resistance amongst students here. *The Australian* newspaper for 25 June 1969 makes no mention whatever of the granting of our Royal Charter, but reports instead that a prominent university professor – a future President of this Academy, as it happens – had spoken in support of students objecting to the American-led war in Asia in which they had been asked to serve.

The year of the Academy’s birth, as these selective examples remind us, was a time of quite unusual excitement and nervousness in universities throughout Australia and the western world. It was a time

when the nature of the implied contract between the teacher and the taught, between the governor and the governed, seemed suddenly open to revision; when the tectonic plates on which our universities had been built began quite startlingly to shift, and the very *idea of the academy* – in the widest possible sense of that phrase – had become a matter of lively and far-reaching debate. ‘Bite the Hand’, advised a famous poster designed in that year by students from the London School of Economics; ‘Bite It Off’.

The *idea of an academy* in the more particular sense I want to explore in this lecture, however, has more ancient origins. I’d like to take you on a brief journey back in time, across not just four decades but four centuries, to glance at some of the earliest discussions in Europe of what a learned academy might be and do, how it might be organised, and why it might be worth establishing in the first place. Some of these early models will no doubt seem (by modern standards) bizarre, utopian, and grandiose. Some were notably short-lived, while others failed to get going at all. Some however have endured, and evolved, and had a determining influence on the development of later academies in various parts of the world, including our own. Others were built on intellectual hopes and aspirations that for one reason or another were neglected or forgotten as time went by, but may nevertheless – so I want to suggest, in the final part of this lecture – be worth our attention right now in Australia in 2009.

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In 1617 an impoverished English Catholic scholar with a taste for heraldry, poetry, philology, and antiquarian studies had a big idea. His name, scarcely known today, was Edmund Bolton. Bolton’s idea was to establish under royal patronage a grandly ambitious national academy in Britain, which he called the *Academ Roial*. The *Academ Roial*, so Bolton proposed, might receive an annual grant of £200 from the Crown. Apart from that, he assured King James, the new institution would cost absolutely nothing to run, though it might appropriately be housed, he ventured to suggest, in Windsor Castle. The new Academy, Bolton went on, might have a tripartite structure. At the highest level of membership would be a group of *grande*s to be known as the *Tutelaries*: comprising the Lord Chancellor, Knights of the Garter, and the Chancellors of the two universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Then came the *Auxiliaries*, who were selected members of the aristocracy. They were followed in turn by the rank and file, the real foot soldiers in this new Academy, known (appropriately enough) as the *Essentials*.

**[Figure 1: List of 84 ‘Essentials’.] {File: List of essentials.tif}**

These were scholars and poets and artists: historians, lawyers, architects, heralds, antiquarians, theologians: a pretty mixed lot, as can be seen from Bolton’s preliminary list of 84 proposed foundation members, which includes Robert Cotton, Henry Spelman, Inigo Jones, George Chapman, Ben Jonson, Michael Drayton, John Selden, Edward Coke. All of the Academy’s members would be permitted to wear

special ribbons and badges which Bolton himself had designed (as depicted here), and to make appropriate adjustments to their coats of arms.

The primary function of the new Academy, as early drafts of Bolton's proposal grandly, if somewhat vaguely, proclaimed, was to be the promotion of ORDER, DECORUM, and DECENCIA (words emphatically inscribed in large upper-case letters) and the suppression of CONFUSION and DEFORMITIE. As Bolton's thoughts developed, he proposed more specific functions to the Academy: that it should control the licensing of all non-theological books in England, for example, and monitor the translations of all learned works.

**[Figure 2: St George and the dragon, and verses 'To my lord': © The British Library Board. BL Harley 6103, 2v, 3r.] {Files: St George and Dragon.tif & To my Lord.tif}**

Depicted here are a couple of folio pages from an early version of Bolton's proposal addressed to James I through the mediation of his current favourite, the Duke of Buckingham, to whom Bolton was distantly related. Buckingham's first name, conveniently, was George. The illustration nicely captures the spirit of the entire venture: heroic combat, the triumph of good over evil, English nationalism, the Order of the Garter, and of course George Villiers.

James was impressed by Bolton's grand proposal. He was flattered by the role in which Bolton had cast him as Britain's King Solomon, presiding over a house of wisdom like that which Francis Bacon was also (coincidentally) at this time imagining, and pledged his support to the scheme. James died however before the new Academy could be established, and Charles I, despite specific written instructions on this matter from his late father, showed no interest whatever in taking the project forward. Another three centuries were to pass before the British Academy was finally established, in modest fulfilment of some at least of Bolton's early dreams. Yet Bolton's bold – and today, largely forgotten – venture (it is worth insisting) very nearly came off, and if James had not died unexpectedly in 1625, the Academie Roiale would have preceded the Royal Society by a good four decades.

In proposing his scheme Bolton was aware that there had been earlier unsuccessful attempts in Britain to establish some kind of national Academy. He would have known about Sir Humphrey Gilbert's attempts to form an Academy under Queen Elizabeth's protection, and about the Academie Royale that was developing around the young Prince Henry at the time of his sudden death in 1612, that placed special importance on the study of languages, mathematics, and horsemanship. Bolton was also familiar with the ambitions of the Society of Antiquaries to establish themselves as a kind of national academy under royal protection. This learned group of antiquarians – their numbers included William Camden, Robert Cotton, Henry Spelman, John Stow – had been meeting regularly at Derby House during the last years of Elizabeth's reign, and had petitioned her in vain for the granting of a royal charter. To their

disappointment, they had fared no better under James, who feared their enquiries might drift from ancient history into modern times and reflect on contemporary ‘matters of state’. This group had now disbanded, and it was not until the early years of the next century that the Society of Antiquaries was revived and formally re-constituted, acquiring its Royal Charter in 1751 from George II, the Society’s official Founder and Patron.

Bolton would also have known something about the new academies that been springing up throughout Europe since the creation by Cosimo de Medici of his Accademia Platonica in Florence in the early fifteenth century. Amongst the most remarkable and most recent of such learned institutions was the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, the National Academy of Lynxes, established in Rome in 1603 by the 18-year-old Prince Federico Cesi. The Lynxes burst on to the scholarly world with the most ambitious intellectual agenda, and smallest imaginable band of members. This so-called National Academy consisted initially of just four friends: the young Prince Cesi himself, a passionate patron of learning, and three scholarly companions, the Dutch physician Jan Heck (otherwise known as Johannes Heckius), a young nobleman named Francesco Stelluti, and Count Anastasio de Filius, a relative of the Cesi family. These four friends resolved to explore together the fields of philosophy and metaphysics, astronomy, mathematics, history, and botany. In the modern academic world they would have been told abruptly that their institution was of non-viable size and that their research outcomes were too vaguely stated. Fortunately however they had private money at their disposal, and had no bureaucrats to bother them. The young prince established the headquarters of the new Academy in the family palace in Via della Maschera d’Oro in Rome, near Piazza Navona. He began to recruit to the Academy, one by one, the most outstanding scholars of the day: first, Giambattista della Porta in Naples, the leading natural scientist in Italy, by then getting on in years, already in his seventies; and next, in 1611, the much younger sensation of his time, Galileo Galilei in Florence. These two men in turn were invited to establish branches of the Academy – Lyceums, as they were called – in those two cities. The plan was to establish a network of Lyceums right across Italy and across the world, with a community of scholars in each dedicated to celibacy and to free, open, and peaceable enquiry. Each Lyceum would have a museum, a library, a printing house, observatories, machines, botanical gardens, and laboratories. Federico Cesi took as the emblem of the new Academy the lynx, an animal still found at that time in the Umbrian hills around his home village of Acquasparta, and reputedly possessed of such sharp vision that it could penetrate any object on which it looked: an apt symbol of an institution devoted to empirical enquiry. In time all members of the Academy would wear rings with an emerald engraved with a lynx’s head. Galileo, a proud member of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei – a body powerful enough to protect him on occasions against papal interference – gratefully used this symbol in all his publications.

**[Figure 3: Galileo title-page: *Istoria e dimonstrazioni*, 1613] {File: Galileo Istoria e Dimostrazioni.tif}**

The Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei is sometimes described as the earliest scientific academy in Europe; but the modern word *scientific* does not adequately register the full range of the Lynceans' activities. It was a fundamental principle of the new Academy that humane studies were not to be divorced from, or subordinated to, studies relating to the natural and physical world. 'The Lynceans', as Galileo himself described them in a letter in 1618, 'are a company of Academics of this name, founded by the most excellent gentleman, Prince Cesi, who is still head of it, and these companions have as their aim the study of letters, and in particular of philosophy and other sciences contributory thereto, and, moreover, they expect the more intelligent ones to write down and publish the results of their labours for the benefit of the republic of letters.' The Academy made a point of electing poets, writers, and artists as well as non-scientific scholars to its fellowship, and has maintained its humanistic ideals throughout its various transformations and reconfigurations into modern times. Today the Accademia dei Lincei has two interrelated classes of membership: one, of Moral, Historical, and Philological Sciences, the other of Physical, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences. It has supported in recent times, alongside its more purely scientific ventures, large humanistic projects on Greco-Egyptian papyri, on Greek and Latin classics, on the history of Italy, on the drawings and notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci. Following the ideals of Prince Cesi and his early colleagues, the Academy has continued moreover to be a truly international body, maintaining correspondence and exchanges with thousands of academies, learned societies, and institutions throughout the world.

**[Figure 4: frontispiece to Sprat's *History of the Royal Society*, 1667] {File: Frontispiece Sprat.tif}**

The Royal Society of London, at the time of its establishment in 1663 under the patronage of Charles II, had very similar aims to those of the Accademia dei Lincei, though the subsequent histories of these two institutions then notably diverged. During the first twenty-five years of its life the Royal Society included amongst its membership many non-scientific Fellows: poets such as Abraham Cowley, John Dryden, Edmund Waller, along with dramatists, divines, antiquaries, lawyers, historians, politicians, classical scholars, writers on heraldry, and other characters described simply in the early records as 'travellers' or 'satirists' (a category unknown, I fancy, to the Royal Society today). Founded as it was on the Baconian belief in the need for integrated, holistic knowledge, and on the broadly humanistic curriculum of Gresham College, the Royal Society in its earliest days welcomed this wide range of intellectual discussion and debate.

The aspirations of the Society were moreover determinedly international. 'We are to overcome the mysteries of all the Works of Nature', as Thomas Sprat, a founding father of the Royal Society and its earliest chronicler, grandly declared in his *History of the Royal Society* in 1667, 'and not only to prosecute such as are confin'd to one Kingdom, or beat upon one shore.' The global conquest of nature would be achieved with the help of the Royal Society's extensive network of Corresponding Fellows stretching

throughout the learned world: a community of foreign scholars who stayed in constant touch with their colleagues in London through the systematic exchange of papers and through personal visits. This policy of international openness and reciprocity would enable the Society in time to be seen, so Sprat eloquently declared, as ‘the general *Bank*, and Free-port of the World.’ These are bold and futuristic metaphors. Banking was still in its earliest days, and the concept of national banking still entirely untried in Britain – the Bank of England was not to be established until the 1690s – but Sprat is already looking further ahead, seeing the Royal Society as a kind of equivalent to the World Bank (a creation of the twentieth century): as a vast magazine where the world’s intellectual capital was being already progressively accumulated; a treasure house of global knowledge. As ‘the Free-port of the World’ – Sprat is writing more than a century before Adam Smith and David Ricardo – the Royal Society would moreover boost the world’s intellectual economy, the international circulation of ideas. In recent times, the Director of the British Museum, Neil McGregor, faced by persistent claims for restitution of the Elgin marbles and other foreign treasures, has adroitly rebranded his institution as *the World’s Museum*. This was the kind of vision that Thomas Sprat already had for the Royal Society three and a half centuries earlier.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, the Royal Society, facing claims of scandalous laxity in its admission of Fellows, felt obliged to scale down these highly ambitious early aims. The Society, so Charles Babbage found reason to complain in his *Reflections on the Decline of Science in England* in 1830, had by now lost both its coherence and its credibility. It had admitted to the Fellowship too many amateurs and idle hangers-on: barristers, politicians, well-to-do gentlemen, leisurely lovers of learning, and was in danger of becoming a national disgrace. In 1847, after prolonged debate, the Royal Society resolved to narrow its mission. It would become henceforth a professional body dedicated to the support of outstanding *scientists* – a very new word in the 1840s – admitting to the Fellowship only those who had promoted, or made distinguished contributions to, the understanding of *science* in the newly developing sense of that word. Timely and understandable in many ways though this move was, it left England curiously out of step with developments in Scotland, where the Royal Society of Edinburgh was determinedly maintaining (as it does to this day) a diverse program of activities in arts and sciences, and with most major countries in Continental Europe. In England there was now no major institution to support and promote what we would call today humanistic scholarship. This absence became acutely embarrassing when, in 1899, the Royal Society was invited to send representatives to the first official meeting scheduled to take place in Paris the following year of the newly formed International Association of Academies. The International Association – comprising organisations from across Europe and America – had agreed to constitute itself within two main sections, one devoted to natural science and the other to literature, antiquities, and philosophy. The Royal Society had no difficulty in finding representatives to send to the first of these sections, but had no one at all within its ranks who could decently be asked to represent English interests in the second.



The Society therefore wrote in some desperation to seek the advice of a number of ‘distinguished men of letters’ – they included Alfred Lyall, Henry Sidgwick, Lord Acton, Leslie Stephen, and others – who, after an emergency meeting at the headquarters of the Society of Antiquaries in Burlington House, reported that in their opinion there were now two options. The Royal Society might wish, on the one hand, to create a separate section catering for non-scientific subjects, as other national academies in countries such as Germany had done. The alternative would be the establishment of a totally new Academy to accommodate those disciplines that lay outside the present reach of the Royal Society. A special meeting of the Fellows called to discuss these options resolved after much discussion to reject the idea of expanding the Royal Society to include non-scientific subjects. The direct consequence of this decision was the creation of the British Academy for the Promotion of Historical, Philosophical, and Philological Studies, which received its Royal Charter from Edward VII on the eve of his coronation in August 1902.

Though its title had a grand ring, the new British Academy didn’t otherwise have much going for it. Unlike the Royal Society, it had no building in which to conduct its activities, and, for the first twenty-two years of its life (again, in contrast to the Royal Society) received no public funding whatever. Today the Royal Society and the British Academy – describing themselves respectively as ‘the independent scientific academy of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth’ and as Britain’s ‘national academy for the humanities and the social sciences’ – are located side-by-side in Carlton House Terrace, and are both in receipt of public funds (though of very different magnitude). These two institutions, though on friendly and neighbourly terms, might be thought in some ways to symbolise within British academic life the so-called two cultures which C. P. Snow set out to describe in his provocative Rede lecture in the University of Cambridge in 1959, exactly fifty years ago.

These twin bodies, the Royal Society and the British Academy, served to a large degree as initial models and prototypes for the establishment of a learned academy structure within Australia during the second half of the last century. Over the years, however, the Australian structure has evolved in a somewhat different manner, with four learned Academies – of Sciences, Technological Sciences and Engineering, Social Sciences, and Humanities – representing what are nowadays perceived to be the four main quadrants of knowledge.

During the period running up to the granting of our own Academy’s Royal Charter in 1969, however, the precise manner in which such divisions should be effected, and the number of divisions there should be, became a matter of intense debate. The Australian Academy of Sciences had received its own Royal Charter – directly, from the hands of the Queen herself, during her visit to Australia in 1954 – and some at least of its Fellows were disposed to regard the term ‘Academy’ as referring and belonging exclusively to themselves. (Fellows of the Australian Academy of Sciences are elected officially as ‘Fellows of the Australian Academy’ and carry the initials FAA after their names). Some thought was given to the

possibility of maintaining a single Academy with three sectional divisions, of science, humanities, and social sciences, and Fellows given the right to belong to more than one section, but this model failed to attract support. The social scientists had for many years been attempting to set up an Academy through the agency of their own Research Council, and the possibility of a combined humanities/social sciences Academy was much discussed throughout the 1960s, but ultimately abandoned. The Academy of Social Sciences in Australia was finally to be established in 1971, and the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences – modelled on similar institutions in Sweden and the United States – would follow in 1976. Neither of these later Academies would claim a Royal Charter as its foundation document.



Birthdays provide an opportunity not just for celebration and retrospect, but also for hopes and wishes and guesses concerning the future. What will our Academy look like in another forty years' time, and how do we want it to develop? How (if at all) do these stories about the Academy's past, and the growth of learned academies in Europe, prompt us to think about the Academy's future? I'd like in the final part of this lecture to make three suggestions, of an entirely personal, speculative, and undogmatic kind, about the possible future development of this Academy, inspired by the brief histories I have just been tracing.

Despite the title I have given to this lecture, there is of course no single 'idea' of an academy any more than there is (with all due respect to Cardinal Newman) any single idea of a university. Academies, like universities, come in all shapes and sizes and are the natural products of their time and place. In popular currency today, the word 'academy' is used in a variety of ways, and often applied to quite specialised institutions. The Melbourne telephone directory informs us of the existence of the Academy of Dance and Movement, the Academy of Traditional Chinese Medicine, the Academy of Hypnotic Science, the Academy of Clinical Hypnotherapy, the Academy of Interactive Entertainment, the Academy of Makeup. While these are all legitimate modern uses of the word, the accounts I have given this morning all hinge on a broader interpretation of that term, on the idea of an academy as an institution offering more than a single field of specialised knowledge. When the International Association of Academies was rounding up suitable institutions to attend its inaugural meeting in Paris in 1900 it felt obliged to say what an academy actually was, arriving finally at a definition of what an academy was *not*: 'that no Society devoted to one subject or to a small range of subjects will be regarded as an "Academy" . . .'. This statement is worth recalling in Australia today, as a number of professional organisations dedicated to the promotion of a single academic discipline currently seek to constitute themselves as learned academies. All are, I am sure, in their different ways, worthwhile bodies, though they don't correspond to that larger and richer idea of an academy that I have been trying to trace in this lecture.

One of the greatest challenges for Australian universities today is how, in an age of increasing academic specialisation, to encourage and achieve conversation right across the disciplines, and across the many

visible and invisible boundaries that characterise the modern university: a conversation that is regular, serious, persistent, adventurous, open, speculative, and mutually intelligible. Most of the big problems facing us presently both as a nation and globally – the problems of an ageing population, of the huge shocks administered by collapsing financial markets, by natural catastrophes and extreme climatic fluctuations – won't ever be solved by a single group of experts, be they gerontologists or economists or ecologists. They need to be addressed holistically, by scientists, social scientists, humanists, technologists, working creatively and collaboratively together. Universities are places in which such wide-ranging conversations should in principle be easy to achieve, but in practice, as we all know, they are not. The very physical structures of the universities seem almost designed to keep us all apart: medical researchers on one side of the campus, social scientists on another, humanists somewhere else, accentuating the centrifugal demands of specialised teaching, administration, and research.

So here is my first suggestion. Might there not be a way in which the four learned Academies, without any change to their present status, autonomy, and activities, could initiate and maintain regular conversations of just this kind across the disciplinary divides: through shared symposia, conferences, and *conversazione*, through joint projects, enquiries, and submissions? That pristine idea of an academy as an intellectually inclusive body has fractured progressively over the centuries under the massive pressures of ever more specialised enquiry within our universities and research institutions. Can it perhaps to some degree now be restored through systematic dialogue of this kind led by the four learned Academies? As an inspiring model, I think of the wonderful meeting organised some years ago by our former President Iain McCalman at the Humanities Research Centre with the help of the four Academies on 'Mad Cows and Modernity', as anxiety was spreading in Britain and throughout the world on the newly discovered cattle disease known as BSE. The meeting brought together, in an illuminating mix, epidemiologists, medical practitioners, economists, pathologists, social and intellectual historians, artists, and poets. I think also of the recent symposium organised by the British Academy, with a wide range of participants, on the global financial crisis entitled 'Why didn't anybody notice?', addressing the simple but penetrating question asked late last year by the Queen on a visit to the LSE: if this was such a big event, why didn't we see it coming?

My second suggestion responds to a feature of those early European Academies that I believe we'd do well *not* to emulate in Australia in the twenty-first century. As you will have noticed, the story I have briefly told this morning about the creation of those Academies is deeply gendered. These early Academies were conceived essentially as clubs exclusive to men. Little over a century ago, the British Academy itself developed through a kind of intellectual parthenogenesis out of discussions amongst that group of 'distinguished men of letters' whose composition I have just described. It is as though women, as a race, had not yet been discovered, or were living on another planet, or were at the very least unlikely to have attained the necessary degree of distinction that would qualify them to take part in such deliberations. In the *Dictionary of National Biography*, prepared in the years leading up to the formation of

the British Academy, the entries for women occupied a mere 3% of the whole. Women's 'opportunities for distinction were infinitesimal in the past', explained the editor of the *DNB*, Sidney Lee, in 1896, 'and are very small compared with men's – something like one to thirty – at the present moment. Women will not therefore, I regret to reflect, have much claim on the attention of the national biographer for a very long time to come.' Women did not have much claim on the attention (either) of those planning the formation of national academies, from which their exclusion was regarded as more or less axiomatic. How far have we progressed since that time? In 1969, the proposal for the establishment of the Australian Academy of the Humanities was submitted to the Queen by ten male members of the Australian Humanities Research Council, along with one female member (Dr Ursula Hoff). At present about 22% of the Academy's Fellows are women: a fractionally better ratio than most of our brother Academies (we can't very well call them 'sisters') in this dismal contest, but still deeply depressing. Improving the representation of women must surely be one of the foremost priorities for this Academy in the years ahead.

A third suggestion, prompted this time by what I see to be a truly admirable feature in those early Academies, and with this suggestion I conclude. The international aspirations of the bodies I have described in this lecture are little short of astonishing. At a time when foreign travel was fraught with difficulty, when roads were muddy, seas were perilous, and the skies entirely empty of traffic, when the straw beds of taverns were hopping with fleas, when faxes and telephone conferencing, when Skype and email lay still in the great undiscovered future, these scholars in their determined way still got around, and saw that their writings got around: in pannier-bags, on the backs of donkeys, in the holds of sailing vessels. They were, in the fullest sense of the term, corresponding scholars, seeing both themselves and the academies to which they belonged as players on a world stage. I sometimes wonder if, in this age of unrivalled global communication, as we sit at our computers accessing at the touch of a button rare materials in depositories around the world, talking in live time with colleagues in Rio and Capetown and Berlin, we might have lost some of that vision and some of that determination in the structures and activities of our Academy. The Australian Academy of the Humanities has at present no category of Corresponding Fellows, and a large number of our more mobile colleagues known as Overseas Fellows (eighty-two at the last count) have been swept off the field altogether to watch the game out from the reserve benches. There is perhaps some lingering tension at present between the national issues and imperatives that quite properly concern our four learned Academies – in relation to which they are supremely well positioned to play, as ever, a leading and critical role – and the larger international issues that also engage us as scholars, and impinge inevitably in turn on our local interests. Over the next forty years we might want perhaps to review that balance, positioning ourselves not just as a peak national body within Australia, but in the ringing words of Thomas Sprat, as a 'general *Banck*, and Free-Port of the World'.

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