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MELBOURNE

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# University of Melbourne

DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS

*Parkville, Victoria 3052*

19th May, 1977

Professor Joseph Burke,  
Herald Professor of Fine Arts,  
Department of Fine Arts,  
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE.

Dear Professor,

At the Staff Meeting on Friday last, the staff asked that I write to you expressing their pleasure and giving their congratulations on the occasion of your award of an honorary doctorate.

The Department is indeed proud that you have been so honoured.

Yours sincerely,

MARGARET PLANT  
Chairman of Department

100-100000  
100-100000  
100-100000

Department of Agriculture

Washington, D.C.

May 1, 1917

Director, Federal Reserve Bank  
Federal Reserve Bank  
Department of Finance  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:

At the staff meeting on Friday, April 27, 1917, the staff agreed that a letter to you expressing their pleasure and in their consideration for the occasion of your award of a honorary citizenship of the United States should be forwarded. The Department has accordingly forwarded the letter to you by a special messenger.

Very respectfully,  
John D. Rockefeller



John D. Rockefeller  
President of the Board of Directors  
Rockefeller Foundation



"Dormers",  
Falls Road,  
KALORAMA. 3766

Dear Friend,

I am beginning this as a circular letter because I have been more than usually remiss in writing letters. In November, I was knocked down on a pedestrian crossing by a charming elderly lady. Fortunately the accident occurred near the Royal Melbourne Hospital. I have made an excellent recovery, and am swimming and have started playing golf again.

1973 was annus mirabilis in a variety of ways. Firstly, I was awarded a C.B.E. in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. This entitles me to get married in the Chapel of the Order in St. Paul's Cathedral. I pointed this out to Agnes, who a few days later brought to my notice the following passage from C.P. Snow's The Light and the Dark

"Muriel", she cried excitedly, "did you see that Houston has got a C.B.E.?"

"No, Doris", said Lady Muriel with finality.

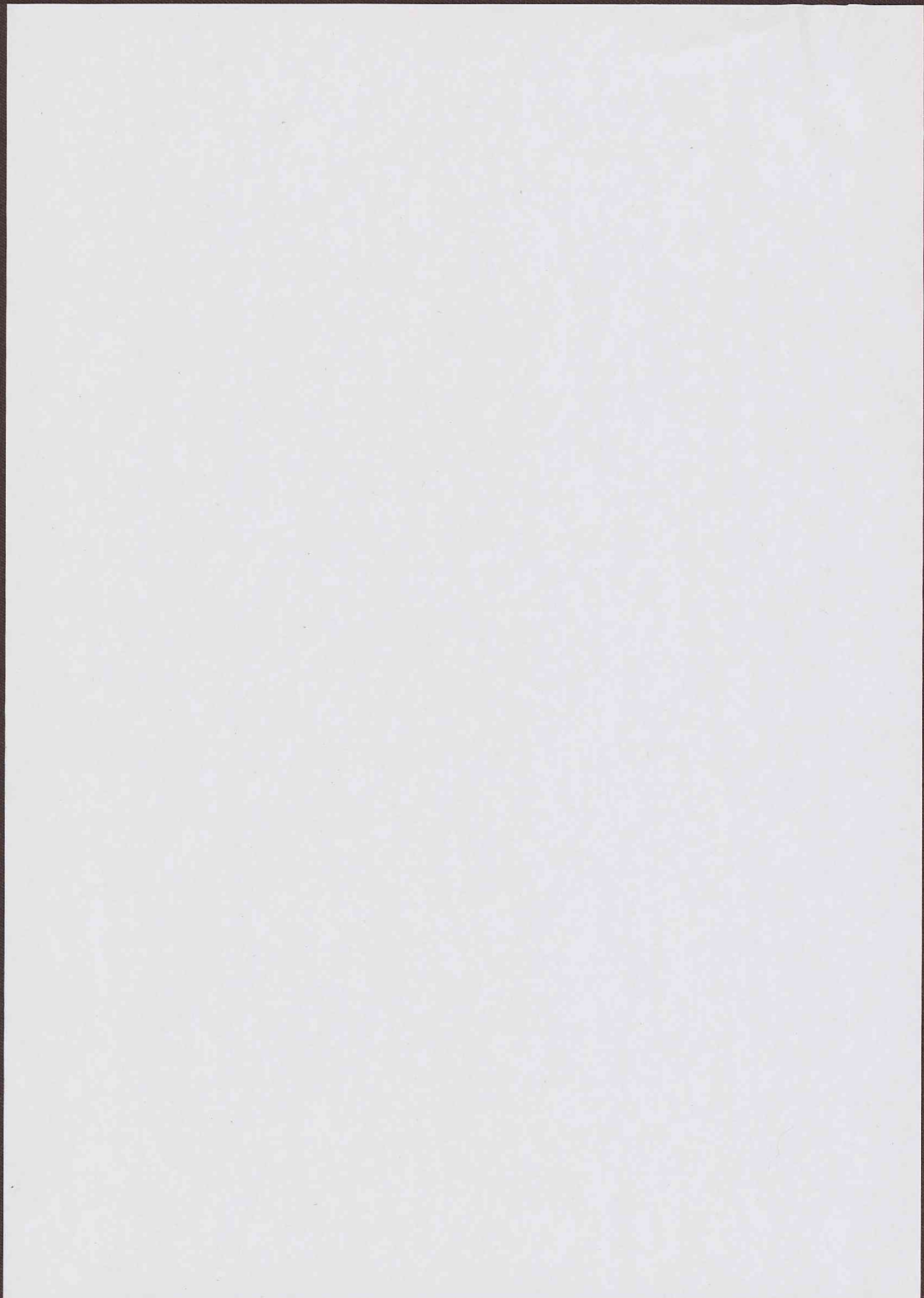
"I never read as low in the list as that".

So that brought me down to size!

Secondly, the 3rd Nichol Smith Memorial Seminar on eighteenth century studies at Canberra in August was possibly the best ever. The Seminar was started by a group of Australian pupils and admirers of this great scholar under the <sup>inspiring</sup> leadership of Dr. R.F. Brissenden. This year the Americans sent a particularly strong contingent, including two who had known Nichol Smith personally, Dr. Mary Hyde and James Clifford. They also had some splendid young people. Indeed the contribution of youth was one of the keynotes of the conference, so that it looks as if the eighteenth century and its civilised values are going to have a new lease of life in the 20th Century. Last but not least, we were once more loyally supported by our Canadian friends.

An exciting development at Melbourne University has been the launching of an inter-disciplinary course on the Enlightenment with funds provided by the Universities Grants Commission. The range of Faculties and Schools taking part extends from Music and Fine Arts to the History and Philosophy of Science.

Thirdly, we have sold our little house in East Hawthorn and bought a fine property near Kalorama in the Dandenong Ranges. It is 1½ acres, about half of this being a garden with well established trees and shrubs. In fact it is a veritable arboretum and might have been planted by a Professor of Botany who had taken up silviculture. The rich soil is very acid and rhododendrons particularly shoot up





tall eucalyptus regnans, blackwood and tree ferns, and is separated from the Forest Reserve by a creek. This is the heart of the lyre-bird country, and the parrots come swooping down on one of the exotic catalpas that is a favourite with them.

The house is a small 2-storey one with dormer windows, hence the name. Because the site is nearly 2,000 feet high there are superb views from a sun-deck in the upper storey across the valley of the Sylvan Dam to mountains in the distance, one of which is appropriately named "Little Joe".

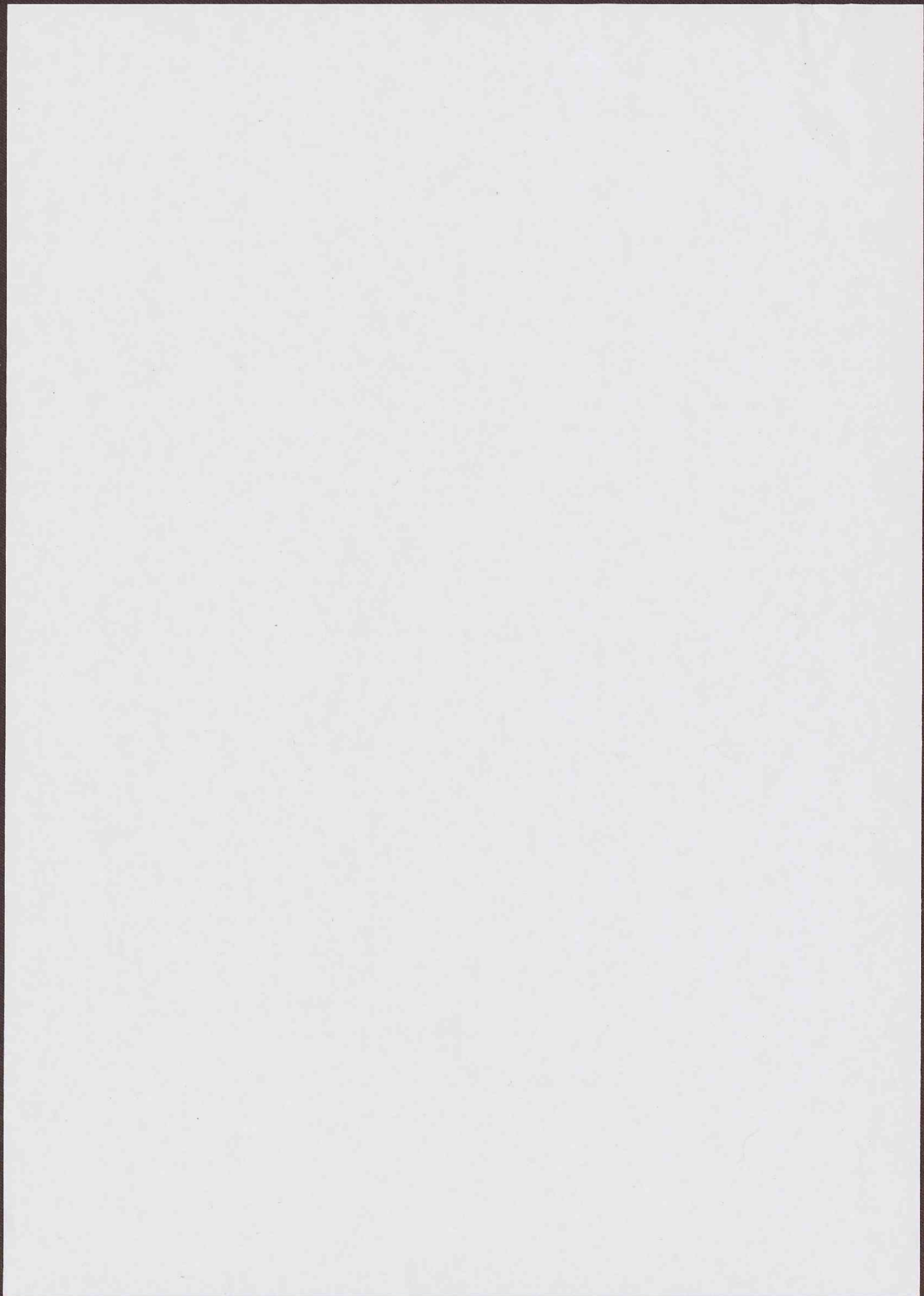
Like all Canadians, Agnes is a great believer in being warm, so we have installed central heating over 21 squares in the first storey. Because of the height, it is 10 degrees cooler than Melbourne, and 3-day snow can adorn the winter landscape. We have more room, and are looking forward to having overseas visitors stay with us and showing them something of the mountains, forest and wild life.

My original plan was to rent a room near the University, because Kalorama is too far to commute, although Agnes, who is a fast driver, can do it in an hour when the roads are empty at night by making use of the South Eastern Freeway. However, I have been elected a Fellow of Trinity College and have been given rooms in the Old Chaplaincy, where Agnes can also stay. This has a lovely garden. The Old Chaplaincy is called the Vactican, because a previous incumbent was very High Church. I have, however, decided to be modest and shall not change the name of "Dormers" to Castel Gandolfo.

It is all a very great change from suburban life, and there is a great temptation to snatch more leisure than I have in the past.

Agnes loves the garden, where she spends most of her free time. Ricky, Helen and Ricky Junior all flourish, and Helen had her second child, a lovely girl, in March. She has been christened Anthea.

Finally, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario has done me the honour of inviting me as a Commonwealth visitor from early September to February. Queen's is very strong in 18th Century studies and was represented at the 2nd Nichol Smith Seminar by that fine scholar, James Leith. Agnes and I hope to spend Christmas with her sister who is the widow of a minister and lives in a manse in lovely surroundings near Prince William, New Brunswick. This is where Agnes spent much of her childhood and I am quite certain Canada will oblige with a white winter, something she misses in Melbourne. Thereafter, we hope to see some of our friends in the U.S.A. before proceeding to England where I shall be working on Blake and especially on a book on Benjamin West and the Anglo-American Revival of History Painting.





807 Toorak Road,  
Hawthorn East 3123,  
Victoria, Australia.

Dear Friend,

Qui s'excuse s'accuse.

No News is Good News.

How often have I relied on these time-honoured formulae to cover up my failure as a correspondent!

I am told that the Chinese have the charming custom of giving each year a name. In my case 1967 has been 'the Year of Survival'.

At the end of 1966 the higher echelons of the University were scurrying round the corridors of impotence to prepare for the tornado of a cut in the University grant. Senator Gorton, now our fine Prime Minister, has a reputation for toughness, really for making honest decisions which are unpopular. He announced in Parliament that the Government proposed to spend ten per cent more on the Universities than ever before in the history of the nation. But the bill - the enormous bill - was coming in for the new Universities, including Monash and Latrobe in Melbourne. The older ones would have to take a cut.

In 1967 one of my colleagues went on sabbatical leave. John Carter of Classics, who gives the course on classical art history, also went on leave. The staff groaned as we spent hours discussing the redistribution of the load after two tutors had been dropped from the establishment. Then in February Bernard Smith, a Reader in the Department, was appointed Power Professor and Director of the Power Institute of Modern Art at the University of Sydney. We all basked in the reflected glory of this well-deserved and distinguished appointment. The two tutors were reappointed. But who was to give his lectures? The answer was, me. In 1967 I gave five lectures, three tutorials and two seminars a week, comprising a first year course, a joint second and third year pass course, an honours course and tutorials and two seminar classes for M.A. supervision. With all this went

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an unprecedented load of essays and papers to set and correct. In the weeks before Christmas, when cards and letters are normally sent out, I was busy starting to clear up the business of the year and marking examination papers.

Because the Herald Chair was founded to promote the appreciation of art in the community at large, and to provide inter-disciplinary lectures, it was laid down in the terms of the appointment that I should not establish a Department or 'give regular courses of instruction'. The idea was a Professorship without a portfolio, like the Ritchie Chair of Economics, or the Slade Professorship at Oxford. When the permission of the donors was sought for the introduction of Fine Arts A, I was asked to give a firm promise that the original aims of the Foundation would be given an overriding priority. An additional benefaction of £20,000 was made in recognition of this undertaking. With the growth of the Department to 400 students it has not been easy to honour my promise. In 1967 I served on fifteen committees outside the University, including six Federal ones that meet regularly in Canberra or Sydney. I was President of A.S.E.A., Acting Chairman for a short time of the UNESCO Advisory Committee for Visual Arts and rapporteur of the first Canberra Conference and Seminar of the Federal National Trusts of Australia. In addition to committees, and conferences, there have been many speeches, including lecturing visits to all States except Queensland and Western Australia. My University Committees have grown to fourteen, and I even carry the Mace before the Chancellor, Sir Robert Menzies, as Esquire Bedell. Inevitably there has been a lot of correspondence arriving in substantial batches twice a day. Hard as it may be for my friends to believe, all correspondence other than private letters gets answered sooner or later. Most of the arrears of extra-mural work get cleared in the vacations, but there is always a new addition to the extra-mural vacation load, for example this January I shall be giving six lectures in New South Wales.

'Busy he was, yet not busier than he seemed.'

The encouraging side of all this activity is the friends that one makes and the association with worthwhile, forward-looking and exciting causes. At the top



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
DEPARTMENT OF THE HISTORY OF ARTS  
AND ARCHITECTURE  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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of these I put the new National Gallery and Arts Centre in Melbourne. The Gallery will be opened about the middle of 1968, and designs for the Arts Centre with its theatres and auditoria have already been submitted. It is now many years since I formed the opinion that the architect, Roy Grounds, has a touch of genius. The Gallery will, I believe, be a great work of art. It is both severe and magnificent in its abstraction; as an art historian I am reminded of Schinkel and Piranesi. However, it is really completely Roy Grounds, a classical carapace for a romantic imagination. There are authoritative rumours that the collection will be seen to advantage.

The Gallery and Arts Centre Building Committee has been the most exciting of my Committees, but of course my favourite is the Felton Bequest. The Felton Advisor in London, Dr Margaret Woodall, has done nothing but bring out the best in all of us by her beautifully presented recommendations. When the works arrive they are just that little bit better than we expect from her cautious encomia. It's a terribly hard market these days, and we are filled with admiration. There is a touch of the serpent about dealers, and for once they have met their match in an Eve as intelligent as she is charming.

For friends who have visited the home there is very little change, except that the garden is acquiring Salvator Rosa beauties by neglect, to say nothing of a Gothick air conferred by the household repairs that remain to be done. At the moment we are undergoing the worst drought in the history of Melbourne, but so far we have not lost any shrubs or trees. Fortunately lavender and hollyhock appear to be indestructible.

The great climax of 1967 was Ricky's wedding, although it actually took place on January 6th, 1968. Helen Englefield is a lovely girl, and she and Ricky have been inseparable since they first met shortly after leaving school. Ricky began his speech at the reception in the Hotel Australia by saying 'Unaccustomed as I am to answering my father back', which brought the house down. For the honeymoon they have taken their car for a tour of beaches and cities, and will be spending two days in Canberra and the greater part of a week in Sydney, having booked in





at lovely hotels en route through a travel agency. They spent their first night in the bridal suite of a very new hotel in Melbourne, eleven stories high and with a lovely view across the Albert Park Lake. The management presented them with a bottle of champagne and an enormous box of chocolates, so clearly it pays to travel as a honeymoon couple.

Agnes is very well, and looks younger every day, so that I feel almost embarrassed to be seen with her, as if I had married out of my age group. She went to the Adelaide Festival with me last year, but because my Interstate visits now have to be rushed - I frequently fly to and back from Canberra or Sydney on the same day, and if I do stay the night it is because there is an evening session - she has taken a number of breaks in the hills, staying with Ella Dumbleton. The great debate in Melbourne is between the sea and the hills. Agnes has lost her heart to the hills, especially near Olinda, and if we have one day-dream to which we are more attached than any other, it is to save up and buy a little shack there. It is hard to describe the beauty of the Dandenong ranges to those who have not seen them, but it partly consists in the light shining through the gum trees, with their vertically pendant leaves - no use for sheltering from rain, but wonderful for letting in the light - and partly in the vivid but spectral blue of the mountains across the valleys.



