

## JOHN PENWILL: 1944–2018

The editors of *Ramus* are saddened to report the death (on 2 April 2018) of their fellow editor, John Penwill, dearest friend and tireless colleague, without whose industry and commitment for over forty years the journal would have ceased to exist long ago. John brought a brilliant intellect and boundless energy to his editorial and (in the many years before CUP became the publisher) business and managerial tasks, while at the same time maintaining an active pedagogical and research career in Classics and the Humanities. His effect on his students was more than inspirational. Throughout a wide-ranging teaching career (at Monash and La Trobe Universities in Victoria, Australia, and at the University of Tasmania) he not only taught the humanities but practised them, steeping the lives of his students in the values of great literature and critical discourse. His oral papers and scholarly articles were almost always controversial and persuasive. Penwill's thoughts on Terence, Lucretius, Cicero, Virgil, Livy, Apuleius, Seneca, Quintilian, Statius, Silius, Tacitus, Lactantius are cited constantly and deservedly by the present generation of classical and literary scholars. Greek authors, too, received his attention, including Plato, Epicurus and the unknown authors of the *Letters of Themistocles* and the *Letters of Chion of Heraclea*.

John was a past president of the Australian Society for Classical Studies and during his three-year tenure in that office (2006–08) travelled throughout Australia, endeavouring to convince university administrators of the value of classical studies and their essential role in tertiary education, for which he was always and everywhere a most fervent advocate. He was a frequent participant in classical conferences, and many who knew him will remember his capacity for vigorous critical debate. John saw academic conferences as a Platonic receptacle of becoming, where traces of new ideas were to be identified and developed into full-grown, exegetic theses, rather than as a stage where established actors could strut and fret. His favourite conference was the annual Pacific Rim Roman Literary Seminar, which began at the University of Tasmania in 1987 and of which he was a founder member and its most constant attendee. He must have given almost thirty scholarly papers at that seminar alone.

But it is not only the Australian classical world which will miss him. John was an international scholar, who presented papers across the globe, especially in the USA, Europe, New Zealand and South Africa. He leaves behind many who were illumined by his presence and are saddened by his passing. John once described the ending of Lucretius' great epic on 'Nature' (John's most loved poem in the classical canon) as capturing 'the ending of life precisely'. 'After death', he writes, 'there is no more sensation, no more words. The rest is silence.' The rest is not silence for those left behind, who will remember the pleasures of his company and the acuity of his words, and will pass on that remembrance to others.