Leaves in the Wind

Memories, Ruminations, Intimations

Harry Oldmeadow

Bendigo, 2021

For my family:
For those who came before,
those who came with me,
and those who come after

*

Our lives are wrapped in mystery, and a lifetime
is hardly sufficient to begin to fathom it.
(*Huston Smith*)

Many Winters

Some years ago a friend was looking after a visiting Tibetan lama and introducing him to a strange culture. One of the phenomena which puzzled the lama, visiting a Western bookshop for the first time, was the apparent interest in biography. He was amazed to learn that quite ordinary people should write about their own lives and those of others, and that there should be a sizeable market for such personal histories. For him the only biography which could be of any possible value or interest was the life of a saint or sage, an exemplary life rather than one made up of the "paraphernalia of irrelevant living" (to borrow a phrase from Patrick White). Coming from one of the last truly traditional cultures, the lama was expressing a point of view which nowhere would have seemed idiosyncratic until modern times. Black Elk, the revered Lakota holy-man, espoused the same principle when he said, in the inimitable idiom of the Plains Indians, "what is one man that he should make much of his winters, even when they bend him like a heavy snow? So many other men have lived and shall live that story, to be grass upon the hills" (*Black Elk Speaks*). There are far too many books in the modern world and one must be wary of adding to their number, especially in the overcrowded field of biography. In self-defence I point out that the present volume is privately produced, in tiny numbers, and intended only for my family and a few close friends.

I have scrawled out these pages firstly for my own purposes: as an autumnal reflection on my own life and its many blessings, and as a token of gratitude to those who have accompanied me on various parts of the journey; and secondly as a record for family members who may, after I have become grass upon the hills, be interested to read something about my life and times. After Mum and Dad died I regretted that I had not asked them more about their own lives, especially their early years. I would have been interested in any memoirs had they existed. If, in the future, there are no such readers for this volume, nothing is lost. Then too there is also the fact that I enjoy writing and am only really happy when I have a project on the go. From this vantage point it might be said that this volume is an exercise in self-indulgence. Well, quite so!

But it's a harmless one, so I like to think. I hope I have not made too much of my many winters.

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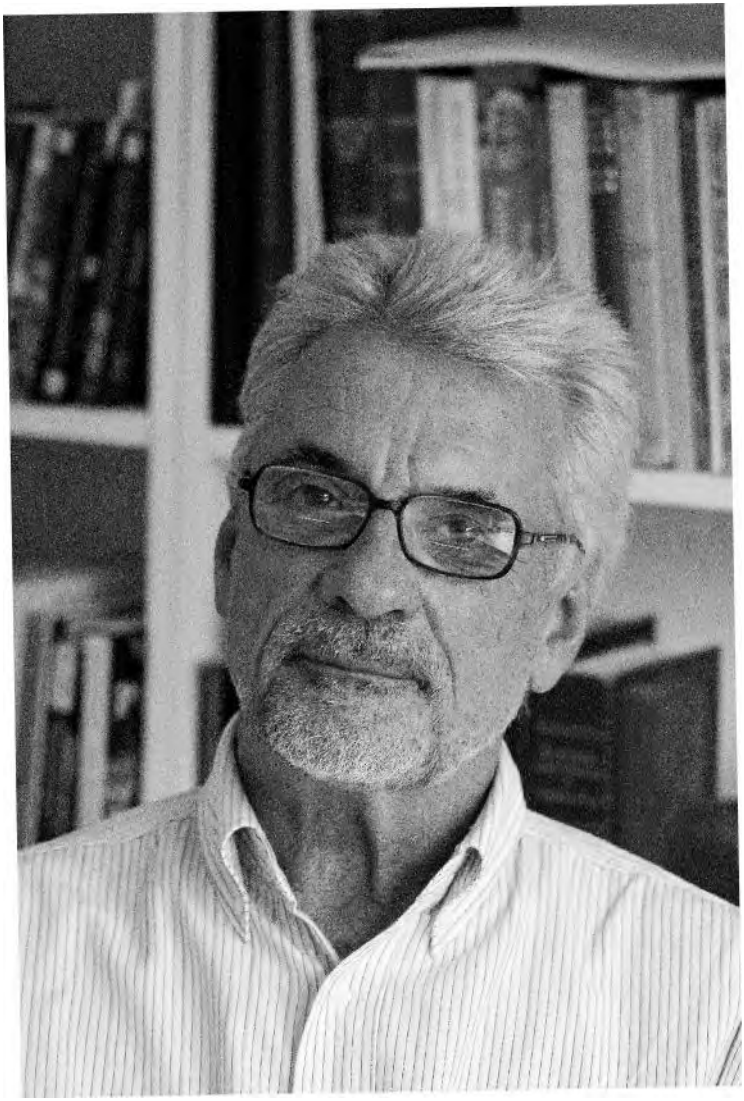


Mandurang, 2007
(Photo: Peter)

CONTENTS

Many Winters

1. Golden Haze: An Indian Childhood page 7
2. Mostly Gold, Some Grey: Canberra Schooldays 28
3. Mayhem on Campus: University Days 48
4. Wider Horizons: Oxford, Europe, Morocco 70
5. Hippie Ratbag: the SWOW Years 82
6. A Lightning Bolt and a Turning About 99
7. The "Full Catastrophe": Family Life in the 80s 117
8. Heading South: A New Life in Bendigo 140
9. Hard at It: Teaching & Writing 158
10. Travels 184
11. The Inner Journey 213
12. Loafing in the Shade: Retirement 227

Epilogue: Night Thoughts 251

In Memoriam
Roger Sworder, Russell Oldmeadow, Diana Oldmeadow 253

C.V. 266

1.

Golden Haze
An Indian Childhood

Born in Melbourne, 1947. Soon after my arrival, the family moved to Franklin in the Huon Valley, south of Hobart, where Dad took up his first appointment as a Methodist minister. Apple orchard country. I have no conscious memory of my two years in Tasmania but perhaps they explain my lifelong love affair with this beautiful island which I have visited many times during my adult life. Close on the heels of my second birthday and the birth of my sister Pamela, my parents offered themselves for missionary service in Fiji, but to Mum's great disappointment, were sent instead to India, appointed firstly to Ghazipur and then Azamgarh, both in Uttar Pradesh province which straddles Mother Ganga and the dusty northern plains. The nearest well-known cities are Lucknow and Benares.

Apart from some fugitive and indistinct impressions my earliest memory is of my fifth birthday when I was given a two-wheel bike. I remember the pleasurable ache of anticipation when I thought I *might* score a bike. What an adventure careering around the Ghazipur compound; plenty of scrapes and bumps and bruises! I recall some of the Indian folk from the household giving me excited instructions in the arts and sciences of bicycle-riding. Another memory from Ghazipur, I think during a visit from Azamgarh: "Aunty" Beryl Thompson (to be distinguished from "Aunty" Beryl Smithson) demonstrating a comfortable sleeping position – a kind of swastika shape – on the hot, mosquito-buzzing nights of the Indian summer. Of my parents' missionary colleagues she is the one I remember most fondly. Tragically, her husband David was soon to die from an infection following some minor wound. India exacted a heavy toll on the health of missionaries. Dick Richardson, another Methodist missionary whom Dad met in England during the War, had been afflicted with various tropical diseases which left him with bothersome ailments for the rest of his life.

The house and compound at Ghazipur remain more clearly etched in memory than particular incidents: space, dust, heat, insects, flowers; the Indian servants going about their tasks; the lighting of the lamps in the evening. But a couple of specific

incidents from Ghazipur days stand out. One was the introduction into the household of a wind-up gramophone and a modest collection of 78rpm records of classical and operatic music. This must have been a gift; such extravagances were quite beyond the parental budget. The strange workings of the machine impressed me more than the music itself and I remember both Mum and Dad trying to explain, not very successfully, how this astonishing contraption worked, the seemingly miraculous transference of musical performances onto a plastic disc and their subsequent amplification. I still don't understand the whole business!

Another memory from these early years is arising one morning in the dark to accompany Dad on a bus-trip to a nearby town where he had some sort of missionary business. Boarding the bus in the town square in the dawn light amidst a jostling and noisy crowd of folk, the pervasive Indian aromas in the air – flowers, incense, cow dung, burning charcoal. A couple of puris to eat on the bus. The first of many Indian bus-trips, including one a year or two later when, from Azamgarh, I was despatched alone, in the protective custody of the kindly bus-driver, to visit the Thompsons in Ghazipur. I also recall the thrill of the first car trip from Azamgarh to Ghazipur. In those years the normal modes of transport were ekkas (horse/donkey driven carts), rickshaws, bicycles, buses and trains.

The Azamgarh years are crowded with many more memories: the large two-storey brick Allen House with its tennis court and spacious garden irrigated by a network of channels, water drawn from the well by Nubi-Buksh, the gardener; the majestic trees along one side of the garden in which there were often noisome and mischievous monkeys at play; frangipanis, bougainvillea, marigolds, hibiscus everywhere; the dusty spaces beyond the fence-lines, dotted with imli trees, where we used to play an improvised form of cricket, another game involving a small wooden chuck with sharpened ends which one moved about by bashing the pointed end with a stick, and, best of all, a game played with matchbox or cigarette package covers which were placed in a circle on the ground. From a distance one threw a flat stone to shift the most prized cards out of the circle, thus claiming them for oneself. Marbles also figured in our regular pastimes.

Allen House was situated in the Christian compound which was administered by a handful of missionaries from England and Australia, and which encompassed a small community of Indian Christians. Most eminent amongst the householders was Mr Theophilus, the Headmaster of the Christian school serving the town. The Theophilus family lived nearby. Dad and Mr Theophilus, a stout and dignified Indian, sometimes grave but with a lively sense of humour, enjoyed many conversations in both English and Hindi on what seemed to me very arcane subjects. We were taught the deepest respect for Mr Theophilus and developed friendly relations with his family. Mr Theophilus had a shiny bald dome, prompting Dad to quip, "he does his hair with a towel". I thought this uproariously funny. (As with many of Dad's jokes, we heard this more than once.) Another regular visitor to the household was an Indian judge, a very lofty figure in our childish eyes, who was schooling Dad in Hindi and Urdu. I think he was a Muslim. He declared that Dad spoke impeccable Hindi, more correct than that of most Indians and the best he had heard from a foreigner. If only Dad's aptitude for languages had been transferred to his eldest son who survived no more than three painful years of secondary school French and Latin – "*la plume de ma tante sur la table*" – and who, unlike his siblings, soon forgot Hindi after the return to Australia. Pamela later went on to become a teacher of French and English as a second language, and Pete mastered the mysteries of Sanskrit and Tibetan.

Most of my time at Azamgarh was spent with my Indian friends. There were no Anglo children of my own age. I also loitered about with the servants. Nubi-Buksh, in charge of the grounds and a general Mr Fix-It, was a very dark, tall, muscular fellow of genial disposition, something of a prankster. Despite his Urdu name he was a Hindu. Shahamat was a slightly shifty and lazy fellow, nominally in charge of cleaning and sweeping. He was not often seen actually discharging his duties. Timal was feebleminded and inept but a sweet-natured young man belonging to a lowly Hindu caste. His duties were vague but included general housekeeping and watching over the children. He discharged his responsibilities as best he could but was quite incompetent. He was sometimes sent to market to buy vegetables and groceries but

usually returned without the items which the cook or Mum had specified, with sundry other items which were not required, and in a state of tremendous confusion about the monetary transactions which had transpired and the amount of change rendered. There was no dishonesty in him; it was just that he had difficulty managing anything beyond sweeping the porch, squatting outside the kitchen for a smoke with Nubi-Buksh, or playing with his own child. Mum said she kept him on because he was fiercely loyal and would never abandon the children. She also surely did so for so many years out of kindness and care for Timal's timid young wife and small baby. The undisputed boss of the servants – or at least the one with the most elevated status, each being in charge of their own domain – was Kumar, the cook. Like Nubi-Buksh he had a keen sense of humour, and was kindly and solicitous of our welfare. He ruled the dark and smoky kitchen and storeroom at the back of the house with an iron fist and, should anyone violate his various rules of conduct and etiquette in the kitchen, they could expect a sharp reprimand; contrition would bring an immediate *rapprochement* and perhaps a biscuit, still warm out of the oven. Mum often asserted that Kumar was the finest cook in the district, and a priceless asset to the household. We all agreed. His family lived in a town some distance away so he periodically disappeared on leave. He too was a Hindu.

Outside the kitchen was a small overhanging roof sheltering a bench and a fireplace. Here the servants and their friends spent some of their leisure time, often with a few urchins lurking about. I was always made welcome in these gatherings and enjoyed listening to their gossip and badinage. Sometimes we were joined by my closest friend in Azamgarh, Jitandra, who was a couple of years older than me. I remember the general amusement the first time I tried out some Hindi swear-words. I think it was there too that I had my first smoke. Implicit in our relations with the servants was the understanding that, apart from behaviour that might put us in danger, our misdemeanours would not be reported to my father, in charge of all matters concerning standards of behaviour, punishments and so on. From a severe Methodist family, my father held us to exacting standards in all matters, from table manners to honest dealings to grammatical

speech to not handling money on Sundays. But he was always patient and kindly in his instruction. The only time I can remember him raising his voice in anger was when Peter and I were playing on the verandah right outside the parental bedroom. It was before *Choti Hazri* ("little breakfast"), the early morning cup of tea and a small snack which began the day. After our noisy hi-jinx persisted despite several imprecations from within, Dad appeared, still in his pajamas and with unusually untidy hair, brandishing a sandal. We skedaddled into the garden.

Of the town-life of Azamgarh I have only generalized memories: the ubiquitous monkeys sporting about everywhere; the thrumming marketplace, noisy, smelly, chaotic with its constant jangle of sounds, wandering cows and the seductive stalls selling dripping jalebis, luddoos, halva and other mouth-watering sweets; the exotic paraphernalia of the religious celebrations, especially the magic of *Diwali* (the festival of lights) when buildings all over town were adorned with flames flickering in their little oil-filled clay bowls; the occasional appearance of brilliantly caparisoned elephants in religious processions or, equally exotic, the sporadic passage of a caravan of camels; the call to prayer from the mosque in the Muslim sector; the pleading beggars, limbless men, others with different physical deformities, and the haunting hollow-eyed women with tiny babies, most frequently encountered at the railway station; and everywhere that mix of people of different colour, dress and demeanour, Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs, each easily identified by their dress and comportment, people black, brown, yellow and the occasional European (not often seen outside the compound); children scampering and playing hither and thither, mangy dogs, long-suffering and frequently abused mules and donkeys, women in their graceful and colourful saris, itinerant *sannyasis* (renunciates) and mendicants, sometimes soldiers displaying their gleaming rifles and spruce khaki uniforms. Lest all this seems rather romantic I must add that I haven't forgotten the rubbish, the mud, the excrement, the puddles of filthy water, the putrid odours, all of which were to be found in abundance in the busier parts of Azamgarh.

At the age of five I was sent to Woodstock, a boarding school in the Himalayan foothills. On the first train journey to Dehra Dun I was accompanied by Dad, thence by bus up to Mussoorie and then Landour, an outlying settlement where the school was located. Mussoorie was one of a chain of hill stations where, in the days of the Raj, the British spent the hottest part of the enervating Indian summers. After taking me to the junior boys' boarding school, Dad climbed into an ekka to begin the long journey home. I remember this painful and poignant moment clearly. But I was soon taken under the wing of the Anglo-Indian house-matron, a kindly woman of great warmth and sensitivity. How much more alarming my introduction to boarding school might have been without her!

Woodstock School was run by the Presbyterian Church. It was remarkably liberal in its educational philosophy and my time there, apart from my initial mild home-sickness, was a happy one. The school catered primarily for the offspring of missionaries, diplomats and other foreigners living in India so there was a very cosmopolitan mix, as well as a small number of Indians from the wealthier classes. Perhaps my memory is playing tricks but I do not recall ever being mistreated or abused by the teachers, or bullied by other children. When we returned to Australia for good, at the end of 1958, I was shocked by the treatment of the students at my new Australian school. I don't suppose that Queanbeyan Primary School was any worse than the average but I was horrified by the fact that teachers called students by their surnames only, that corporal punishment (by cane) was meted out daily for even minor misdemeanours, that the principal was a figure universally feared, and that most of the "education" consisted of very tedious rote-learning. I could look after myself in the schoolyard but again I was stunned by the amount of physical violence in the rough-house games and the intermittent incidents of schoolyard bullying, not to mention the pervasive swearing. All this was in the sharpest contrast to what I had experienced at Woodstock.

I was a gregarious child and there was an inexhaustible supply of friends at Woodstock, including girls, in separate accommodation but sharing the classrooms. Here I experienced

my first childish infatuation, a blue-eyed, blonde, American girl with teeth-braces. Her name was Mary-Jo Burckhalter. I'm not sure that she ever spoke to me but I secretly regarded her as my "girlfriend".

My favourite time of day in these early years was after "lights-out". We slept in bunk-beds in large dormitories each, I suppose, housing something like twenty young ruffians. The matron would do the rounds, switching off the lights and every night admonishing us that there was to be "no talking!". This injunction was, of course, completely ignored. Once she had retired to her quarters there would be a babble of voices, recounting anecdotes from the day's activities, reminiscences about out-of-school adventures, and many jokes, some of them of a grubby kind but serving the purpose of making our later sex education classes redundant. It may have been in this nocturnal environment that I developed some skill as a raconteur.

The political and moral climate of Woodstock must have been somewhat conservative despite the liberal educational practices. Two illustrative incidents. Most Woodstock students were from the USA and there was a fair amount of American history and such in the curriculum. We also tried to keep abreast of American fashions, mainly through visits to the cinema in Mussoorie where we ventured, unsupervised, for Saturday afternoon matinées. (In later years the pre-screening theme music in the ramshackle cinema was Pat Boone singing "Bernadine".) Anyway, 1956 was Presidential election year. The conventional wisdom was that all right-thinking people would be voting for good ole "Ike" Eisenhower, and that only commies and other dodgy types could possibly support Adlai Stevenson. One day my father appeared to pick me up; it was during the mid-year period when all of the family had retreated to Landour and we were liberated from the boarding house. He found me with a small group of companions at the basketball courts. One of my youthful American friends asked Dad whom he was going to vote for. Dad replied that as an Australian he did not have a vote but if he did, it would go to Stevenson. This caused me acute embarrassment and chagrin.

The general political climate at Woodstock could also be gauged by the tidal wave of dismay and trepidation when, in

October ’57, the Soviet Union successfully launched Sputnik 1. Many of the American teachers, parents and students were incredulous that it was not their own country which had first achieved this feat. Some were full of dire warnings about an imminent “hot” war. Generally the outside world and affairs of state remained outside our childish purview but one other event which sparked consternation and anxiety in the missionary community and amongst Anglo expatriates was the Suez War in 1956. I remember being disturbed by the headlines in *The Statesman*, India’s largest English-language newspaper, and asking Dad questions about these apparently menacing developments in the Middle East. I can’t remember what he said but over the years he was a consistent advocate of national self-determination and believed that European colonialism should be dismantled as quickly as possible. He was a great admirer of Nehru and Gandhi, especially, in those days, the former. At that time one also heard teachers and parents alluding to the threat of nuclear war but this never really impinged on my consciousness. Later it was to become a matter of the deepest concern to me, so much so that in the early 80s I threw myself into efforts to establish a new Australian political party, the short-lived Nuclear Disarmament Party which achieved one seat in the Senate (from Western Australia, to their credit) but which was soon subsumed in the emergent Greens.

The other incident, trivial in itself but somehow remembered, involved an earnest young friend, with the lacklustre and now tarnished name of Alan Jones, who was deeply troubled by my father’s smoking of cigarettes and pipes. For Alan this raised a serious *moral* issue, quite unrelated to health-effects such as would later cause concern: it was, he insisted, my *religious* duty to persuade my father to give up this *sinful* activity. I remember discussing this with utmost seriousness while we were exploring the *khud*, an uncleared area of tangled forest on the slopes between the school and the higher Landour ridge where we lived mid-year. Alan put me under relentless pressure to accede, and I finally did so, reluctantly. My attempts to discuss this troubling issue with Dad were dismissed with gentle good humour and with assurances that I need not worry myself about such things. I never

again took on the task of reforming the smokers, amongst whom I would later be numbered.

The highlight of the school week was Saturday afternoon when we were off the leash, allowed to explore the hilly terrain in the school's hinterland, to visit our sisters in the girls' boarding house, or to venture into Mussoorie, a walk of perhaps half an hour from the school campus. The most magnetic attraction was the cinema where one could expend one's meagre allowance on the price of admission and perhaps a small bag of peanuts. The more affluent amongst us might buy an ice-cream. The films I remember seeing in that cinema, sometimes with the rest of the family, include *High Society*, *Vera Cruz* and *Jailhouse Rock* as well as Laurel and Hardy shorts, some Bob Hope films and plenty of cartoons. I also remember longing to see *Raintree County* but this was deemed too naughty for matinée sessions and so was out of reach. (I have revisited the other three aforementioned but still haven't seen *Raintree County*.) These experiences germinated a lifelong cinephilia, an addiction to "the frenzy on the wall" as Sartre so memorably described his first exposure to the movies. These outings were augmented by screenings at school, usually of a character-building kind: *Scott of the Antarctic*, *The Conquest of Everest*, heroic narratives featuring the glories of the American Revolution, Davy Crockett, Daniel Boone, the Alamo, Kit Carson, documentaries about Helen Keller and Madame Curie. *Vera Cruz* was more my go.

For six weeks in the middle of each year my mother would move up to Landour, accompanied by Timal, Dad joining us a little later for a shorter stay. We lived on a long ridgeline with spectacular views of the great Himalayan range to the north, the mystical peak of *Nanda Devi* (the highest in India) visible on the horizon on a clear day. To the south lay the vast Indian plain, often shrouded in a dusty haze. Released from the boarding school, life presented new adventures: exploring the surrounding forests and the abandoned "haunted house" about which there were all manner of occult tellings; picnics with Mum and Dad; tennis; roller-skating; weekly worship at the Kellogg Church; most memorable of all, nocturnal beetle-hunts on which one accumulated ebony-black beetles with fearsome claws, as well as

lesser beetle breeds, moths and other insects, all to become traffic in a lively trade with both school friends and the local children. For a while I also hurled myself into stamp collecting. From time to time there would be a family outing to the Kwality Restaurant in Mussoorie, an impossibly sybaritic realm.

The highlight of these mid-year sojourns was a family trek, along with the Forbes, another missionary family who lived in Faizabad. Their eldest daughter Christine was another of my early "girlfriends" while Andrew and Mark were companions for my younger siblings. Accompanied by various "coolies" we were out in the mountains for several days, sleeping in the humble huts of villagers along the way. The destination, shrouded in romantic mythology, was *Nag Tiba*. This might be where my lifelong obsession with mountains originated. In adult life I was to go on no less than six extended treks in the majestic Himalayan ranges of Nepal. I also became a serious *aficionado* of mountaineering literature and a relentless photographer of alpine landscapes in Australia, New Zealand and USA – though nothing can match the awesome Himalayas.

One of my less happy memories of India concerns the fear of ill-health and dreadful tropical diseases which were part of the background, so to speak, of daily life. Polio, typhoid, cholera, jaundice, dysentery, tetanus, rabies, malaria, leprosy were all dark spectres. Scary stories abounded. Then too there was the fear of the venomous cobras which could be seen from time to time slithering around in sinister fashion in the Azamgarh garden. Dad once shot a large cobra which had come too close to the house and was a threat to my baby sister, playing under the guava tree. I've been terrified of snakes ever since. From time to time Dad also shot monkeys causing mayhem in Nubi-Buksh's carefully tended garden, eating the fruit, uprooting plants, scattering the soil, all the time jabbering and screeching. On one occasion a monkey came through an open window and snatched a banana off the dining-room table where we had gathered for lunch. The cheek!

As a very young child Peter suffered various illnesses and afflictions, some of them life-threatening and causing a good deal of family anxiety. My mother also had to spend time in the Landour Hospital which caused me the deepest worry. Towards

the end of our time in India Dad had a nasty bout of typhoid which was also seriously distressing. One other unpleasant memory is of the time when Dad took me to the mission hospital to witness an operation being performed by "Uncle" Geoff (Pike). The patient had a massively swollen scrotum which had to be cut open and drained. I was nauseated and had to rush outside to throw up in the garden. Never did figure out what Dad was thinking – all part of a young fellow's education I suppose. I also have an unhappy memory of falling out of a tree in the garden, splitting my head open, awash in blood. Commotion, hysteria among the servants, general panic. Dad taking charge and rushing me pell-mell to the hospital in a rickshaw, soon to be patched up. I also had a hernia operation but that was in Landour. The only part of that experience I recall is the euphoric drift into unconsciousness on the operating table and the fact that one could eat ice-cream every day in hospital. Almost worth it!

The ways in which our childhood experiences shape our later lives is an abiding mystery, recalcitrant to facile explanations. But perhaps it is not drawing too long a bow to suggest that the seeds of my later interest in the mythologies and religions of the Orient must have been sown in these early years. Our time in India made me aware, at a very young age, of racial diversity and religious pluralism. Throughout my adult life I have been painfully aware of the scourge of racism, pervasive in Australia. I am not foolish enough to claim that I have not been negatively affected by racism. Who could possibly claim to be free of its malignant effects, often imprinted in us below the level of our conscious attitudes and assumptions! But I can say that, whenever I recognized it, I have always been deeply distressed by racism in its many ugly manifestations. This, in part, motivated my first serious and extended intellectual project, a History Honours thesis on the impact of 19thC evolutionary theory on attitudes to Australia's indigenous people. In my mind the ancient civilisations of the sub-continent and the archaic traditions of the Australian Aborigines were linked together.

After five years in the mission-field the family returned to Australia for a twelve-month furlough during which Dad assumed

various clerical duties with the Methodist Church in Victoria. We lived with my maternal grandparents in Box Hill, in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, and Pamela and I attended Koonung Heights Primary School. Unlike my traumatic induction at Queanbeyan Primary school four years later, my time there is a pleasant memory. It was here that Pamela began her formal schooling, hitherto being home-schooled by Mum in Azamgarh. On her first day at Koonung Heights, at recess time, she wandered, in a characteristically day-dream state, back to the grandparental home, announcing that school was good but she had had enough for one day. After our return to India Pamela started as a boarder at Woodstock.

In India Peter never spoke anything except Hindi. After our return to Australia Peter, now aged three, continued to refuse to speak English, a stance which only collapsed one morning when my grandmother asked Pamela and me what we wanted for breakfast, ignoring the mute Peter. At this point he ejaculated "And I want boiled eggs too!" His first words in English! On the voyage back to Australia some Indian crewmen explained to him that he was not an Indian, a revelation which was met with a flood of tears and recriminations, and the adamantine declaration, "I *am* an Indian!" This endeared him to those fellows. I think he will always have an Indian soul.

Peter soon became Granny's inseparable companion. When the year was up and he learned that she would not be accompanying us back to India he devised a cunning stratagem whereby, on the ship's departure from the pier, he would haul Granny through the porthole into our cabin, using a long stick which he had procured and to which he envisaged her clinging as he surreptitiously smuggled her aboard. The comic resonances of this episode were enhanced by the fact that Granny, in her later years, was a very stout woman.

It must have been during this year, 1955, that we all forged a special relationship with both grandparents, particularly Lillian who always treated us with the most tender kindness and extravagant generosity, and who took the closest interest in our education. Granny had a humble family background in England, somewhat like that narrated in Flora Thompson's wonderful

memoir, *Lark Rise to Candleford*, to which she sometimes alluded. She had come to Australia in her teen years, and was a self-educated woman who developed a deep love of literature which she passed on to me. Amongst the books to which she introduced me during our furlough were *The Magic Pudding*, *Swallows and Amazons* and *Wind in the Willows*. Later, in my teenage years, she shared several of her own most fervent literary loves: the Romantic poets, Thomas Hardy, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Dostoevsky, Patrick White, Judith Wright.

School holidays were often spent with the family of Dad's elder brother Dick (the second of four boys, Dad being the youngest). Dick was an enterprising businessman with a growing real estate empire in Ivanhoe. He had generously supplied us with a Holden for our year back in Australia. Tremendously exciting! It was characteristic of his lifelong generosity to our family, always hard-pressed financially. There were frequent excursions to the bayside beaches where everybody, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, would join in rambunctious games of beach cricket. Pamela was often off alone fossicking for shells and other flotsam and jetsam. Another favoured destination for excursions and picnics was Lake Emerald (in reality a small artificial dam) in the Dandenongs, the modest range of hills east of Melbourne. Holidays with the Ivanhoe Oldmeadows (Dick, Margaret, Keith, Ross and Heather) became a permanent summer fixture in later years, often at Inverloch where Dad's eldest brother, Don, owned a holiday shack.

It was during this time that we also came to know our paternal grandparents and other Oldmeadow relatives, a seemingly endless parade of uncles and aunts and cousins, scattered over Melbourne but concentrated in Ivanhoe and Dandenong. Once a year there was a festive picnic gathering of the whole clan at Wattle Park in Kew. Most of the Oldmeadows of my grandparents' generation, were devout Methodists and included several missionaries of whom the most eccentric was the doughty Aunt Lou who served in both Fiji and India. Lou was corpulent, loud, cheery. She had a small moustache which worried me. Most of these elderly relatives I remember as inhabiting a kind of late-Victorian time-warp – lace doilies, cameo broaches and long

dresses, no doubt hiding tightly-bound corsets, for the women, dark three-piece suits for the men, mahogany and teak furniture in gloomy houses, English cottage flowers in the garden, respect for the Queen, hymn singing around the family piano, a reverential aura around John and Charles Wesley, a slightly forbidding atmosphere of Methodist piety. The names of the women of that generation – Queenie, Jessie, Ethel, Gert – also had a slightly musty Victorian flavour. Papa Oldmeadow worked in banking, or was it insurance, a very grey world it seemed to me. When Dad first started courting Mum, which must have been in the early 40s, his parents disapproved: she wore lipstick and liked dancing! (One recalls the old joke that Methodists disapprove of sex because it might lead to dancing.) But all of this was leavened and lightened by their uniform kindliness and a benign good humour which softened the strict Methodist ethos. Then too it was countered by my father and his two surviving brothers. Fenton, the third son, had died in action in the War. Whenever Don, Dick and my father Russell were together there were endless jokes, banter, pranks and general *bonhomie*. All four sons had served in the war. Don was somehow involved with flying boats in the Pacific and the rest were in the Air Force, Fenton as one of the Pathfinders and Dick as a navigator. After training in Gippsland and Canada, Dad became a Bomber pilot, posted in England and flying Lancasters on raids over Germany. He flew something like 30 missions. When one remembers that the fatality rate for bombing missions was in the order of one in eight, and that overall half the bomber crews in the war perished, one gets some sense of how dangerous and terrifying these missions must have been. One of the most vivid accounts of life for an Australian pilot stationed in England can be found in Don Charlwood's memoir, *No Moon Tonight*. During the war Fenton, the brother closest to Dad in age, was killed in a mission somewhere over Europe, a loss which Dad felt keenly. A few years before his death I asked Dad what were the worst experiences he had had during the war: the fear he felt on bombing raids and the death of Fenton. For many years Dad was reticent about his war service, only really speaking about it in his later years. He told me that his commanding officer had recommended him for the DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross) but

had been posted elsewhere before the formalities had been completed and which were subsequently neglected by his successor. During his long retirement Dad read a lot of books about the war, particularly about Bomber Command. I had the sense that he was troubled by his participation in raids which inevitably caused the death of civilians, but he never explicitly said so. Whatever he felt on that score it was clear, at least in his later years, that he was quietly proud of his war service. He also told me that his war experiences strengthened his resolve to enter the ministry. On returning to Australia he was briefly back in his old job at the bank. When Dad told his boss, the Bank Manager, that he was going to enter the Methodist ministry, the old fellow's only response was "Any money in it?" Ha! He clearly had no idea about the way in which the Methodist Church was run and for whom the old adage might have been amended to "poverty is next to godliness".

My paternal grandparents, rather optimistically but with the best of intentions, posted a copy of *David Copperfield* to India for what must have been my seventh birthday. Another ten years were to pass before I first fell in love with the works of Dickens, *Pickwick Papers* being my first foray into this astonishing, endlessly interesting world with its gallery of extraordinary characters. Oddly enough, my other grandmother, a voracious reader and deeply immersed in English literary culture, evinced little enthusiasm for Dickens. How could anyone not love the works of Dickens? It's a perplexing question I am still unable to answer!

Apart from the annual trips between Azamgarh and Mussoorie, family travel in India was limited. Most of the sights we saw were experienced on the trips between home and Bombay, into and out of which we sailed on those stalwarts of the P&O line, the *Strathaird, Strathnaver, Strathmore and Stratheden.* Other than that I can only remember a couple of trips to Faizabad to visit an older Australian missionary, Mr Machin, whose chief claim to fame was that he doused his porridge with salt, and to meet up with the Forbes family with whom we had the friendliest relations. On our final departure from India in 1958 our train trip to Bombay was disrupted somewhere near Lucknow by an acute

case of appendicitis, initially diagnosed as constipation and then as something else, before I was finally put on the operating table. I was bed-ridden in hospital for a week or so and we missed the ship. It must have been a nightmare for Mum and Dad. I remember Dad spending hours and hours by my hospital bedside each day while Mum looked after the others.

Amongst the more memorable great sights we visited in India were Lucknow with its many architectural relics of the Mughal era and the Raj, the Red Fort in Delhi and the Qatab Minar (about which Dad seemed to know a great deal), the Taj Mahal which seemed like a celestial apparition, the shops and emporiums of Bombay – a veritable cornucopia! – and the astonishing river banks in Benares, teeming with both life and death, corpses being burned on the *ghats*, golden roofs sparkling in the sunlight, yogis performing their exercises on the steps, everywhere people praying, chanting, begging. The vast breadth of the Ganges was astounding. On our last transit through Bombay in 1958 Mum took me to a very plush cinema (well, it seemed plush to me!) to see Jerry Lewis in *Rock-a-bye-Baby*. She claimed to enjoy it.

Train trips were always a great adventure. The tremendous chuffing and puffing of the old steam trains, smoke and steam bellowing, grit swirling, the clanking wheels, people clambering onto the roof and hanging off the sides. Inside and outside one could see India displayed in all its vibrant diversity and fascinating chaos. And at every stop vendors of various kinds scurried up and down the platform, noisily spruiking their wares and dispensing fruit, peanuts, sweets and little clay cups of chai. The most exhilarating of these trips were the ones I did on my own, from Azamgarh to Dehra Dun, the whole trip taking something more than 24 hours and thus spanning a full night. The nocturnal river crossings on long bridges high above the water, generating their own sound, music of a sort, always struck me as being of a momentous significance but one which I could not in any way fathom.

We returned to Melbourne late in 1958, back for a few months to Belmore Road, Box Hill. Some of the delightful discoveries which awaited us were garden hoses, radios, pop-up toasters, test cricket (I was soon adulating Richie Benaud and Ray

Lindwall, that summer playing his last test), rock 'n roll (Elvis, Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry), Paddle Pops, Tarax, trams, and most intoxicating of all, television. My favourites included *The Rifleman, Sea Hunt, The Untouchables,* and *Leave it to Beaver*. I was secretly in love with Annette Funicello of *The Musketeers*. Granny loved *The Perry Como Show*, Dean Martin and Graham Kennedy, and often referred in glowing terms to Eric Pearce, a newsreader of impeccable diction and considerable gravitas.

We came to see more of the rest of Mum's side of the family than we had in 1955. Auntie Maxine and Uncle John lived just a block away and were quite profligate in dispensing sixpences and shillings, usually spent at the corner shop on liquorice all-sorts and Paddle Pops. We also became very friendly with our Auntie Gillian, her husband John (Murray) and cousins Sue and Scott with whom we have maintained close contact. In later years Auntie Gillian married the pianist David Helfgott.

And so came to an end the rich and wonderful phase of our lives in India which left its impress on us all and to which we have all returned many times. Later in life I have often pondered how lucky we were to have one of life's greatest possible gifts, a happy and more or less carefree childhood, and how irreparable the debt we owed to our always-loving parents. How much better the world would be if everyone could share in such a blessing.

Benares, Mussoorie, Woodstock

Landour Shops; Pete, H. & Pamela;
Oakville Cottage, Landour

My parents, Russell & Diana

2.

Mostly Gold, Some Grey

School Days

After some months in Melbourne the family moved to Queanbeyan, a country town huddled on Canberra's south-eastern outskirts. Dad had decided to join the Anglican Church. He was drawn to the Canberra-Goulburn diocese by the controversial Bishop Ernest Burgmann, a man of liberal theological outlook and reformist politics. In later years when I asked Dad why he had "converted" he replied that he had been attracted by the richer liturgy and sense of tradition. He didn't say so but I surmised that he might also have found the more iconoclastic and puritanical tendencies of the Methodists a bit stifling. I also wondered if he wanted to put some distance between himself and his family, to move out of their shadow so to speak. He had an abiding love for all of his family but I think he wanted to find his own way, to travel a different path. Anyway, here we were in Queanbeyan where Dad was ordained and installed as a curate.

Queanbeyan was a rough-house working-class town in those days. I alluded earlier to my rude introduction to Australian school life. My memories of Queanbeyan are fragmentary: playing on the school softball team, which entailed visits to schools in Canberra; listening in my verandah sleep-out to the Top 40 and the cricket on the radio; lots of Westerns at the movie matinɐes; my first romantic kiss, with Robyn Williams, down by the river; the sweltering heat in our tiny fibro box-like home; the occasional family excursion into Canberra to eat out or go to the movies (*Paris Holiday* with Bob Hope was one); a CEBS (Church of England Boys Society) camp in Sydney where we were under the supervision of a young fellow with a certain aura because he sported scars on his leg where he had slashed himself with a razor after being bitten by a venomous snake, the recommended procedure in those days. What a hero!

Our sojourn in Queanbeyan was brief, less than a year, because Dad was soon appointed to a large parish in Wagga Wagga, a couple of hundred kilometres to the southwest, the regional centre for a vast agricultural area; sheep, cattle, wheat. In the countryside one could still see traces of the old ways depicted by Henry Lawson, Barbara Baynton and Joseph Furphy. Whilst

picnicking on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River, for instance, one now and then one espied a drovers' camp, hundreds of sheep munching grass, horses tethered under the gums, and around a fire drinking billy-tea a group of men out of Banjo Paterson. Or one might see a lone swaggie trudging the back ways; the odd one turned up at the rectory door both here and in Gundagai to which we moved a few years later.

It was at Wagga that the family first acquired a transistor and a modern record-player, a Pye I think. The first single in my collection was Slim Dusty's immortal "The Pub with No Beer" and the first LP, a grand Christmas present, *The Buddy Holly Story*. Hearing of the death of Buddy, the Big Bopper and Ritchie Valens in an air crash came as quite a shock. Another unhappy memory is being busted, with my friend from over the back fence, for some minor shoplifting in Coles. Dad was deeply unimpressed but the only punishment was being sent to my room for a couple of hours and an apology to Mum. Dad's main theme in his discourse about my ill-doing was that I had "let Mum down badly". He knew that little else could have cut me to the quick in quite that way. Another vivid memory, more pleasing: on the radio, Adelaide Test against the West Indies; Lindsay Kline and Ken Mackay bat for two hours to save the game against the fire and fury of Wes Hall and the guile of Lance Gibbs.

Saturday afternoons were usually spent at the movie matinée, and there were family outings to the drive-in which were tremendous fun. (The disappearance of drive-ins is a melancholy token of insidious cultural decline.) Jaffas, Fantales, Cokes and Paddle Pops were the order of the day. Westerns were always my first choice but the offerings were varied. Among the films I recall from Wagga days are *The Big Country, The Magnificent Seven, The Colditz Story, Smiley Gets a Gun, Flaming Star, The Alamo, Exodus* and *Blue Hawaii*. How good could it get? One film which impressed me mightily was *The Buccaneer*, set in New Orleans, and in which Yul Brynner plays Jean Lafitte, a pirate who comes to the aid of the Americans in the war against the British. The cast included Charlton Heston, Charles Boyer, Claire Bloom and Inger Stevens. Directed by Anthony Quinn with some uncredited help from Cecil B DeMille. Can you imagine! So impressed was I that I insisted that

Mum and Dad accompany me on my second viewing. This was not easily achieved but they generously succumbed to my entreaties. I squirm now to think of it. I have not been brave enough to return for a third viewing which would almost certainly confirm my suspicions that the film was unfit for viewing by anyone other than twelve-year old boys.

It was also at Wagga that I developed a taste for English thrillers of the type exemplified in its lower reaches by Sapper's Bulldog Drummond series and the Tiger Standish books of Sydney Horler; derring-do by spiffing British chaps to foil the evil plots of spies, terrorists, international financiers and master-criminals, Huns, Reds and Jews. (Only later did one became aware of the dark seam of anti-Semitism which ran through much British writing in the inter-war years.) The world and ethos of Biggles transferred to a darker arena. Erskine Childers, Somerset Maugham, John Buchan, Eric Ambler and Geoffrey Household were among the more reputable genre-practitioners whom I was soon reading. I've been an inveterate reader of spy novels ever since, my later enthusiasms ascending to Graham Greene, Le Carré (who learned a great deal from Greene), Charles McCarry, Robert Littell and many others. I've also read a good many books about real-life spies.

Before we left Queanbeyan Dad told me that I was to go as a boarding student to Canberra Grammar School. This provoked angry expostulations on my behalf. While at Queanbeyan Primary I had imbibed the pervasive hostility to private schools – peopled, so we thought, by stuck-ups and silver-spooners. I declared that there was no way I was going to join the toffs at CGS. But, of course, after a short spell at Turvey Park Primary School in Wagga (much more congenial than QPS), I was once again off to boarding school. Over the next five years I developed a love-hate relationship to the school, with the scales usually tipping to the more positive side. I soon made plenty of friends. Jim ("Mick") Laity, Bill Searl, and Stewart ("Stook") Mudge I met on the very first day, soon to be joined by Phil Helmore, Jo ("Hank") Hinchliffe, Keith Armstrong and Graydon ("Stein") Boddington, all to become my boon companions. I was, at this time, quite an extrovert and I thrived on the camaraderie of boarding school life.

CGS was in many ways an odd school. The school motto, frequently referred to by the headmaster as a kind of scriptural rubric, was *Deo, Ecclesia, Patria* (for God, Church, Country). This, at least, was its official business. I don't suppose school boys ever pay much attention to Latin mottoes but from my present vantage point I much prefer Melbourne Grammar's motto: *Ora et Labora* (Work and Pray). The student population was made up of two distinct groups: the boarders, many of whom came from farms and a good few who were sons of the clergy (special rates on the school fees made this possible), while the day boys came from more well-heeled Canberra families, professional people, business, diplomats and the like. The two groups rubbed along well enough but each group had its own *esprit de corps*. My closest friend among the day-boys was Bob Schaedel, school captain in our last year. CGS, like many Australian private schools, half-successfully aped the English public schools: teachers wearing gowns and imposing rigorous "discipline"; Spartan living conditions in the boarding houses (early morning rises, cold showers, stodgy food, no privacy); the droning of the Latin grace before every meal, *Benedictus benedicat, per Iesum Christum, Dominum nostrum*; a ludicrous over-valuation of sporting achievements; a regime of corporal punishment (not too brutal in this case); mild "initiation ceremonies" for newcomers (not nearly as sadistic as was commonplace in England); a patriotic-imperial ethos with plenty of rah-rah about the Anzacs, the Queen, the Commonwealth, moral fibre, playing for the team, glory on the sporting field. Throw a bit of PG Wodehouse and Evelyn Waugh into the mix as well. Thankfully there was none of the abhorrent system of "fagging" endemic in the English schools. Nor was the school stained by the hideous practice of prefects caning other boys. Also, to its credit, CGS did not have cadets, the coercive quasi-military system by which so many young fellows were brutalized in many of Australia's "better" schools. Instead, we had something called Group X, allied with the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme, where boys were taught useful things about bushcraft, survival, map-reading, orienteering and such. Incidentally, here I might record the fact that my brother Pete and his friend Geoff Smedley were the first boys in the history of The Kings School

(Parramatta) to be exempted from cadets on the grounds of conscientious objection. Bravo!

The saving grace was that most of the school boarders did not take any of the rhetorical guff very seriously. The motive-force of boarding school life was evading restrictions, thwarting the rules, devising pranks and finding ways to soften the harsh austerities of daily life — smuggling bread out of the dining room to toast after lights-out, for instance. The most popular recreational activity was smoking. The school campus was quite extensive and there were several favoured spots where two or three students could gather for a clandestine smoke: the "elephant tower" above the ceiling of the dining room, under the stage, in the trees behind the tennis courts, and in the Dark Room, buried deep in the bowels of the main building, designated for the use of photography students only but regularly habituated by smokers. It had the added advantage of an escape hatch into underground tunnels where boys could flee when alerted to the very infrequent approach of a teacher or prefect. Given that over the course of five years no one was ever apprehended smoking in the Dark Room one can only suppose that there must have been a benign blind-eye policy from the boarding school masters. Prefects were usually smart enough not to go looking for trouble. A more extended smoking romp could be had by slipping out of school bounds, crossing Mugga Way, lined with diplomatic residences, up on to Red Hill where one could roam unfettered through the bush, spotting kangaroos and wandering sheep, telling tall stories to one's companions, recounting the day's activities, maybe devising new nick-names for the teachers. "Ichabod", "Chunder", "Test-Tube", "Test-Tube 2", "The Dag", "The Prof", "Thunder-Breasts" (the school nurse) were amongst the more durable while many teachers were usually referred to by their first names; Vern, Roy, Gil, Fred, Dave and so on. One teacher's initials were PNS; he was given the unhappy nickname of "Penis". I always found the business of nicknames a fertile field for amusing schoolboy inventiveness, sometimes cruelty as well.

Routine punishments for such common misdemeanours as smoking, "cheeking" a teacher, failing to do homework, being seen in public without a school tie, pilfering from the tuckshop or being

"out of bounds", were caning, detention, being gated or work drills such as weeding the gardens. Students fell into three groups as far the school rules were concerned: the goody two-shoes who were altogether compliant; regular petty violators with a rebellious streak, often believing on principle that Authority must sometimes be resisted and subverted; and the serious recidivists, some of whom went in for more daring felonies such as smuggling alcohol into the dormitories or nocturnal absconding to meet girls down at the Manuka shops. I belonged in the second group so I received my share of canings and detentions, none of which I even vaguely resented; it was all part of the game. As I realized at the time, my somewhat untidy disciplinary record meant that I would never be chosen as a prefect, a position which brought some privileges as well as responsibilities. I was more than happy to evade the latter. The only position which I held was that of Class Captain, elected by my fellows and charged with maintaining law and order in the classroom whenever the teacher was absent. It was a complete sinecure which I held over several years.

The ultimate punishment, almost never used, was expulsion. During my five years there I think no more than two or three students suffered this fate, usually obscured in the Headmaster's cloudy formulations: "Student X left the school yesterday and has returned to his family. We do not expect he will be returning." Wayne Summerfield, one of my more unruly and mutinous school mates, was threatened with expulsion because, on a work-drill in the Headmaster's garden, he ringed-barked several fruit trees. But even he escaped this final sanction. It was also he who one day in class unleashed a volcanic fart. When no one volunteered the confession demanded by the irate teacher (I think it was the maths teacher, the midget-sized "Peanuts" Jessop), we were all threatened with a two-hour after-school detention. After a prolonged and pregnant silence, Wayne piped up, "Please sir, it wasn't me but I'm prepared to take the blame." He thus assured himself an enduring place in the group mythology.

The daily routine went something like this:

6.30am rise, dress, make bed – "hospital corners" ("navy style" if Jim Kilby was the master on duty), polish shoes; shower

	(tepid if you were lucky); inspection parade of beds, uniforms and lockers
7.15	Breakfast (plentiful if nothing else; most of us loaded up on Weeties, hot toast and tea)
8.45	School Parade, everyone lined up for inspection; boys with loose ties or drooping socks or dirty shoes bawled out by Fred Fage, a sort of regimental sergeant-major with the looks, language and demeanour of an escaped convict (Fred was also the woodwork teacher and owned a small dog, frequently seen at his heels)
	Assembly: announcements, prayers, Headmaster's pep-talk
9-3.30	Lessons with interludes for recess and lunch (more sludge in the dining hall for the boarders; home-made lunches or fare from the tuckshop for the day boys)
4-5.30	Compulsory sports training two afternoons a week, (in my case rugby in winter, basketball in summer, a little cricket), otherwise free time (or detentions!)
6	Dinner (of sorts)
7-9	"Prep", i.e., homework (and reading), prayers
9-10	free time
10	Lights Out (when the fun really started)

The intellectual diet was much more varied than the muck served up in the dining hall (lukewarm corn beef smothered in a gelatinous white sauce, served up with soggy mash and flaccid cabbage typified the sort of stuff on offer). Classroom lessons were, to be sure, often boring and wearisome, Latin declensions and mathematical equations the most dreary of all. There were too many teachers intent on cramming, unmindful of Plutarch's wise dictum that "the mind is not a vessel to be filled but a fire to be ignited". But there was also much of interest and many discoveries to be made. Some of the teachers were well-educated and erudite fellows with several comedians and gifted raconteurs among them, the most popular being the Master of Studies, the Rev John ("Jack") Tyrell. During the first few CGS years came the flowering of seeds sown earlier by Mum and Granny: an insatiable

appetite for reading. Each evening we spent two hours in the classroom doing homework, only loosely supervised. Many found this period of the day tedious in the extreme but I loved it. I could usually knock off my homework assignments quickly and then turn to reading. I would often be interrupted by blokes wanting some help with their homework. I never minded. In fact, I so much enjoyed helping out that it helped to crystallize my intention to become a teacher.

My reading during the first three years at CGS covered what could be called popular "middlebrow" novels. The school library had a pretty fair holding and I worked my way through my favoured authors: Nevil Shute, Nicholas Monsarrat, Ian Fleming, Jack London, Josephine Tey, Edgar Wallace, Willard Motley, Arthur Upfield, Morris West, Irwin Shaw. I also developed an early taste for short stories, perhaps triggered by a class anthology entitled *Under Northern Lights*, tales of adventure and survival in the snowy wilderness of Alaska and the Yukon. "Naughty" books also circulated furtively amongst the boarders. Carter Brown and Erskine Caldwell, the former entirely bereft of any literary merit, were two such authors I read in small doses. *Peyton Place* also did the rounds while the steamier parts of the James Bond novels also occasioned much discussion.

A break-through came in Fourth Year, then the penultimate year of secondary schooling, just before the Wyndham Scheme introduced a sixth year. The English course, largely devoted to literary studies, was taken by Paul McKeown (B.A., Dip. Ed., Oxon), the Headmaster, freshly arrived from Timbertop, a tall, handsome man, former school athletics champion, war hero, an imposing figure who could turn the charm on at the flick of an invisible switch, a poster-boy for the school. He had a pronounced limp which was believed (wrongly) to be the result of a war wound. In English upper-class idiom, a "thruster", a chap who made things happen. Many years later he became friendly with Mum and Dad when they were living in retirement on the south NSW coast. (I remember Dad telling me that Paul spent a truly astonishing amount of money on books, a fine thing because they shared many interests – theology, biography, history – and Paul was more than happy to lend his books to Dad.) Whatever his limitations as a

Headmaster, the Dag was an imaginative teacher with high expectations. He had inherited the moniker from his predecessor, The Rev. David Garnsey – initials D.A.G. – who later became a distinguished bishop. There was no formal syllabus for Year 11 English, teachers being free to choose the texts for study. Our texts that year (1963), chosen by the Dag, included *The Dubliners* and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *War and Peace*, Sophocles' Oedipus trilogy, the poems of Roy Campbell and Wilfred Owen, and a catholic selection of short stories (Poe, Maugham, Lawson, Mansfield, Chekhov, Hemingway). We were also encouraged to read widely on our own initiative and to write about our reading experiences.

In Year 11 every student had to devise an ambitious Winter Project, requiring teacher approval. These projects were often practical and manual; Phil Helmore, for instance, fashioned a beautiful to-scale model of *Gretel*, the elegant yacht which the previous year had been Australia's America's Cup challenger (Phil later became a naval architect), while Peter Dulhunty, a ruffian from up behind Cooma somewhere, made a gun silencer (he later dabbled in a life of crime!); other chaps made furniture, cultivated garden beds, painted, composed music. It was an inspired idea which allowed students to spend many hours of creative endeavour in some pursuit to which they could really devote themselves. My project that year was to write about twenty-five Book Reviews. I kept the folder of reviews for a number of years but somewhere along the way I lost it. I can now recall none of the particular books I reviewed except Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* which I had to read for Ancient History anyway. I shared HL Mencken's thoughts about a book he was reviewing: "the covers of this book are too far apart".

It was also at this time that I formed what was to become a lifelong addiction not only to reading but to book-collecting. My initial enterprises in this direction were necessarily modest, given the paltry funds at my disposal. School and church fetes suddenly became highly attractive as places where one could accumulate such treasures very cheaply. I started collecting detective stories and novels published by Pan, Penguin, Fontana and other popular paperback imprints. Nearly sixty years later I am still at it. But

unlike my cousin Scott, I am not a bibliophile-proper although I do love books as objects as well as for their substance. (I cannot bring myself to "reading" Kindle and such.) However, I have no interest in first editions, deluxe bindings, autographed copies and such.

As well as doing a great deal of reading I also enjoyed several other approved pursuits: serving in the chapel, school debating (in my last year I was "whip" for the school team which won the inter-school competition, held in the Manuka cinema), photography (thus giving myself a dual purpose to visit the Dark Room). I also enjoyed the lessons in Ancient History, given by a university professor (K.C. Masterman) who seemed almost as ancient as the texts we were studying, Gil Robertson's Modern History classes and David Sheriff's Geography course. I remember Gil with special fondness because of a deal we struck: I could read whatever I wished in "study time" once I had finished the current assignment, which I usually did well ahead of time. There were also electives that one could take for one-hour a week. I joined Jack Tyrell's Current Affairs group where we discussed phenomena such as apartheid, the war in Cambodia, the situation in Berlin, elections. One interesting development was the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1963 which had sent nervous tremors around the world, reaching as far as the CGS Year 11 dormitory. The old boy, Jack, was very knowledgeable and adept at explaining the grubby machinations of *realpolitik*. He also told a lot of jokes. Jack had been at the school since the Year Dot and many people thought he should have succeeded Garnsey as Headmaster. He and Paul McKeown didn't see eye to eye on most subjects. Most of us were on Jack's side. When my last year at the school was over he told me that twelve months earlier he had recommended me for School Captain but the Dag wouldn't even countenance me as a prefect. The Head won the day as he almost always did. As it happened, I didn't want to be either captain or prefect so I didn't lose any skin. (Later on the Dag must have changed his mind about me because in 1981 he invited me to apply for the position of Head of English at CGS. I was chuffed, but declined.) Jack had great faith in my abilities and high hopes for my future but was unsure, he confided, whether I would end up as a bishop or a master criminal. My future turned out to be less illustrious and less

colourful but, to me at least, more interesting. By the time my schooling had finished I had long since decided that I wanted to be a teacher despite the urgings of the vocational guidance counsellor that I should study law (for which my primary qualification, he said, was "the gift of the gab" — and it had the advantage, he said, of "serious money"). Strange kind of school vocational guidance where boys were discouraged from aspirations to teach!

The school mounted at least one major dramatic production each year. I had secondary roles in *Charley's Aunt*, *Arsenic and Old Lace* and Brecht's *Galileo*, the last directed by a Junior School master with whom I became quite friendly, John Downie. He was a very cultured fellow with a high voice, an effeminate manner and a pet dachshund. He was the butt of many jokes but he always treated me kindly, sometimes lending me books out of his own library. The sort of chap who has a lot of Folio Society editions. At the end of fourth year the Headmaster announced that early the next year he would be producing *Othello* and that I was to take the lead role – an extraordinary decision! What was he thinking? But one had no choice in these matters: Authority had spoken! Over the summer holiday I painstakingly learned most of the lines, no small feat as Othello's is the largest of all Shakespearean parts. On returning to school the Headmaster blithely told us that he had changed his mind and the production would not go ahead. I wasn't happy but somewhat relieved.

As a Church school, CGS also had a weekly program of morning and evening prayers (rather perfunctory), two services on Sundays, optional services (sparsely attended) on saints' days and other festivals, and weekly Divinity classes (from which a tiny handful of Muslims, Hindus and other heathens were exempted). On the whole this was fairly pallid stuff but I didn't find it oppressive in the way that many of my confrères did. I always looked forward to Jack Tyrell's sermons, laced with jokes and anecdotes but with plenty of substance. Those of the Headmaster were altogether too character-building, full of threadbare military and sporting analogies and extended metaphors. Keith Sowell had no gift for oratory and was just plain boring (but a lovely man). The school chaplain and Junior Boarding House Master, Ron

"Ichabod" Morris was not bad. I developed a love for the formal, poetic and slightly archaic language of the *Book of Common Prayer*, later scandalously abandoned in most Anglican churches, for *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, for the Psalms and the parables of the New Testament.

After lights-out we listened to the radio, usually on home-made crystal sets. My favourite programs: the Monday night boxing show with Jeff Mahoney, usually coming from the Sydney Stadium (Jimmie Caruthers, Tony Mundine, Tony Madigan, Rocky Gattellari); *Sunday Night Theatre* (radio plays, which I loved) on the ABC; *Night Beat*, a series about an intrepid crime reporter; and the Friday and Saturday night request and country music shows. I later became an avid listener to 2UE's Bob Rogers and when I was in Victoria on holidays, "Stan the Man" Rofe on 3UZ. Best of all nocturnal radio-listening was when Australia was in England for an Ashes series; the heroics of Bill Lawry, Richie Benaud, Garth McKenzie, Peter Burge, Brian Booth. Once we had acquired a TV at home – about 1964 I think – there were the delights of "Hendo" Henderson's *Bandstand (*Col Joye, Little Pattie, the Atlantics and Digger Revell, to recall a few) as well as *Gunsmoke, Dragnet* and *Perry Mason*.

On Saturday nights there was usually a film screening in the gym. The quality varied, depending on which master had been given this portfolio that year. We saw some of the classics of the rather meagre body of Australian or Australia-related films: *The Sentimental Bloke, The Rats of Tobruk, Forty Thousand Horsemen, Robbery Under Arms, The Sundowners, A Town Like Alice*. Then too there were quite a number of the British comedies and stiff-upper-lip war dramas of the day – the Ealing comedies, *The Cruel Sea, The Winslow Boy, In Which We Serve, Great Expectations*. There were also Hollywood films but most of these were of a rather forgettable kind such as *The Mountain* and *Houdini* which for some reason I do recall. One which left a deeper impression was *The Desperate Hours*, William Wyler's stylish thriller about a family under threat, featuring a rather scuffed up Humphrey Bogart. During a holiday visit to Melbourne I saw *1984* (the 1956 version) on TV. I found it deeply disturbing.

Once a year there was the school dance with our sister-school, a mile or two away at the other end of Mugga Way, CCEGGS (Canberra Church of England Girls' Grammar School) to which Pamela was sent in '64. Thenceforth I would sometimes visit her during the allotted time on Sunday afternoons. The dances provided an opportunity for a student-formed band to strut their stuff. Stein Boddington on bass, Ray Dowling on rhythm guitar, Spud Spurgeon on drums and Race Taylor out front as lead guitarist and singer. In retrospect I'm not sure how much musical talent they had though Stein did pursue a semi-professional musical career for a while, playing bass guitar for some well-known bands in Sydney. In any event, we thought they were immensely cool. The most popular part of their limited repertoire comprised the instrumental numbers of the Shadows whom many of us idolized; Hank B. Marvin and Jet Harris were figures to be reckoned with! The English pop-rock scene was in full tilt at the time: The Searchers, Brian Poole and the Tremeloes, the Dave Clark Five, Gerry and the Pacemakers. Beatlemania was just emerging in my last year at CGS (1964). A school dance furnished me with the nickname "Harry" which I have had ever since. It came about like this. At the end of proceedings one escorted one's partner back to the bus in which the girls were to return to their school. The bus being parked some distance from the dance-hall, here was an opportunity to get in some smooching. My partner and I were spotted but in the darkness I was mistaken for another bespectacled student of similar build, one Harry Abraham. He was a reclusive and bookish fellow, not the sort one could easily imagine in a romantic clinch. The story spread that Harry was carrying on with a girl in the shadows. This misperception was soon remedied but the student who had identified me as the figure in question continued calling me "Harry". The full story came out the next afternoon at rugby practice, much to the amusement of the master taking the drills. He too started calling me "Harry". Soon the name stuck, partly because I preferred its more egalitarian ring. Almost no one whom I met after leaving school realized that it was a nickname.

One disconcerting incident in my second or third year occurred during basketball training in the gym. Joey Harrison was

a big, tough Aboriginal kid with whom I had had only casual but, as I thought, friendly dealings. For no apparent reason he came up to me while I was skylarking around and punched me as hard as he could – pretty hard, believe me! – right in the face, a dizzying blow. Luckily my glasses, flying off at a tangent, were not broken, nor was my nose, but my pride took a beating. What grievance triggered this particular outburst I never discovered. He then marched out, leaving the onlookers in a state of perturbation. For unrelated reasons he left school soon after this incident and I never had any further dealings with him. I suspect that he was not motivated by any personal animus. There was a handful of students who didn't fit the general mould: a couple of Aboriginal boys, a lad from Vietnam, some other Asian day students. I do not remember them being singled out for racial abuse or bullying (of which there was, mercifully, very little) but they were definitely on the outer ... unless they happened to excel at sport as did Billy Cheung who was a winger in the First XV. He had a withering burst of speed and a dazzling side-step. After leaving school I regretted not making more of an effort to befriend the Vietnamese boy, Pham Kac Rung, who was obviously lonely. I can't now remember how he came to be at the school or what were his family circumstances. I don't know what became of him. I hope things went well for him.

We had three holiday periods at the end of each term. I would usually return home by bus to Yass and then by train to Wagga or, later, Gundagai. Quite often I would take a friend with me, or sometimes accompany friends to their homes. This introduced me to several different social milieux including the rural communities out in the sticks and upper-crust Sydney society. I stayed on several farms in the districts around Junee, Boorowa, Crookwell and Taralga, most often with Mick Laity, spent several days with Stook Mudge's family on a visit to Jingellic on the Murray River in the south-western tablelands, and went sailing on Sydney harbour with Hank Hinchliffe and his dad, a naval commander and yachting enthusiast. My friend Stein (the sobriquet was an abbreviation of "Einstein"; he was very sharp at maths and physics) came from Cootamundra so sometimes I stopped off there on my way home to Gundagai and later Albury.

My time as a boarder at CGS was, in the main, a happy one, full of fun and friendship and, in my later years, the joys of learning. But I was one of the lucky ones. I was popular with the other boys, was liked well enough by most of the teachers, and was secure in the affections of my family. I had no difficulty with school work and mucked along at sports. But even at the time I was aware that boarding school could be a nightmare for a significant number – those who were particularly shy, who were a bit different, who had some sort of disability either intellectual or physical, those who suffered from chronic conditions (asthma, excema, epilepsy and the like), who came from far away or from unhappy families. Perhaps cruellest of all were the spiteful jibes directed at anyone, students and teachers alike, suspected of being "poofs". Life could be hard for teachers: any sign of weakness or ineptitude was exploited and ridiculed, sometimes in the most cruel ways. Despite my own generally happy experiences I cannot imagine circumstances under which I would ever send my own children to a boarding school. All too often the law of the jungle prevails. I have some sympathy for Saki's dictum: "You can't expect a boy to be really vicious until he's been to a good school."

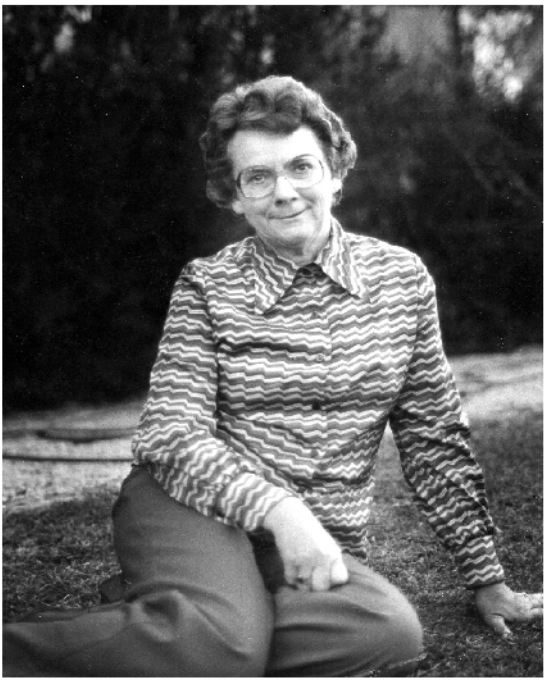
James & Ethel Oldmeadow

Lillian and Joe Green

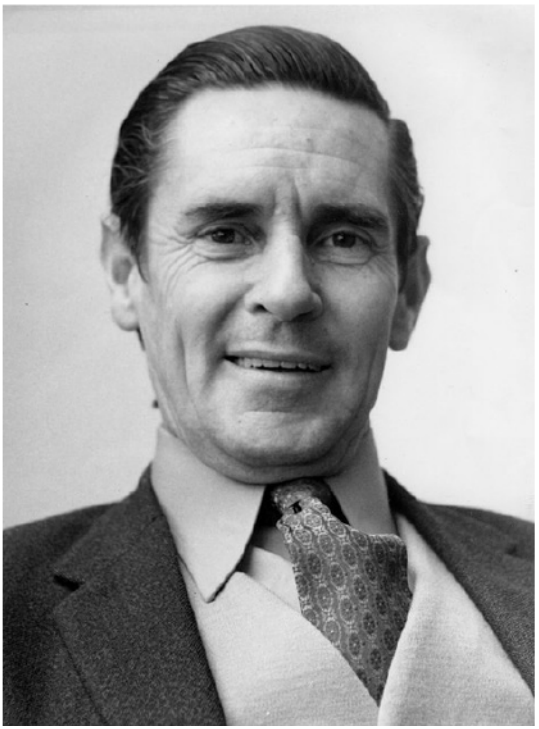
Bishop Burgmann

C.G.S

Bruce Wilson
Gaël McCalman
Iain McCalman
Di McManus



Didie & Russell,
mid-70s



3.

Mayhem on Campus
University

My first destination at ANU (Australian National University) was Burton Hall, a new co-residential college. Because the construction was behind schedule we had to share rooms for the first few months and trudge down to the Student Union for meals. My school friend Stein and I were crammed in together. We were soon into the swing of things. After five years of more or less monastic exclusion it was rather heady to find oneself in close company with crowds of young women, "girls" as we still called them. My chosen subjects were History, English Lit and Politics, taking the Honours course in the first. My studies that year were intermittent – so many distractions all around! – but one didn't have to do much to scrape through. Strangely enough, what little study I did do in the first year I really enjoyed, especially in Lit and Ancient History – strange I mean, that I did so little. There were several teachers of some eminence and usually some eccentricity as well: A.D. Hope, the very model of the absent-minded professor, Manning Clark, a colourful and controversial figure in Australian History, and Finn Crisp, head of the Politics department and the author of an astonishingly boring textbook on the Australian political system. In his lectures, delivered to a mass of students in the smoke-choked Childers Hall, Crisp never once referred to either the Liberal or Country Parties by name, referring to them always as "the anti-Labor parties". In later years I was lucky enough to sit at the feet of some fine teachers, the most significant being David Johanson, a brilliant but shy and self-effacing history lecturer with whom I became very friendly. He later engineered my first academic appointment at La Trobe University (Melbourne) to which he had moved in 1969. After I left Melbourne to study at Oxford, a move encouraged by David, we spent some time together in London where he was on sabbatical leave. But I'm getting ahead of myself. As I became more seriously engaged in my studies I enjoyed lectures by Geoff Bartlett, Bruce Kent and Daphne Gollan in History, Bob Brissenden and Dorothy Green in Literature, and a long-haired, bearded humourist in International Relations, Bob Cooksey. I also audited a few lectures

in Philosophy but found them sterile and boring, the fate of so much modern philosophy!

At that time the universities still retained something of the Newman-Arnold ideal of a liberal education. I enjoyed the vibrant intellectual life and did a good deal of reading and exploration outside the boundaries of the formal curriculum. Manning Clark encouraged us to read as widely as possible. He would button-hole one in the corridor: "Have you read *The Possessed* yet? Why not?" He also invited all manner of speakers to the department to give guest lectures and seminars to which the Honours students were always invited; philosophers, poets, artists, folklorists, theologians, playwrights and actors, a rich gallery of characters, some of them quite cranky. An endless smorgasbord rather than the dull, conformist, and utilitarian university system of today. What a sad decline. Criminal really.

First Year was not going to end well. I had done so little work for the Modern History Honours unit on Historiography, taken by Clark, that I thought it pointless to even attempt the exam. After glancing at the exam questions I wrote a brief note in the examination booklet: "Dear Professor, I am sorry I didn't do any study for this exam. Not because I wasn't interested but other things interfered." I signed my name and after the obligatory stay of twenty minutes I left the exam room, my Honours aspirations turned to ashes. The regulations stated that to continue in the Honours course one must have satisfactorily completed both Honours units. I had already done the exam in the other Honours unit in Ancient History, on the Athenian Constitution. Some weeks later the exam results appeared on the Library wall. To my astonishment I had been awarded a Credit in Modern History. Thinking there had been some clerical error to which I should alert the Professor, I made my way to his office on the second storey of the Arts building. Embarrassed by my malingering I mumbled out another apology and told him that there had been a mistake in the posting of the results. A somewhat stony glare from CMHC. "No mistake. Your effort in Modern History Honours was a disgrace. But your Ancient History paper was very good. I'm giving you another chance." He moved over to the window, beckoning me to follow. Pointing into airy space, "If you pull such

a stunt next year I'm throwing you and your exam papers out this window." Evidently Manning believed in that very wise formulation from Plato: "Rules [and academic regulations] are made for the obedience of the foolish and the guidance of the wise." I resolved to buckle down in my second year and to vindicate his decision.

The main go in that first year was not study but social life. So many new friends, so many parties, so much music. It was exhilarating. I also developed a deeper interest in politics, my sympathies being more or less "leftist". Student protest movements were just starting to emerge, galvanized by the Vietnam War, conscription and the anti-apartheid movement but not really burgeoning until my last two years at ANU (1967-68) by which time rallies, demos, sit-ins, teach-ins and such were the order of the day, culminating in the massive Moratorium March in Melbourne in 1970, which I attended, listening to Jim Cairns and unexpectedly bumping into one of my cousins, Jillian Oldmeadow. Demos were great fun, as much about social interaction as political protest, though our dissent was real enough if often naïve.

I had initially been persuaded by one of the History lecturers, Geoffrey Fairbairn, a gruff and untidy pipe-smoking character of conservative political persuasion, that the American intervention in Vietnam was justified, as was the support of the Menzies government. My friend Richard Graves, a lanky, ginger-haired son of the land from Gippsland and something of a student of international affairs, shared this view. We had many late-night discussions about it, chain-smoking all the while and drinking interminable cups of coffee into the small hours. That summer Richard came home to Gundagai with me. Dad had lined up work for us as asparagus pickers. We lasted one and a half days at this back-breaking, knee-burning work. My understanding of the situation in Indo-China eventually turned around, partly as the result of a long discussion with Dad. The drift of his disquisition on Vietnam was that Asian conflicts were best left to the Asians, that European colonialism had created much of the problem in the first place, and that American and Australian military interference was likely to have terrible and unforeseen consequences. How

right he was! His opposition to Australian-American involvement, unlike that of most student protestors, was not motivated in any way by pro-communist sympathies. For my own part I was not completely immune to the romantic allure of such figures as Ho Chi Minh and Che Guevara, poster-boys of the student left. Another hero, with whom I never became disenchanted, was Martin Luther King. The Bogeymen, on the other hand were LBJ, General Westmoreland, Robert McNamara, Menzies and Holt, later Nixon and Kissinger, and in the university milieu, the controversial Jewish-Czech émigré and fierce anti-communist, Frank Knopfelmacher. I still don't have any time for that lot though there may well be much that might be said to vindicate Knopfelmacher, and something to be said in LBJ's defence; in other circumstances he might have made a great President. But I'm still upset about the disgraceful tactics Menzies used in exploiting conscripts to fight in Vietnam. The Vietnam war was a highly volatile issue on campus right through my university days. The longer it went the more cynical, delusional and destructive seemed the policies of America and her allies, Australia being one of the most obsequious. The demeaning grovelling of successive Australian governments was only temporarily arrested by the election of 1972. And who was it that said "Satire died the day they gave Kissinger the Nobel Peace Prize?" Tom Lehrer perhaps. What would he make of the political grotesqueries of Trump, also seriously proposed in some quarters for the same award?

One issue about which I came to feel strongly while at university was Aboriginal Land Rights. An interest in the Wave Hill strikes in 1966-67, led by Vincent Lingiari and subsequently recounted in Frank Hardy's *The Unlucky Australians*, provoked me into wider reading about the baleful history of race relations in Australia. This prompted my involvement in ABSCHOL, a student organization devoted to improving educational prospects for indigenous students. I did some writing and editing work for the ABSCHOL newsletter. I also participated in some of the earliest land rights demos outside Parliament House, sparsely attended in those days. Eventually my interest in racial issues led me to the subject of my fourth year History Honours thesis, *The Impact of 19thC Evolutionary Theory on Attitudes to the Australian Aborigines*,

a project on which I received heartfelt support and helpful supervision from David Johanson. David had a long-standing interest in the history of the White Australia policy, on which he had done some scholarly writing, and in indigenous issues though his primary research field was British social history. He was a man of very wide interests, philosophical, political and literary as well as historical.

The ANU Film Club was another attraction of university life. The screenings were held over in the Research School, near the Menzies Library where I was to spend many hours during my Honours year, and even more hours a decade later when I was researching a Masters in Religious Studies. The Film Club and the Friday late-night screenings at the recently opened Centre Cinema in Civic introduced me to the intoxicating world of "arthouse" cinema, something previously outside my purview. Two of the earliest films in which I experienced the rapture of the budding cinephile were *The Seventh Seal* and *Diary of a Country Priest* (still films I admire enormously though I now favour other works by these directors). Here was a whole new world to be discovered – Antonioni, Polanski, Welles, Kurosawa, Buñuel, Visconti, Satyajit Ray, and many others. By the early 70s when I returned to Canberra after sojourns in Sydney, Melbourne and overseas, a much richer film culture was flourishing, signalled by the Canberra Film Festival and the opening of the Electric Shadows cinema, the dream-child of my fellow-student, friend and film historian, Andrew Pike. At one of the early festivals I saw four Eisenstein films in one day, including both parts of *Ivan the Terrible,* enough Eisenstein to last me the rest of my life! And how much fun was it discussing these films afterwards, often in a haze of dope-smoke.

It was during the last couple of years at ANU that I also plunged into the emergent hippie "counter-culture", filtering into Australia from the American West Coast: "sex, drugs and rock 'n roll" as it was sometimes characterized, but also the vehicle of more serious interests, Eastern religion and philosophy amongst them. Ram Dass' *Be Here Now!*, Alan Watts, *The Whole Earth Catalogue*. The Beatles and Rolling Stones were already wildly popular in my circle but now they were joined by Bob Dylan.

Listening to *Blonde on Blonde* from start to finish, slightly stupefied with drugs, was astonishing! Joan Baez, acid rock, the blues, West Coast country-rock, folk, bluegrass. By the early 70s I had become a serious addict of "country rock", a synthesis of musical styles and influences: the Byrds, the Grateful Dead, Buffalo Springfield, the Flying Burrito Brothers. I also loved the work of singer-songwriters like Kris Kristofferson, Joni Mitchell and Neil Young. Joe Cocker singing "With a Little Help from my Friends" in *Woodstock*. Wow! Heady times! Just the memory of it is still enough to provoke a kind of nervous excitation.

I continued to see something of my former school friends but quickly made many new ones, most of them also studying Arts and residents at Burton Hall: Brendan Moore, Bruce Wilson, Iain McCalman, Helen McCallum, Steve Christiansen, Richard Graves, Monty Stephens, to name a few. They came from all sorts of backgrounds: Brendan was North Shore-GPS but not in the slightest snobbish (for my 21st birthday he and his girlfriend gave me one of the best presents ever: the Oxford two-volume dictionary, bound in blue leather, still treasured for its beauty, its utility and its provenance); Bruce was from a working-class background in Frankston, one of the sharpest minds and most witty humourists; Iain had grown up in Malawi where his father was part of the old colonial apparatus, and was a raconteur-*extraordinaire* and the Rising Star of the History department; Steve was from a family of old Sydney lefties, as nice a fellow as you'd ever want to meet; Richard a quiet, largely self-educated country boy with a keen interest in international affairs and a taste for irony; Monty was a bit of a dandy, drove an antique Riley, wore waistcoats and cravats, and read lots of poetry. There were many others and plenty of "characters" about. Sadly, I have lost touch with most of them. In my fourth year Pamela moved into Burton Hall and a year later into the adjoining Garran Hall. She made her own life there but there was some overlap in our social circles. It was a fine thing to have my dear sister nearby.

Brendan, Monty, perhaps Bruce, and I used to meet regularly as an informal literary club at Burton Hall, discussing books – mainly fiction but also poetry, plays and non-fiction – which had been collectively chosen. We rather fancied ourselves as *avant-*

garde intellectuals and *litterateurs*. Some of the books I recall discussing were novels by Dostoevsky, Kazantzakis (a special favourite), Heinrich Böll, Camus and Sartre, and plays by Oscar Wilde, Christopher Fry and TS Eliot. One week we struggled with some writing by Alain Robbe-Grillet, at that time the darling of the Parisian *cognoscenti*, now, I imagine, no more than a forgotten footnote in French literary history. Colin Wilson's *The Outsider* and *The Strength to Dream* caused some excitement. Two books I recall reading under Iain's insistence were John Fowles' *The Magus*, a real page-turner, and *The Lost Footsteps* by Alejo Carpentier, a very exotic read! One of Bruce's enthusiasms was Angus Wilson whose novel *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* impressed us both. At this time I also often discussed literature with my grandmother until her death in the late 60s. Granny and Grandad had come to live with my parents shortly after Dad was appointed as the Archdeacon of Albury. I still saw a good deal of them during the lengthy holidays between terms and over the summer. I think it was in the same year, 1968, that I had a reading blitz, hardly arising from the couch for a week during which my material needs were attended to by my indulgent mother and during which I read, literally, for about twelve hours a day. In one week I read the Tolkien trilogy, *Great Expectations*, Lampedusa's *The Leopard* and *The Brothers Karamazov*. I have never since been on quite such an intensive and immersive reading bout. It was during my second year that I started the habit, continued to this day, of recording the author, title, country and genre of every book I read. So, for instance, if anyone were silly enough to inquire how many Graham Greene novels I read in 1973 I would be able to tell them. The answer is three. Greene figured in my reading most years and I still reckon him to be the most accomplished and interesting English novelist of the century, excluding, of course, both Conrad and James on the grounds that neither were strictly speaking English and that their great late works, written in the period before the Great War, belonged more to the 19th than the 20th century which only began in earnest in 1914. Hardy was done and dusted as a novelist by 1895 when he published *Jude the Obscure*. Booklists were but one symptom of a more general list-mania. I became a relentless listographer to whom Dr Johnson's

characterization of the lexicographer might well be applied: “a harmless drudge”.

During the long vacations there were other adventures beckoning. Stein and I hitchhiked to Brisbane to watch the 1966 Australian Grand Prix, in which I had no interest whatever but which excited Stein. (Graham Hill won; the favourite Jackie Stewart bombed out.) The following year we hitchhiked around Tasmania, skirting round the dreadful bushfires that raged in the south-east that year, and finishing the trip with a six-day hike through the Lake St. Clair-Cradle Mountain National Park, an undertaking for which we were woefully unprepared. Dropped off one overcast evening in Derwent Bridge we were dismayed to find that the only “shop” stocked very little beyond a scanty selection of canned foods. For the next week our diet consisted almost entirely of Heinz baked beans and spaghetti. We had only the most rudimentary map, a makeshift tent with no floor, offering no protection from the snakes which abounded that year. Between us we had nothing that could, even with the most generous intention, be called bushcraft. At that time this national park was not the massively popular attraction that it has become, still pretty much of an untamed wilderness without any boardwalks and the like, and only a couple of ramshackle huts. We saw no one for the first five days, not a soul. On our last night we found a hut at the northern end of the walk. An old geezer with matted hair and an unruly beard was holed up there. He must have had more funds than one would have supposed from his appearance as he had organized a helicopter to drop off his supplies – sacks of flour, tea, sugar, beef jerky, and several crates of VB. He had taken up permanent residence for the summer. He delighted in telling us the story of a young woman who had visited the hut earlier in the year, had slipped outside for a nocturnal pee, had been bitten in an embarrassing spot and had died. Probably pure fiction but he surely enjoyed recounting the story. He was quite hospitable in an irascible sort of way. We had our best meal of the walk, very basic fare but a welcome relief after the endless cans of slop we had been eating. A VB, cooled in the nearby mountain stream, was very welcome. Three decades later I did the same walk, this time from north to south, with my regular bushwalking companions,

Peter and Richard Stanley. This was an entirely different experience. The majestic landscape was still there of course but now one registered at the National Park Office, paid a fee and carried an obligatory EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon), met a steady flow of walkers on the well-maintained tracks and boardwalks, slept in well-appointed huts. Still great fun but not the same thing. In the thirty-year interval between these two walks Rose and I also ventured into the southern end of the park, camping there on New Year's Eve in 1982. With appalling insouciance and because her boots were uncomfortable, Rose did most of the walk in bare feet. Remembering the several scary encounters with serpents on the first walk, I was seriously worried. She wasn't.

A less happy memory, one reflecting no credit on me, concerns a smash-up I had in my second or third year. Friday nights we did the party circuit. This night we ended up at a party in Turner. The usual thing: loud music, booze flowing freely, a thick fog of smoke, people dancing and making out in dark corners, more than a few right off their faces. I bumped into an old school friend, "Nige" Jay. "Let's go for a spin. I've nicked the old man's car." We stumble out into the darkness, clamber into a middle-aged Ford Falcon station-wagon and head out on the Goulburn road where Nige opens it right up. After burning up a few miles, he turns the car around and we swap seats. I'm in the cockpit. Barrelling down a long downhill slope I lose control on a sweeping curve. Crash! The car is wrapped around a electricity pole just outside the drive-in. Nige and I are both banged up. I'm dripping blood from my forehead and my chest and knee are on fire. I clamber back into the car to retrieve my blood-stained smokes from the floor. The car is totalled. Police. Ambulance. Hospital. Nige's father came to see me in hospital. He was extraordinarily kind, concerned about my injuries and in no way reproachful. When I'm released from hospital I go to see him in his office at ANU, expecting that now I might be in for a real dressing-down. Not a bit of it. Mum and Dad front the money to cover his insurance excess. Life goes on. Some months later I'm in court on a negligent driving charge. It's pre-breathalyzer days and I am not charged with DUI as I should have been. I'm also lucky with the

magistrate who imposes nothing more than a modest fine and a good behaviour bond. One good thing came out of it. That was the last time I was seriously drunk and the whole episode cured me of adolescent bravado behind the steering-wheel. And I'm still grateful to Bob Jay. What discomforts me now is the way in which I blithely accepted that Mum and Dad would pay both the insurance excess and the court fine, not shouldering any responsibility myself and taking their generosity for granted.

For the first two years at the ANU my approach to my studies could fairly be described as "coasting" but during the third year, fired up by David Johanson's course on the Renaissance and Reformation, I became more systematic and disciplined in my studies. The general pattern up to that point had been to attend enough lectures and tutorials to keep one's head above water, to polish off assignments as quickly as possible, and to put in a punishing burst of study in the week or two before the exams when several of us locked into a new routine: sleep from about nine in the morning until late afternoon, enjoy a few hours of social life, head down to the Greasy Spoon in Mort Street for a hamburger at about 11pm, and then go hell-bent into the lecture notes (such as they were) and books, charged up on speed (easily available on campus and widely used), finishing the "day" with breakfast in the Burton Hall Dining Room. Sometimes students rather OD-ed on the amphetamines. After a drug-fuelled night of "study", Nick Swift emerged from a Political Science exam in high spirits, claiming that he had "aced it". He failed. He went to see the lecturer, insisting that there had been some mistake. The lecturer removed Nick's examination booklet from a filing cabinet and asked him to peruse it. The booklet contained nothing but the phrase "Rocky is sweating like a mad pig" written hundreds of times over several pages. Nothing else. We deduced that over breakfast, before the exam, Nick's attention had been rivetted to a newspaper picture of the boxer, Rocky Gattellari, in strenuous training and sweating profusely. The episode reminded me of the headline of a disparaging review of a book by Colin Wilson, "Scrambled Egghead". During my third year I again had reason to resort to the speed when I set up as a disc-jockey in the new Monaro Mall in Civic, playing music, with accompanying patter, for

forty hours non-stop. This was some sort of publicity and fund-raising stunt. I have forgotten the ostensible cause. I was installed on a small platform and hooked up to the PA system. Fortunately, the amenities were close by and I could dash in and out, as necessary, while the music was playing. Friends brought me food and drink. An early try-out for my later stint on community radio.

After completing my demanding Honours year I moved to Sydney to study for a Dip. Ed, obligatory as I was on a Teachers' Scholarship but what I wanted to do anyway. I lived for a few months in International House, on the edge of the University of Sydney campus in Newtown, but then moved into a house in Marrickville with my school friend Hank Hinchliffe and an English fellow who answered our ad for another tenant. For my 21st birthday Mum and Dad had scraped up enough to give me a beat-up old VW Beetle in which I would rattle my way to uni.

The Dip. Ed. was pretty tepid stuff after my studies at ANU though I really enjoyed one of my elective subjects, Art History, mainly comprising slide shows during which we would discuss the paintings on display. It was in the middle of one of these classes that we were excused to watch the first Moon Landing, an event in which I could not muster much interest though it did spark a certain momentary *frisson*. The most daunting part of the Dip. Ed. was my "practice teaching" round at Enmore Boys High School. I was to teach *Gulliver's Travels* to a group of rowdy boys, almost all of them of Greek background and for whom the glories of English Literature were very distant and not all seductive. It was no easy task. But I was given a good report so all was well.

The Dip. Ed. imposed only modest demands so I once again threw myself into a hectic social life as well as sustained bouts of reading, devouring some of the classic novels of the 19thC. Dickens, Tolstoy, Flaubert, Stendhal, Balzac, George Eliot were all on my private curriculum. Chinatown, the Sydney beaches, the NSW Art Gallery, the Sydney Cricket Ground, the downtown bookshops, Circular Quay, the cinemas, the Student Union – these became my favoured haunts. Stein (now living in Edgecliff and scratching out a living as a muso) and I made an excursion to Botany Bay to see Christo's wrap-up of the rocky cliffs. An *avant-garde* art "happening"! We also attended, girlfriends in tow, the scandalous

production of *Hair* where the actors briefly sported around on stage in the nude. Pete was still at Kings School in Parramatta so I saw him occasionally, once at an SCG test match where Doug Walters and Greg Chappell both went on run-sprees, slashing in the former case, elegant in the latter. (I think we were playing the Windies, now something of a spent force before they were to re-emerge in such glorious fashion in the mid-70s. I was an obsessive cricket follower throughout the 60s and 70s.)

The bland and boring lectures in the Dip. Ed. – how to prepare a lesson plan, how to use "assessment instruments", how to deal with troublesome students, and the like – were supplemented by an M.A. seminar course in Australian Literature, run by Leonie Kramer, later to become the Vice-Chancellor of Sydney University. Manning Clark, who seemed to know everyone in the academic universe, at least in the field of the humanities, had asked her to permit me to participate even though I was not enrolled in postgraduate studies. So, once a week I strolled over the grass to Professor Kramer's study to discuss the set reading with a small group of postgrad students. Plenty of intellectual horse-power here. Martin Boyd, Patrick White, Xavier Herbert, Judith Wright, Vance Palmer, Katherine Susannah Prichard, David Campbell all figured in these spirited discussions. As an auditor of the course I was not obliged to complete any assignments – just the reading and the seminars which were stimulating as I had hitherto studied very little Australian Literature. I was also getting seriously interested in literary criticism. Leavis' *The Great Tradition*, George Steiner's *Language and Silence* and Irving Howe's *Politics and the Novel* were three of the books which most influenced me. I was also very taken with Orwell's essays.

Late in 1969 I had an unexpected phone call from David Johanson. How would I like to join the History department, as a tutor, at the recently established La Trobe University in Melbourne's northeast? I'd like it very much, despite the complication that under the terms of my scholarship I was obliged to take up a teaching position with the NSW Education Department, probably in the country. Somehow I managed to bluster my way through this, extracting a temporary waiver from the Education Department. The bean-counters caught up with me

three years later and screwed the bond-money, as it was called, out of my Uncle Dick who had gone guarantor. That was the sort of thing Uncle Dick did on a regular basis. When we were kids he would often stealthily slip a ten shilling note into our pockets. His philosophy seemed to be that the primary purpose of earning money was to give it away. Should be more like him!

So, without much aforethought, I moved to Melbourne, set up house in Alphington with my university friend Bruce Wilson and old school chum, Bill Searl, joined later in the year by girlfriends Gaël McCalman (Iain's sister and soon to be Bruce's wife) and Di McManus. I immediately started scrubbing up my European history in which I would soon be tutoring. David Johanson set up the course and gave the lectures, assisted by Tony Bartlett and later in the year, Alec Tyrell, newly-arrived from England. I was also invited to deliver a few lectures despite my lowly position. The very first of these was on Bertolt Brecht, a somewhat nerve-wracking prospect which entailed facing a couple of hundred students in the university's largest lecture theatre. At that time history was the most popular subject on campus. Later I gave a series of lectures on the growth of the Russian revolutionary movement.

David had structured the course in an unusual way, much to my benefit. All students in the course attended the lectures but were then given a choice of taking one of four tutorial courses, each designed by a different member of staff. In the first semester my course, hurriedly designed over the summer, was "Literature and Society", based largely on Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society*, a penetrating study of the anti-industrial tradition of English writers stretching from Blake and the Romantics, through Dickens, Ruskin and Morris, down to T.S. Eliot, Orwell and Lawrence. The very first tutorial I approached with some trepidation, not because of the students but because two colleagues – one from History, one from English – had expressed a desire to attend. But all went well. More forbidding was the invitation from Head of Department, Alan Martin, to deliver a Staff Seminar Paper. My chosen subject was "Literature and the Historian", an inquiry into the use of literary sources in historical research. All the Departmental heavies were there: Alan Martin,

John Salmond, John Hirst, Israel Getzler, Rhys Isaac and other notables as well as a couple of folk from the English Department. But again, I needn't have worried. Heck, one could manage almost anything after Enmore Boys High! Alan Martin, always kindly with the junior staff, went out of his way to commend my paper which was subsequently published in *La Trobe Historical Studies*, my third published article and one which gave me much satisfaction. My first article was on Luther's theology, growing out of my ANU studies, published in *St Mark's Review*, the second a comparison of the views of Petrarch and Dr Leavis on the function of literature, commissioned by Iain McCalman who had become the editor of the *ANU Historical Journal*. The thrill of seeing one's writing in print never quite wears off but is especially piquant the first few times around.

The work at LTU was tremendously interesting but the demands on my time were quite limited, not really enough to justify my full-time salary which seemed extravagant after living for years on my slender scholarship allowance. Apart from giving the occasional lecture and doing a lot of marking, I gave the same tutorial six times each week. I think Alan Martin imagined that I was also doing postgraduate study. I wasn't. The campus was an exciting place to be, a hotbed of student dissent and the site of all sorts of innovations both in the lecture halls and elsewhere. Dances, parties, movies, billiards, cards; debates, demos, sit-ins, marches, teach-ins; writing a couple of short articles and capsule film reviews for *Rabelais*, the student newspaper; Daddy Cool thundering out "Eagle Rock" and "Come Back Again" in the Agora. Fitting in some work here and there as best I could.

One development of special interest was the establishment of the inaugural Cinema Studies department in which cousin Scott had enrolled. Cinema Studies was in its infancy as an area of scholarly study, very much concerned with finding an appropriate *raison d'être* and "methodology". Scott was tight with three other aspiring film-makers with a strong interest in film criticism. They collaborated on a *ciné-vérité* doco about student unrest and political protest, *Beginnings* (1971). They also founded *Cinema Papers* which became Australia's longest-running film journal, edited by Scott for most of its illustrious career. Some years later

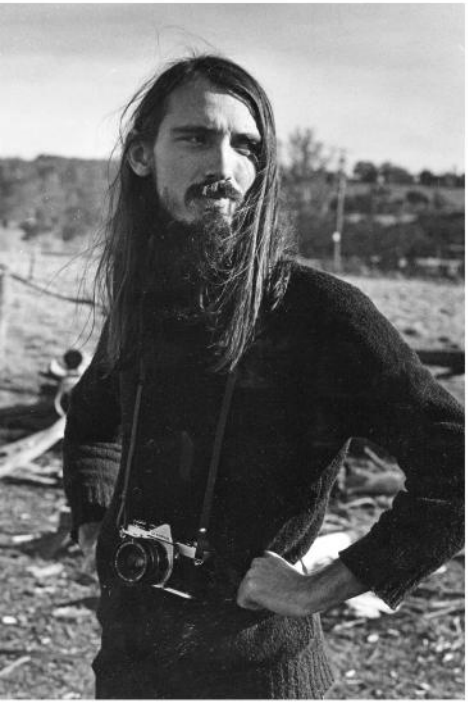
Scott launched out as a solo director with the ill-fated *The Devil in the Flesh* (1989) (aka *Beyond Innocence*), based on the 1923 novel by Raymond Radiquet. Film mania had family antecedents as Scott's father, John B. Murray, was involved in the Australian New Wave of the late 60s and early 70s. John produced *The Devil in the Flesh*. Sue too was to work in the film industry, for many years at the Australian Film Institute, and as a producer and script consultant. I did my bit for the family film connection by returning to LTU in 1994 to pursue a doctorate in Cinema Studies.

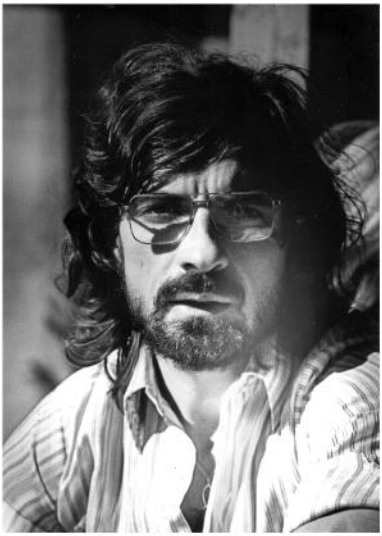
Life in Melbourne was even more exciting than it had been in Sydney. I was now not only engaged in stimulating work, well-renumerated as well, but there were plenty of friends from school and uni on hand. Johnny's Green Room in Carlton, the Whole Earth Bookshop in Bourke St, the Carlton Flea-pit for late night cinema, the bookshops and cafes of Lygon Street, St Kilda's Ackland Street and the Palais, visiting my Ivanhoe relatives who lived just across the river from us, *Judd for the Defence* on late-night TV. But perhaps most exciting of all was the introduction to the greatest game in the world and my initiation into Melbourne's extraordinary footy culture. Bruce was a rabid Collingwood supporter – there's no other kind actually – and we religiously attended the footy on Saturday afternoons, Victoria Park every second week for our home games, and then the MCG and around the suburban grounds on alternate weekends: the quagmire at Moorabbin, the drab, crabbed ground at Glenferrie, the squalid environs at Arden Street, the windy wastes of the Western Oval, the heart of Enemy Territory at Princess Park, and so on. A lesson in the topography of Melbourne. After each game we completed a chart stuck up on the kitchen wall in Alphington. We each gave every Collingwood player a score out of ten and closely followed their fluctuating ranking week-by-week. (We had not the slightest interest in the opposition players.) We were also dedicated watchers of the footy shows on Friday and Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings. Lou Richards, Jack Dyer, Bob Davis, Chicken Smallhorn, Roy Wright, Tony Ongarello and others would dissect past and forthcoming matches; at least as much banter as footy analysis.

Collingwood had a slashing team in 1970, champions on every line. Bob Rose was coach, Terry Waters the captain after Des Tuddenham was deposed by the club over a pay dispute. ("Tuddy" was always referred to in the radio coverage of the games as "tough as old boots" or "as hard as nails", two time-worn footy metaphors which are still in circulation while others – "stacks on the mill", "in more trouble than the early explorers", "he's done more miles than the Leyland brothers", "a bigger turning circle than the *Queen Mary*" – seem to have disappeared.) Peter McKenna, Barry Price, the Richardson brothers, John Greening, Bill Picken (a high-marking defender who, as the footy was sailing through the air, called out such adjurations as "Leave it for Billy", "It's Billy's mark", "Get out of Billy's way") , "Thomo" and "Jerker" Jenkin in the ruck. How could we not win the flag? Well might you ask. I'm still too upset by the 1970 Grand Final to recount the tragic events of that Saturday afternoon in September. Bruce and I were as flat as the proverbial shit-carter's hat as we trudged from the MCG, surrounded by the traumatizing spectacle of Carlton fans wildly celebrating. We had no appetite for Humble Pie. I could never again hear the names of Ted Hopkins or Ron Barassi without wincing. Dear oh dear! Scars which still haven't healed, wounds to be reopened in later years. I've been to three Grand Finals – 1970, 2002 and 2018. We narrowly lost them all. I won't mention 1977, 1979, 1980, 1981, 2003, 2011 and 2018. Could've, would've, should've. How much can a fella take? As Pete reminds me, being a rabid sports fan is a mug's game with disappointment being the usual recompense. No use pointing out to the multitude of Collingwood-haters that the Pies have been in more Grand Finals, and have won more Finals matches than any other club. All you'll get in reply is derisive comments about "the Colliwobbles". On the other side of the ledger only two trophies to show for my fifty years of unwavering loyalty: 1990 and 2010. I was at neither. I missed the 2010 replay against St Kilda because I was in Cairns for Bill Searl's wedding. When I inquired whether he might be able to set up a TV in the reception room he ruefully replied that he had no intention of being sued for divorce on the same day he was entering the matrimonial state. (Bruce and I had

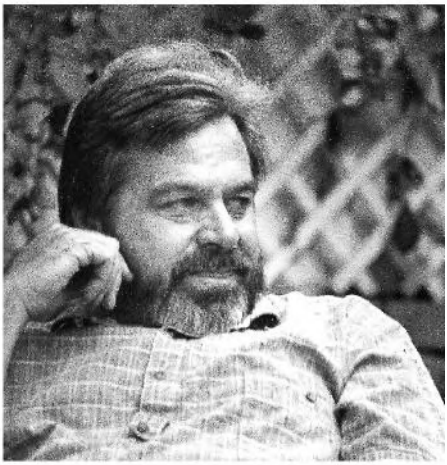
to smuggle in a small transistor to surreptitiously check the scores.)

In the second semester at LTU I ran a tutorial course on the Russian intelligentsia, again fashioned by me. This involved a quite intensive study of 19th century writers and theorists such as Chaadayev, Belinski, Chernyshevsky, Plekhanov, as well as the great literary writers, particularly Dostoevsky and Turgenev, and winding up with a study of the revolutions of 1905 and 1917. For several months I travelled into the city one night a week for classes in Russian. I dreamed of reading Pushkin and Dostoevsky in their native language. But alas, the school-day traumas with Latin and Greek repeated themselves. Almost no progress! Late in 1970 David Johanson had persuaded me to apply for a Commonwealth Overseas Scholarship to study at Oxford, doing postgraduate research at St Johns College. I was lucky enough to land it and so, in August 1971, I was once again on the move – this time by ship, aboard the *Fairstar* on the five-week voyage across the Pacific and Atlantic via Tahiti, Panama, Curacao and Lisbon. At the bash organized to farewell departing staff members, one of my colleagues, Inga Clendinnen, with whom I had enjoyed only fleeting contact, approached me and made a lovely remark, "I don't know you Harry, but I like you". How charming!



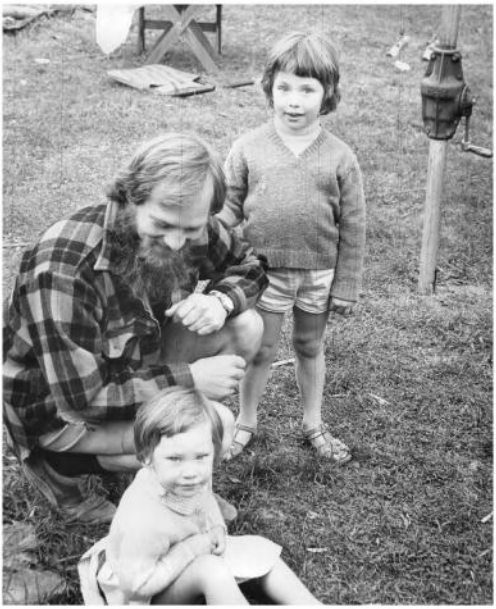


Pete, H. & Pamela
at Tarlina, early 70s



Wendy Murdoch & Paul Brammall
Jenny Owen
John Hambly
Virginia Ryan

Richard Kelly



Alan, Peter & Chessie Haig at Tarlina

Sally Haig

Rose, mid-70s

4.

WIDER HORIZONS
Oxford, Europe, Morocco

The voyage to England was pleasant. Loafing about in the sun, leisurely meals, reading, deck games, movies, port excursions. By good fortune I joined up with Judy Dixon, a distant cousin, on her way to London to study art, Pam Garrard, Stein's girlfriend, and her cousin Jenny Owen. Judy was a quiet, scholarly type while Pam and Jenny were budding hippies and party animals in search of a good time. Good company. I was holed up deep in the bowels of the ship in a tiny cabin with three young blokes, nice enough fellows but belonging to the species *Bogan Australianus*. Plenty of low-grade jokes, lots of boozing, endless conversations about the "chicks" on board and inquiries as to whether my female friends "did it". For all that we rubbed along well enough. But they were mystified by my habit of relentless reading. So much leisure time was available that I ripped through *Bleak House, The Idiot, Buddenbrooks, Cancer Ward*, *The First Circle*, and *What Maisie Knew* as well as any number of pot-boilers. There were also plenty of movies to be seen but mostly of a pedestrian kind. The only one I remember was Richard Brooks' noirish adaptation of *In Cold Blood,* an unsettling story first recounted in the brilliant book by Truman Capote, a pioneer of the "New Journalism". I was soon reading not only Capote but other exemplars of hip-reportage; Norman Mailer, Tom Wolfe, Joan Didion, Hunter Thompson.

I travelled up from Southampton to London by train, enchanted by the rolling countryside and grazing livestock, scenes familiar from Hardy and George Eliot. In London I was met by the Richardsons, Rev. Dick and Dorothy, who had offered such warm hospitality to Dad and his two brothers during the war. Dad and Dick now also had the bond of having both served on the Indian mission field. On being shown around the house, looking out the back window I murmured, "It's a lovely yard." This provoked the sternest rebuke, "That, my dear fellow, is not a yard; that is a garden". I had to watch my P's and Q's. But the Richardsons were infinitely kind and generous, and I was soon to meet their married daughters, Margaret and Ann, and their families. I stayed a week or so with the Richardsons in one of London's southern suburbs and travelled up to the city every day to explore its wonders. In

fact the city at that time was somewhat dishevelled – drab and dirty with astonishingly bad food on offer in the cheaper outlets, all that I could afford. I mean, Wimpy Burgers? Seriously. And what passed for a pizza, after the mouth-watering offerings of Lygon Street, was a limp slab of dough smeared with tacky tomato sauce and sprinkled with cheese that might as well have been shredded cardboard. Perhaps it was! Not to mention the coffee – tepid Nescafe Instant in a Styrofoam cup was the order of the day. The Poms had some odd eating habits. I was disconcerted by huge jars of pickled onions in the pubs.

But there was no end of places to be visited and explored as soon as possible: the British Museum where I anticipated doing a lot of my research, Westminster Abbey and St Paul's, the National Art Gallery and the Tate, the Victoria and Albert Museum, a pilgrimage to the home of Charles Dickens, Hampstead Heath, Windsor Castle, Greenwich, the four great railway stations on the Monopoly board, Hyde Park ... an apparently limitless string of attractions. On top of all this the bookshops of Charing Cross Road and the maze of cinemas and theatres. I was in a delirium of excitement. On my first weekend Dick took me to Hampton Court Palace to enjoy its magnificent gardens and marvel at the rich horde of art treasures. We also went to a service in Temple Church, Fleet Street and the Thames close by; plenty of pomp, glittering vestments and a heavenly choir. Dick, of fairly severe Methodist outlook, no doubt found the whole thing a bit Papist.

By the time I arrived in London I was famished for the arthouse cinema which had so enthralled me over the last few years. My first day in London: *Clockwork Orange, Family Life* (Ken Loach), *Death in Venice* and *The Conformist,* all high-octane films, a real blast. "Kapow!" as they used to say in the cartoons. The next night I went to Pasolini's *Pigsty*, real left-field "art-house"; it did nothing for me. And the night after that, *Little Big Man*, a revisionist Western like no other I'd ever seen. London, like Melbourne, had a dazzling array of cinemas, quite a number devoted to arthouse and independent movies. 1972 was one of the last great years in the cinema: the studio system not yet quite dead, interesting indie film-makers everywhere, and the stunning wave of European "art cinema" still going strong. Here are a few of

the films I saw that year: *Aguirre, Wrath of God, Play it Again Sam, Fata Morgana, Fat City, The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, Cries and Whispers, Solaris, Fellini's Roma, Images, The Godfather, Junior Bonner*.

Soon it was time to front up at St John's College, to explore Oxford, to meet my tutors and settle on a research project for my B. Litt. I had indicated that I wanted to do work in the field of British social history. Keith Thomas was to be my college tutor and Brian Harrison my research supervisor. Both excellent fellows. But settling on an approved subject was much more difficult than I imagined. My various proposals were rejected as "too literary", "too philosophical", "not the sort of thing we do here", and so on. Tedious and frustrating. Eventually, after much negotiation, we agreed that I should write a history of the Ragged Schools, a philanthropic movement sponsored in the later 19th century by Lord Shaftesbury. In the Bodleian I scoured the academic literature and the lists of completed History theses to ensure that this was virginal territory, and then settled into my research, much of it pursued in London.

I was soon to discover, to my surprise and horror, that Oxford was a much more hide-bound and mouldy intellectual environment than those I had enjoyed at ANU, Sydney and La Trobe. Further, I did not find College life congenial: snobbery and social hierarchies, silver spoons everywhere, formal dinners, silly toffs. Most upsetting was the practice of students being served by "scouts", mainly working-class fellows much older than I, who cleaned the rooms, made the beds and so on. My somewhat aggressive egalitarian instincts were offended by the still rigid class stratifications everywhere on display and evident in the condescending remarks about chaps from the colonies. After a couple of months I moved into private digs in Banbury Road. I had five close friends in Oxford already: Pam and Jenny who had both moved to Oxford, working as barmaids, Richard Stanley, Jenny's boyfriend newly arrived from Sydney and soon employed as a tree surgeon, and a young fellow whom I had met on the ship, Alan Haig, returning from a visit to his family in New Zealand to take up undergraduate studies in History after his schooling at Winchester. He was a kindred spirit, interested in history (his first

love), literature, philosophy and cinema. Alan became a lifelong friend as did Richard. I also struck up a friendship with another History postgraduate student from New Zealand, Peter Adams, and his wife Ginny. Ginny worked in the NZ diplomatic service and had a flat in Earl's Court, a convenient place to crash when we were in London, as often as not for rock concerts. Two of the other tenants in my Banbury Road house were Denise and Jamie from Canada, who also became close comrades. Denise was a firebrand feminist who tartly reprimanded my father (visiting from Australia, with Mum) when he opened a restaurant door for her. His reply that he would open the door for anyone, irrespective of gender, cut no ice. But they were soon engaged in a friendly dinner-table discussion, over Indian curry, of feminist ideology. (I need hardly add that Dad paid the restaurant bill. No protest from Denise.) I had already read Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*, soon after arriving in Oxford: it knocked me sideways. Now Denise shepherded me through a crash course in feminist literature; Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millett, Shulamith Firestone, Ingrid Bengis and other feminist luminaries of the day. She also gave me my first taste of Canadian literature by pressing into my hands works by Margaret Laurence and Margaret Atwood. At the same time I was embarking on wide-ranging reading of some of the other radical texts of the day – Paolo Friere, R.D. Laing, Elridge Cleaver, Juliet Mitchell, Angela Davis, Ivan Illich. *Rolling Stone* was the magazine of choice.

I spent too much time in the pubs and not enough in the library. There were many long nights: movies, meals at the El Cheapo Indian restaurant, lying about listening to music, dope-smoking, endless conversation. In more active mode, walks and bike-rides in the countryside, excursions in Richard's Morris to the Cotswolds, a few trips further afield to Stonehenge, Salisbury Cathedral, Cambridge. It was all Evelyn Waugh meets the Grateful Dead, so to speak. My girlfriend Di and I were reunited some months after we had become engaged by letter. But that relationship soon fizzled out. It had been a case of "distance makes the heart ...". We remained on amicable terms.

In the summer of 72 Mum and Dad came on a visit. Together we spent time in London, and caught some of the second Ashes

test at Lords; the Chappell brothers and "Stacky" made runs and Swing-Meister Bob Massie collected a bag of 16 wickets to take Australia to victory despite John Snow's best efforts. We travelled up through the midlands to the Lakes District in a hired car, and spent several nights on the return journey in Nottingham to attend the test at Trent Bridge. Ross Edwards made his majestic 170 and Dennis Lillee was on fire. Those two old barnacles, the English openers John Edrich and Brian Luckhurst, dug in and made things difficult. The test was drawn, as was the series. During the parental visit we also explored a lot of country to the south and west. We visited many cathedrals and churches, some of which were quite astounding. I recalled the words of A.W. Pugin whom I had studied earlier: "There is nothing worth living for but Christian Architecture and a boat." I didn't entirely agree but I saw what he meant.

My studies moved along in fits and starts. After about nine months, a serious trauma: I discovered that someone had already exhaustively researched the Ragged Schools and had completed a top-drawer thesis at one of the provincial universities. I had missed finding it in my earlier search because it was listed in the Education rather than the History catalogue. Disaster! ... well, sort of. (Montaigne: "my life has been full of terrible misfortunes most of which never happened".) I reported the discovery to my tutors who encouraged me to find another topic. "No problem," they insisted. But I didn't have the motivation or drive to start all over again. Time to pull the pin. I contacted the chap who had done the thesis on Ragged Schools and asked him if he was doing further research in this field. He was. Would he like the results of my own labours over the past few months? Yes, he would. All my notes and draft chapters duly handed over. My new typewriter passed on to Peter Adams.

I travelled down to London by train to visit the Commonwealth Overseas Scholarships Office to announce my decision to quit my studies and to relinquish my scholarship. They too urged me to reconsider and to find a new project. I was adamant that I was done and that I intended to embark on travels in Europe. I could have no further claim on my scholarship money. The response: "Now look here old chap, there's no rush to decide

anything. Just stay on the scholarship and think things over." I replied: "There is no chance that I will resume my studies and I can't in good faith accept any more funding." Him: "Well, my dear fellow, it's good of you to put your cards on the table but what say we give it another few months, what? Come back and see us in November and we'll see how things stand." What could I do? I acquiesced. Now I entered into one of the most pleasurable periods in my life: no pressure to work, enough money to stay afloat, a vista of travel possibilities in prospect, lots of reading and film-going. What could be better?

First up was the Great Western Express Festival, near Lincoln. Five of us squeezed into Richard's tiny car and off we went. Joe Cocker, Wishbone Ash, the Beach Boys, Humble Pie, Don Maclean and Rory Gallagher were among the acts. Joe Cocker was totally off his face but electrifying on stage. (Off-stage was another story.) Lots of people, lots of rain, lots of mud, lots of fun. Going to Lincoln was a difficult choice because it clashed with almost irresistible gigs in London by the Grateful Dead and Pink Floyd. For the Glastonbury Fayre we piled into Mick Laity's decrepit van and headed for Cornwall. Mick was on holiday in England after a visit to Ireland where he found his wife-to-be. Traffic, Melanie, David Bowie, Fairport Convention. Back in London a gig by legendary American bluesman Albert King in Finsbury Park. In Oxford: Kris Kristofferson and Rita Coolidge, the Moody Blues, Procol Harum. A moveable feast indeed!

The next adventure was a trip to Europe, again crushed into Richard's Morris. Richard, Jenny, Pam and myself. We meandered through northern France and Belgium and made our first extended stay in Amsterdam, sleeping in Vondel Park along with hundreds of others, mostly hippie riff-raff like ourselves. The main attractions in Amsterdam were easily available dope which could be enjoyed more or less with impunity, the picturesque canals, and the Van Gogh and Rembrandt paintings in the galleries and museums. The Dutch folk were much friendlier than the French, and happy to speak English. It was also easy to find cafes where sumptuous meals could be had for not much money. A hippie-friendly city one might say.

Then it was through Germany: Dusseldorf, Cologne, Bonn, Frankfurt, Heidelberg, Stuttgart, Munich; the Rhine River, old castles, vineyards, taverns, tankards of foaming beer and men wearing, of all things, leather shorts! Then Switzerland: Zurich, Bern, the Matterhorn region, and Geneva where we crashed in the apartment of an old school friend, Matthew Peek, now working in the diplomatic service. A dash across France after a visit to Annecy which I wanted to visit because of the Cezanne paintings. The French churches and cathedrals of the Romanesque style made a deep impression. I can still picture the grace and beauty of Vézelay Cathedral.

The best was yet to come. Mick Laity was still hanging out in London. Richard and I proposed a trip to Morocco in his beat-up old van, accompanied by Jenny and a newly-acquired friend, Anna, a Canadian of Italian background and a friend of Denise's. I had to wait in London for a few days while the others organized themselves. I was staying with Peter and Ginny. I took advantage of this interlude to read *Our Mutual Friend*. I worked my way through a good deal of Dickens in this period. Apart from everything else, how could one not love novels peopled by characters named Mr M'Choakumchild, the Rev. Melchisedech Howler, Uriah Heep and Wackford Squeers? Another literary enthusiasm of the time was Doris Lessing whose novels I devoured. My appetite for Lessing eventually waned – but for Dickens, never!

With no preparations beyond assembling a crate full of music tapes we were soon off across the Channel, down through France and Spain with stop-overs in Paris, Chartres, Toulouse, Andover, Barcelona, Madrid and Granada, seeing quite a few of the tourist sites along the way. The most striking were Chartres Cathedral (awesome in the proper sense of the word) and the Alhambra. By ferry from Algeciras to Tangier to trace the hippie route through Casablanca, Essaouira, Marrakesh, the Atlas Mountains, Meknes, and Fez. Morocco, exotic and enchanting, brought back a flood of Indian memories. We allowed ourselves to get stuck in Rabat for far too long. Not very interesting, nor was down-at-heel Casablanca, a terrible disappointment given its film-induced romantic associations. Even Ingrid and Bogey would have had

trouble rescuing Casablanca from its early 70s drabness. But all that changed as we drove south in Mick's rattling van.

After some time in Marrakesh we decided to drive as far as we could along the edge of the sand dunes of the Sahara, determined to escape the throngs of people and the hustle and bustle of the *medina*. We found the most isolated and remote camping spot that we could, confident that we could settle in for a couple of days of peaceful solitude. The next morning, before the sun had even risen, there was tapping on the side of the van. There stood a diminutive grubby-faced urchin of about five with a basket full of eggs for sale. Of course, we couldn't say no. That day we had our first sight of an immense Saharan vista, golden sand dunes rolling away into infinity.

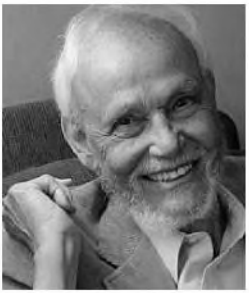
There was so much to see and enjoy in Morocco: the beautiful beaches along the Atlantic coast; the Moorish architecture and splendid mosques, the walled cities; the marketplaces pulsating with colour and movement, the smell of spices in the air, craftsmen plying their traditional arts in side alleys; the austere beauty of the desert and the mountains, oases and camel trains, some Tuareg nomads glimpsed on the edge of the desert; the wonders of Fez where one could still get some sense of the traditional Islamic world, much of the city still being as it was in medieval times. (Some years later I was to read Titus Burckhardt's wonderful book on this city.) It was my first and only extended stay in an Islamic country. I was captivated by the ambience. And everywhere the people, so different from the English, variously forbidding, gravely courteous, hospitable and friendly, sometimes hot-tempered. We enjoyed the rituals entailed in haggling with stall-holders and small shopkeepers, accumulating the usual trophies – Goulimine beads, *djellabas* made out of coarse wool, leatherwork, jewellery and such, all within the reach of the most modest budget. It was enormous fun being with my very congenial companions.

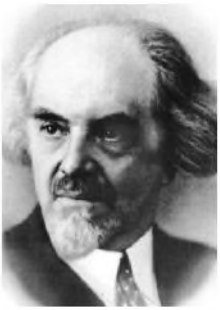
Before heading for home I finalized the termination of my scholarship. Later on Mum told me that Dad was deeply disappointed about my failure to complete my studies at Oxford though he never gave me any sense of this. An Oxford degree still held great cachet for him. For my own part I had no regrets,

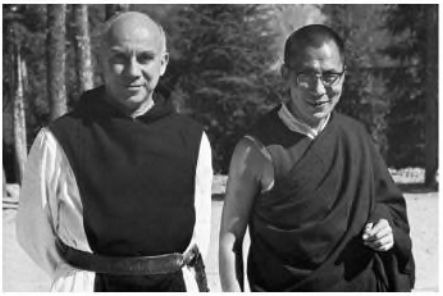
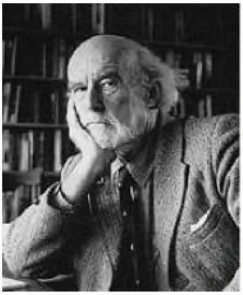
sympathizing with T.S. Eliot's acerbic remark that "Oxford is very pretty, but I don't like to be dead". On the flight home I was happy to read extensive newspaper coverage of the "It's Time!" election which catapulted Gough Whitlam and the ALP into power, propelling us out of the vast wasteland of Liberal-Country Party rule. Mum and Dad picked me up from the airport in Sydney. On the drive back to Canberra (to which they had moved in 1970) I was startled by how moving I found the sight of sun-burnt paddocks and straggly gum trees. I'd been away for less than eighteen months but a lot had happened, both for me and for Australia.

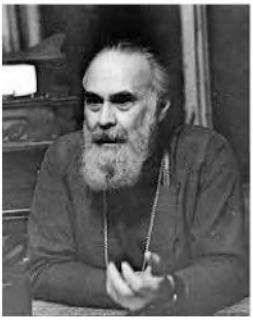
Russell, Bob Hanley,

H., mid-70s





Huston Smith . Marco Pallis . Nicholas Berdayev
Kathleen Raine . Thomas Merton and HH the Dalai Lama
Manning Clark . Titus Burckhardt . Simone Weil
Metropolitan Anthony . Anagarika Govinda . Rudolf Otto

5.

Hippie Ratbag
SWOW & the 70s

Since about 1980, by which time the counter-cultural wave had ebbed, "hippies" have had a pretty bad press: drug-crazed and brain-addled young folk with absurdly naïve ideas, addicted to outlandish music, and prone to taking their clothes off. However, as Theodore Roszak made clear in his landmark work, *The Making of the Counter Culture*, this upheaval was both cause and symptom of some radical changes, some of which have had beneficial long-term effects. (I use the word "radical" here in its proper sense: a return to the roots.) The *seriousness* of the intellectual and spiritual shift which took place in the late 60s and early 70s has been occluded by the popular mythology about Haight-Ashbury "flower-power" and the more frivolous and ephemeral manifestations of rebellion and "liberation". The burgeoning interest in primordial indigenous cultures and in Eastern religion and spirituality might be adduced as illustrative of deeper trends. The fact that some ostensible manifestations turned out to be counterfeit (Carlos Castaneda, say, or Raj Neesh) should not devalue the genuine article, the real thing (let's say *Black Elk Speaks* and Shunryu Suzuki). No doubt there were also parts of the counter-cultural legacy which were less benign but these have been rehearsed often enough. My own immersion in the tumult lasted through most of the 70s. Since then I have been happy to think of myself, in some respects at least, as a hippie relic.

While in England, as intimated earlier, I hurled myself into the political and intellectual ferment of the period, primarily in its American expressions. Anarchist and libertarian politics, the Beats, feminism, anti-colonialism, civil rights, anti-psychiatry, liberation theology, an embryonic environmentalism, as well as "sex, drugs and rock 'n roll". One area of special interest to me was schooling and education, particularly at the secondary level. I became deeply interested in a whole raft of ideas circulating in the works of such writers as Paolo Friere, Herbert Kohl, Jonathan Kozol, Charles Reich, James Herndon, and earlier forerunners such as A.S. Neill. Their work informed the emergence of new schools, mainly in the USA, which were given various labels: "free schools", "alternative schools", "community schools" and so on. The general

ideological and philosophical drift of the movement was anti-authoritarian, libertarian and "New Left"-ist. By the time I returned to Australia I was full of evangelical zeal, determined to apply these ideas, insofar as possible, in whatever school had been reckless enough to employ me. David Johanson urged me to return to La Trobe, saying that I could easily be re-installed in my tutor's position and that, if I were prepared to acquire some further postgraduate credentials, I would soon nail down a tenured position as full-time lecturer. But I was done with Academia and wanted to be down in the trenches, as it were.

My first assignment was to find a job and somewhere to live. I was now without an income, sponging off my parents and taking up more than my share of room in their new but small house in Mawson. I was lucky enough to be signed up by the ACT Schools Authority and appointed as an English teacher to Telopea Park High School, located in the leafy suburb of Manuka. I pitched up at the school office and was told to report to the Principal, Wally Somebody, an old fossil left behind by the NSW Education Department which had formerly run Canberra's schools. The encounter went like this.

Me: Good morning Wally. [Not a good opening gambit!] I have been appointed to the English staff here. I'm reporting for duty.

[Wally looking me over, noting my John Lennon glasses, beard, pony tail, embroidered shirt]

Him: No!

Me: Sorry?

Him [scowling]: No, you haven't been appointed here. We don't need you.

Me: I was told in a phone conversation two days ago to report here on the first day of school.

Him: I'm not interested in what you were told. It was a mistake. We don't need any more English teachers.

Me: Well, perhaps you could check with the Schools Authority?

Him: Wait outside.

[some ten minutes later]

Him [a look of tired and embittered resignation on his face]: I told them I didn't need you and didn't want you but apparently you have been appointed. Report to Tom —, Head of the English Department.

So began my career as a school teacher. Relations with Wally didn't improve. The "conversation" above comprised more words than he addressed to me over the rest of the year. Tom was much friendlier. Soon I was into the hurly-burly, teaching Year 7 and 8 English. Meanwhile, after combing the countryside Peter and I set up house in a small outlier on a farm in Sutton, about 20k to the northeast of Canberra. Bill Searl and Bob Warner, a Burton Hall friend, moved into an apartment on the same property.

Telopea Park HS was located in an affluent and cosmopolitan part of Canberra. The students were, for the most part, from prosperous families. School discipline was not oppressive and the general ambience mostly pleasant enough. Some of the other staff thought I was a hippie ratbag but most were friendly and supportive despite the fact that I was violating some well-entrenched conventions – encouraging students, for instance, to call me "Harry", refusing to impose the usual sanctions on miscreants, adopting a rather elastic understanding of what constituted "learning". The school librarian, Val Baker, was the only staff member who had any real understanding of what I was doing. Another sympathetic colleague was the Deputy Principal, John Morrow, who at various points gave me sage advice about how to deal with the Principal and with the educational bureaucracy, and warned me when I was getting close to the edge. Early in the piece I missed a day's work. So I had to fill in a leave form, writing under Reason for Absence: "serious hang-over". John replied, a little tersely, that this was quite unacceptable: the bureaucrats would not understand! The standard response, he advised, was "illness", a catch-all understood by everyone to be a term covering a multitude of sins. A decade later I was to work happily under him at Phillip College where he was then Principal.

In the mid-60s Dad had been appointed Archdeacon of Albury. Mum and Dad took up residence in the old two-storey rectory, cheek-by-jowl with St Matthew's Church right in the

middle of town. Granny and Grandad (Green), now afflicted with some of the infirmities of old age, both physical and mental, came to live with them. I spent the uni holidays in Albury, enjoying its comparative proximity to Melbourne. Late in the decade, inspired by the work of the Rev. Alan Walker and the establishment of the Lifeline counselling service in Sydney, Dad had accepted an invitation to become the foundation director of Canberra Lifeline. A big step, leaving a church position which might easily have seen him elevated to a bishopric. After returning from England I trained as a volunteer counsellor and over the next eighteen months or so did a weekly stint on the telephone, usually rostered in the late hours when folks in desperate straits were most likely to pick up the phone and call for help. I found it a humbling experience, and a reminder of the many unearned blessings – I guess all blessings are unearned! – which had been showered on me just as, obversely, many of the callers were victims of circumstances not of their own making.

Early in the year I heard that there were moves afoot to establish an alternative school in Canberra, originating in the Canberra College of Advanced Education and pushed along by one of the lecturers, Pat Brady, a large leprechaun masquerading as a person. Before long I was immersed in the planning for the "School Without Walls" which, we hoped, would be an alternative secondary school within the government system. The recent election of the Labor government and the establishment of a new educational authority meant that such a proposal mighty actually get off the ground, unthinkable under the previous government. Endless meetings, first to sort out a proposal. Anyone could come to the public meetings, decisions were based on consensus, there were no formal positions. Then a series of negotiations with people in local government, the Schools Authority and the federal government who held the purse-strings. Partly in order to lend weight to the proposal a handful of teachers, myself included, set up classes to run in the late afternoons and evenings, open to anyone who cared to attend. These were held in some decrepit portables at Childers St, generously made available by the ANU. I ran a course on Russian history. (One of the youngest students, one J.P., puzzling over Lenin's labyrinthine lucubrations, could

never get her tongue around a key term, always pronouncing it "proto-leriat".)

By the end of the year our efforts came to fruition, the school to start in 1974 with about 100 students, housed in some ramshackle portables on the fringe of Civic. The name School Without Walls was to be taken metaphorically rather than literally, signifying an open teaching and learning environment unfettered by old conventions, attitudes and structures. SWOW was the creature of a particular moment and a specific milieu. It thrived for about a decade before going into a slow decline. I taught at the school in 1974-1975 and 1977-79. Here is not the place for a detailed account of the school's philosophy and history, only a brief and impressionistic account of my experiences there.

One of the themes which circulated freely was that it was a community school, created by students, parents, teachers and other interested folk. True up to a point but the fact was that the motor-force was the teaching group. Over my time there quite a few teachers came and went, but all were highly energetic, creative people, committed to radical educational change, mostly and to varying degree leftist in their political sympathies. It was exciting and immensely rewarding to work with such people. My memories of the original team are strongest but many of these teachers left their mark on the school. There was a loose triumvirate of women, half a generation ahead of the rest of us: "Biff" Ward (daughter of the historian Russell Ward) who was the Coordinator and nominally in charge but her style was relaxed and consensual; Julia Ryan (daughter of feminist pioneer Edna Ryan) was recruited by Biff fairly late in the piece to teach History; Paddy Marlton was the Art teacher. Biff and Julia were serious players in the burgeoning "women's movement", as was my sister Pamela. Simon Dawkins (Economics and Sociology) was one of the activists who had originally conceived the idea of the school. Then there were the two Maths and Sciences teachers, both Rogers – Ellyard and Feltham, the latter bringing his knitting to meetings with the Schools Authority apparatchiks. Noel Ridgeway taught languages, Bob Hanley sport and Outdoor Rec. Over the next few years teachers came and went. The three with whom I was most friendly were Marian May who taught languages, Mitch Burns,

muso and general good guy, and an Italian-American hippie from New York (about whom more later!).

I spent many hours with my colleagues, especially in the first year, devising a flexible and open curriculum, and exploring ways in which the school could put its philosophy into practice. There were also weekly meetings of the whole school community, open to anyone and usually attended by a number of parents and other interested parties. All sorts of ideas were in the air, as were various slogans and catch-cries of the New Left, some of them originating in the streets of Paris in 1968 and appealing more to the heart than the head – "the personal is the political", "make love, not war", "no such thing as a good war, no such thing as a bad strike", "nothing outside politics". It was only in later years that I really understood how the seeds of totalitarianism could germinate in leftist ideology just as easily as they could in the more obvious evils of the Right. But even at the height of my radical-activist days at SWOW I was not comfortable with certain aspects of "leftist" ideology, especially its belligerent secularism, philosophical materialism and totalizing discourse though I was still to understand just how pernicious was the kind of thinking which informed slogans such as "nothing outside politics". One of the issues of the day on which I parted company with most of the SWOW community concerned Maoist China which had already revealed its repugnant colours in its brutal neo-imperial and criminal subjugation of Tibet and its cynical destruction of that country's spiritual heritage – or, more precisely, its attempted destruction, though the damage was vast and included not only the pillaging and desecration of its material fabric but the cold-blooded murder of many monks and nuns. I remember arguing with some of my colleagues after I had drawn attention to the exposure of these and other atrocities by "Simon Leys" (a pen-name of Pierre Ryckmans, the Belgian émigré intellectual and Sinophile who had taken up a post at the ANU and who became a whipping-boy of the radical Left).

We had endless discussions in the pubs and coffee-houses of nearby Civic, in meetings, in our classes which were held all over the place, often outside. There were disagreements, negotiations, compromises but the school was remarkably free of factions and

divisions; everyone could have their say, everything would work out if we remained committed to the school ethos. And most of the time it did. Memory plays tricks but I cannot remember ever facing any kind of hostility or ill-feeling from students, colleagues or parents, a striking contrast to my previous experiences in Australian schools. Halcyon days!

Classes were run on very informal lines. The structures were more like those of a university than a conventional secondary school. No rolls were kept, nothing was compulsory, classes were held at regular times but students had a great deal of free time. Everybody came and went as they pleased, teachers only constrained by the need to teach their classes and attend meetings. I usually pitched up to school about 10am and stayed until late in the afternoon. (By now I had moved into town, sharing a house in O'Connor with Peter, Richard and Paul, an English friend from Oxford days. Pamela lived with us for a while too.) A few years later the Schools Authority established the Senior Colleges for Year 11 and 12 students, separating them from the high schools (Years 7-10). The new Colleges actually followed in the wake of SWOW in allowing students and teachers much more freedom and self-determination, and in developing a more relaxed atmosphere in which teaching and learning could flourish.

We encompassed the curriculum set for the Higher School Certificate for those students wishing to matriculate while the rest of the teaching-learning program was much more open-ended and free-wheeling. I taught some Literature classes, helped Julia with History, created a course called "Looking at Other Cultures" (mainly indigenous). There were also more informal discussion groups and get-togethers where I organized creative writing sessions, film screenings, and music evenings where we listened to and discussed the rock music of the day. (Allman Brothers, Jefferson Starship, Dylan, Neil Young, Janis Joplin and the like.) During my second stint at SWOW I also introduced a Philosophy and Comparative Religion course.

School camps and overnight bushwalks were tremendous fun, organized by the ebullient Bob Hanley, later to be tragically killed in an accident while riding his bike to work (at another school). The south coast was a favoured destination. Several of our most

memorable camps were at Picnic Point, near Tathra. Grassy banks, rocky cliffs, sandy surf beaches. Fishing, diving, walking, reading, singing, beach cricket, swimming. Bob and some of the students went spear-fishing off the rocks, grilling the fish over hot coals. A modern-day "loaves and fishes" story! I remember reading Nadine Gordimer's *A Guest of Honour* on one of these camps. (I always had a supply of books on hand, both for myself and for other voracious readers who might have forgotten to bring a book or who had exhausted their own supply.)

It was during these early SWOW years that, with Bob Hanley's encouragement, I became a serious bushwalker. For the next thirty years Peter, Richard and I, sometimes with a fourth, always did at least one extended bushwalk each summer. The Snowy Mountains, the Budawangs and Tasmania were our favoured haunts but we also did walks in the Victorian Alps and Wilson's Promontory. I vividly remember the time that Richard, Pete, Bill and myself took Josh, eight years old, for his first bushwalk, in the Snowy Mountains. We had been too ambitious in our planning, not taking sufficient account of Josh's capabilities. The weather turned nasty and the tent in which Bill, Josh and I were sleeping was shredded by the gale-force winds at Lake Albina. The poor little fellow found the whole thing an ordeal. The highlight of that particular trip was the third night when the skies had cleared and we were camped somewhere on the upper reaches of the Snowy River. The stars were brilliantly crystalline and the vast dome of the sky slowly wheeled overhead. It was hypnotic. In later years I always thought of that night when discussing a passage – from the *Timaeus* I think – in which Plato affirms that the heavenly bodies were so arranged as to allow men to philosophize. Could the gulf between the traditional and modern understanding of the cosmos be any more clearly dramatized than by the latter's total incomprehension of what the ancient philosopher might have meant? (The same observation might be made about the respective understandings of "philosophy".)

Bushwalking also became a spur for semi-serious photography, mainly of landscapes. After messing about with a cheap Hanimex I purchased my first high-end camera in the mid-70s, an Olympus OM2 which did good service until it finally

clapped out on a trek in Nepal in 2000. My companions on that trek were Bill Searl and Di McManus. Bill, seeing my distress at finding myself bereft of a functioning camera, gave me his for the rest of the trip, a noble sacrifice which I have never forgotten.

By this time Pete was deeply interested in Buddhism and becoming a disciplined meditation practitioner. He's been at it ever since. Sometime in 1974 or thereabouts Pete pressed a book into my hands, saying "You *have* to read this." Glancing at the book I replied, "But I'm not all that interested in this sort of stuff." "I don't care. You *must* read it." Pete, a very mild-mannered fellow, was insistent. The book was *The Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism* by Lama Anagarika Govinda. He also strongly recommended *The Way of the White Clouds* by the same author, an account of a pilgrimage through Tibet in the years after WW2. I put *Foundations* in the ever-expanding books-to-read pile.

One evening, lounging at home in Nardoo Crescent, Richard and I were leafing through a book of photographs by a Japanese photographer, a collection of landscape shots taken in the Nepalese Himalaya. We were mesmerized by the grandeur of the mountains and resolved to go trekking there in the summer. Richard and I were about as well prepared for a trek in Nepal as Stein and I had been for the Overland Walk in Tasmania, which is to say hardly at all. We threw sleeping bags, some clothes, books (including the two by Govinda, still unread) and toothbrushes into our rucksacks and headed to Bangkok on Thai Airlines, and thence to Kathmandu. On the last leg of the journey we were smitten by the epic spectacle of the Himalayas stretching across the horizon, Kachenchunga visible in the East, and the mighty peaks of the Sagamartha region, Everest, Lhotse, Nuptse, Ama Dablam, visible further to the West. Once seen, never forgotten!

We spent several days in Kathmandu, a major stop-over on the Asian Hippie Trail. Buddhist temples and stupas, cramped alley-ways, smoky shops and dingy eating places, noise, cows, bicycles, scooters and motorcycles (very few cars in those days), monks, donkeys, dope-dealers and various other spruikers button-holing us in the alleyways, people everywhere, some of Tibetan appearance and in colourful garb, from the Tibeto-Himalayan regions of Ladakh, Mustang, Sikkim and Bhutan. Hindu

temples, monkeys, thanka shops, rickshaws, beggars. And the aroma of incense and marigolds everywhere in the air. There was also a good deal of rubbish in the streets, no hot water in the guest house, and the electricity went off at random intervals. All tremendous fun.

From Kathmandu to Pokhara on a seemingly interminable journey in a crowded and rickety bus, to be rewarded at the end of the day with the nerve-tingling sight of Machapucchare (English name: the Fishtail) towering above the town, along with Ama Dablam one of the most ravishing mountains in the whole Himalaya. No wonder that John Hunt, recalling the Everest expedition of 1953, observed, "I don't mind admitting that mountains made me pray." Pokhara was another hippie Mecca: dirt-cheap eating houses and accommodation, JJ Cale and Eric Clapton and dope haze in the air (and still so when I visited three decades later!), the beautiful Lake Phewa on the doorstep, all manner of shops filled with exotic fare, thanka workshops, zoned-out hippies, here and there serious trekkers and climbers, mountaineering literature available in cheap Indian editions. I read Maurice Herzog's account of the legendary first-climb of Annapurna, starting an obsessive collection of mountaineering books which now numbers several hundred volumes.

The trek itself was a bit of a fiasco. Our ostensible destination was Annapurna Base Camp deep within the Annapurna Sanctuary. Half the time we were lost. Surprisingly we made it most of the way there. We had a makeshift map of sorts but it was of little help. The Nepalese trekking industry had not yet established itself and there were only a few Westerners about. Most nights we spent in our sleeping bags on the verandah of some humble village dwelling, sharing the family's meal of dahl, rice and a few leaves of spinach, "talking" in sign language with the locals who were still surprised to see Western folk. Richard and I had our only argument of the trip in Pokhara. I insisted we buy some food, mainly unappetizing stuff in cans. Richard said it was unnecessary: people lived up there so there must be food we could buy along the way. We lugged some cans for the first few days. Richard was right.

The trek was thrilling; no other word will do. Walking along the ridges in the sharp mountain air, bumping here and there into a herd of goats or a donkey train coming from Mustang, every few hours coming across the scattered huts of a village, all the while in a state of mild intoxication at the spectacle of the vast Himalayan Range. After a few days of reasonably hard walking we settled in for a restful interlude – it may have been at Chomrong, I'm not sure. Here, with the huge choughs floating on the airstream high above the valleys, I sat under a tree on a grassy slope and read *The Way of the White Clouds*, a heart-churning and mind-bending book of great beauty and depth, one to which I have returned several times over the years and to which I later frequently referred in my course on Eastern Religion and Philosophy. Govinda's Preface to the book is one of the most eloquent and moving statements about the tragic fate of nomadic and indigenous cultures.

After completing our sojourn in Nepal we headed for Benares. By this time we had teamed up with a university-days friend, Helen McCallum, who had been doing a meditation retreat at Kathmandu's Kopan Monastery, the headquarters of Lama Yeshe, soon to become well known in the West. I was more financial than the other two and flew to Benares. They came by train but were arrested on the way, suspected (wrongly) of smuggling drugs so I had to wait a couple of days wondering what might have happened to them. We did all the usual things in Benares: visits to the ghats, a boat ride on the Ganges, a visit to the deer park at Sarnath, the site of the Buddha's first sermon, shopping in the markets. Richard and Helen stayed on in the holy city while I caught the train to Dehra Dun and then a bus to Mussoorie to visit Woodstock and old childhood haunts around Landour. Thence back to Dehra Dun where I was joined by Richard. We found a room with a shaded rooftop where we spent our days thanka-painting, reading, drinking chai. Here I read the other Govinda book, *Foundations of Tibetan Buddhism*, a more demanding study fathoming the depths of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy, largely focused on the highly elaborated doctrine of the *Bodhisattva*. Finally it was time for me to return to Australia to resume my teaching at SWOW. Richard and Helen returned to Kopan

Monastery to do some sustained Buddhist study and practice. A little later Helen donned the nun's robes.

At the end of 1975 I resigned from the Education Department, fired up with a new enthusiasm, communes. Eleven of us had banded together to buy some land and three tottering buildings in Major's Creek, once a gold-mining town but now a small village with only one public building, the pub. Major's Creek nestled in the tablelands above the orchards of Araluen Valley, about 15k west of Braidwood, the locale for the popular movie, *The Year My Voice Broke*. Braidwood was on the main route from Canberra to the South Coast and was in the early stages of gentrification but such developments by-passed Major's Creek altogether. We called our new property "Tarlina", an Aboriginal word meaning "Gathering Place". The other participants: Bill Searl, my schooldays friend, sister Pamela and her friend Liz Beadman, Richard Kelly, a recently acquired friend, Pam Garrard, formerly Stein's girlfriend and one of my companions on the *Fairstar*, now hooked up with brother Pete, and four former SWOW students now at university and art school, Virginia Ryan (now my girlfriend), Kathy Walters, Judy Pickering, and Graham Anderson, and Graham's brother Malcolm. We owned the property collectively, and all contributed to its upkeep, both financially and in terms of creative labour. From memory I think we had to scrape up about $1500 each to buy the place.

"Tarlina" was not a fully-fledged commune in the sense that we all retained our financial independence. A few of us lived on the property and everyone else and many friends came and went as they pleased, some coming down from work or university every weekend, others coming more intermittently. I lived there full-time for about eighteen months but remained a member for many years thereafter. Over the eighteen months I exhausted the funds I had saved up while teaching; they didn't last as long as I had planned. In 1977 I returned to work, for a term at Lyneham High School, a bit of a nightmare, and then back to SWOW.

Soon after "Tarlina" became a going concern Peter, Richard, and Pete's best school-friend, Geoff Smedley moved into an old farmhouse at Cunningham Plains, more or less between Braidwood and Major's Creek. Later they were joined by our

former housemate in O'Connor, Paul Brammall. Nine cats were in residence. I still remember most of them by name, Psyche, a ginger cat of placid temperament being the favourite. Peter Booth had persuaded the group that a viable livelihood might be found in the production of an art easel which he had designed (in the first place for his own use). Peter was a painter. He lived mainly on dates and lentils. Richard was keen to make furniture. The group purchased some wood-working machinery, set up a workshop and started work. For several years they cobbled together an agreeable life there. The Araluen orchards provided summertime employment picking fruit. We all moved freely between the two properties. To the west of Major's Creek, down towards Captain's Flat, lived my friend Alan, now doing a PhD at ANU, and his girl-friend and later wife Sally (formerly Geoff Smedley's wife). There was also a constant stream of visitors from Canberra.

Life at Tarlina shaped itself into a pleasing rhythm. "Work" in the morning, repairing the buildings (I was not much of a handyman but I tried), painting, creating veggie patches, constructing fences, planting trees. Lunch. Reading and writing in the early afternoon. Domestic chores in the late afternoon, cooking, chopping firewood, emptying the dunny-can (no septic tank). Dinner. Evenings we lazed about talking, listening to music, occasionally watching a movie. Bill had installed a 16mm projector in the Dark Room, adjacent to the main living area. A lot of old film classics could be borrowed from the National Library and we occasionally splashed out on a film which we hired commercially. Robert Altman's *Nashville* was one. Other recreational activities included visits to "Nirvana Pool" in the Araluen Valley, pub meals, visiting friends in the area, photography and messing about in the Dark Room, excursions to gather magic mushrooms. One winter Pamela organized her friend, Sydney photographer Robert McFarlane, to give us a Photography Workshop, further fuelling my enthusiasm. There was always plenty of time for reading. During this period I launched myself into a wide-ranging study of religions and philosophies from all around the globe as well as continuing to read a lot of literature. It was at Tarlina that I read what are

arguably the two most imposing novels of the 20th century, both by Thomas Mann: *Doctor Faustus* and *The Magic Mountain*.

From time to time in the Tarlina days some of us would motor up to Sydney for rock concerts at one of the downtown venues or, more often than not, at the Showgrounds. The highlight was Bob Dylan's gig at the Showgrounds in 1978 but they were nearly all good – Fairport Convention, Jackson Browne, Lou Reed, Steeleye Span, the Amazing Rhythm Aces – and in Canberra Joan Armatrading, Hank Snow, Slim Dusty and others. By the 80s it was Dire Straits, Bruce Springsteen, the Everly Brothers (!). There were only two serious let-downs: Van Morrison – "the fat, grumpy, balding Irishman" as I heard him described on the radio – who scowled at the fans and generally looked completely uninterested, but his music had given me so much pleasure that it was easy to forgive him; and JJ Cale who played a set of about thirty-five minutes, never said a word, and disappeared forthwith.

During the 70s I was also travelling to Melbourne once or twice each year, spending time with Bruce and Gael, catching up with cousins Sue and Scott, spending far too much money at the Mystical Bookshop and the Whole Earth Bookstore in Bourke St. Early on in the piece I saw the Stones at Kooyong Stadium. There were also footy matches, Lygon Street, the old cinemas. Despite the fact that I only ever lived in Melbourne for less than two years, still the case, it always felt like "home". And after all, it was my birthplace. I also remember an early visit to Sydney, perhaps 1973, when Pete and I met up with Pamela and her boyfriend, John Warner. In their sparsely furnished digs in Ultimo we sat around listening to some music which knocked me for the proverbial six: John Prine's first album, especially the haunting "Hello in There", and a bluegrass album by the Stanley Brothers: goose-bumps, no kidding! John was a serious *aficionado* of traditional forms of folk music as well as the wave of progressive singer-songwriters of the time.

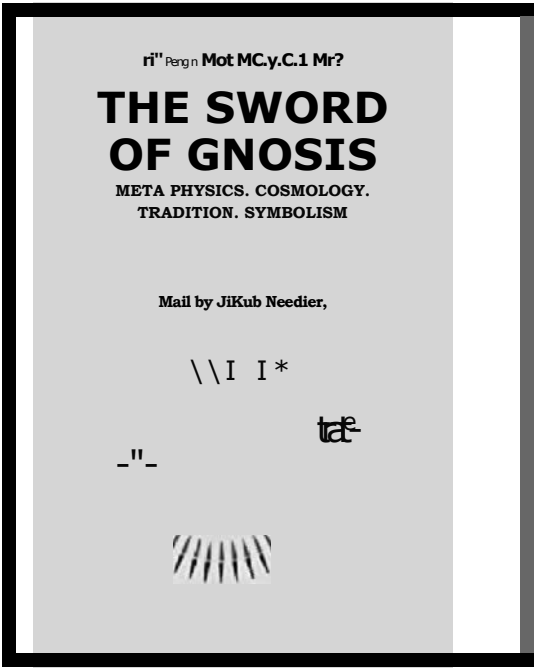
In winter 1976 (I think) I underwent a thirty-day *Lam-rin* study and meditation retreat at Chenrezig Institute, a recently-founded Tibetan Buddhist community in south-east Queensland under the guidance of Lama Yeshe and his young associate, Lama Zopa (now head of the international Buddhist network, the FMPT

and "patron" of the Atisha Centre here in Bendigo.) Lama Yeshe was a vibrant, charismatic personality, full of jokes and anecdotes and boisterous laughter as well as deep teaching. Lama Zopa was less colourful but his piety and devotion made a deep impression on me; one of the most saintly persons I've ever encountered. I was accompanied on this trip by Virginia's younger sister, Fiona. She lasted the distance. I lasted twenty-seven days and then threw in my prayer-shawl, so to speak. No talking, no smoking, very little eating, not enough sleeping, many hours of edifying talks and rigorous meditation sessions, and no reading apart from approved texts. Fortunately I had brought Schuon's *The Transcendent Unity of Religions* with me. It passed muster. I also had Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* in my backpack. I slipped it out one night to read by torchlight in my tent but then Lama Yeshe's admonitions about reading matter rumbled through my consciousness; I returned it to my pack. Four weeks of mild austerities did me in. I started *Under Western Eyes* on the long train trip back to Sydney.

Another excursion that year was a solo motorcycle ride to Adelaide to visit Alan and Sally, camping out near Hay on the way, the Grampians on the return journey. For a year or so I was getting about on a Suzuki 500cc Titan. Motorbikes were in fashion in our circle at that time: Richard, Peter, Richard Kelly all had bikes and there was much discussion about their relative merits.

During my two spells at SWOW I seemed to be always on the move as far as my accommodation was concerned, living first with Bill in Westgarth St in O'Connor, then in a group house in Ainslie, followed by a few months in Curtin with Bill and a new friend, John Hambly, who had married my former girlfriend Jenny but was now separated, and finally with Virginia back in Ainslie. John, then a doctoral candidate in biological science, was to become one of my closest friends in the 80s. It was a chaotic but very enjoyable period of my life. But by the late 70s it was time to get serious. The Chenrezig retreat in '76 was one symptom of a profound "turning about in the soul".

6.
Lightning Bolt
A Turning About



Winter, 1975, Nardoo Crescent, O'Connor. Slouched in a beanbag, pallid sun filtering through the window. I'm reading *Nation Review* a weekly magazine, and have alighted on a review of the latest Grateful Dead Record, *From the Mars Hotel*. Sounds good. My eye wanders down the page to a book review of *The Sword of Gnosis*, edited by Jacob Needleman. Looks interesting, certainly something different from my usual fare. I motor down to my regular bookshop in Civic and am pleasantly surprised to find a copy. Take it home, start reading. It's a compilation of writings, subtitled "Metaphysics, Cosmology, Tradition, Symbolism". Heavy-duty. By the time I've read the first two essays the initial psychic tremor has turned into serious tumult. "No Activity without Truth" and "Oriental Metaphysics" by two authors of whom I have never heard, Frithjof Schuon and René Guénon, ignite my Road to Damascus moment. I am blinded, dumbstruck, I know I have come across something extraordinary. That moment proved to be a kind of pivot after which nothing was going to be the same – my worldview, my self-understanding, my aspirations, my inner journey, in short, my life. Everything was turned inside out and perhaps upside down as well. Later I read Seyyed Hossein Nasr's account of the impact in the West of Guénon's early writings on Vedanta: "It was like a sudden burst of lightning, an abrupt intrusion into the modern world of a body of knowledge and a perspective utterly alien to the prevalent climate and world view and completely opposed to all that characterizes the modern mentality" (from *Knowledge and the Sacred*). Exactly so! One of the strangest aspects of the experience was that although the perennialist perspective was unknown to me I spontaneously understood it. I had unknowingly been suffering from an intellectual and spiritual thirst which could now be assuaged. These writings were, to be sure, challenging, often dense and recondite, but, unlike many other readers coming to Guénon et al. for the first time, I had no difficulty in understanding them. I hurtled through the rest of *The Sword of Gnosis*, discovering other authors who were to become my constant companions on the journey ahead: Titus Burckhardt, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Martin Lings, Marco Pallis, to mention only the most

eminent. I was soon to move to Major's Creek but before that I made a trip to Melbourne to plunder the bookshops for works by these authors. The Mystical Bookshop, a pokey little hole in an arcade off Bourke Street, and the Theosophical Bookshop in Russell Street both had extensive holdings. By the end of the year I must have had thirty or more books by perennialist authors, enough to keep me going for some time! The first work I read at Major's Creek was Schuon's *Light on the Ancient Worlds* which included mind-twisting essays on monasticism, Native American Shamanism and the inflated pretensions of scientism. It soon became apparent that, for me, the most profound, the most beautiful and the most exhaustive exegesis of perennialism was to be found in the prolific writings of Frithjof Schuon. Two of my books, *Traditionalism: Religion in the light of the Perennial Philosophy* (2000) and *Frithjof Schuon and the Perennial Philosophy* (2010) are attempts to give a detailed and coherent account of Schuon's work and of "perennialism" as a whole. A lengthy exposition here, amidst my meandering personal reminiscences, would be out of place so the briefest of summations must suffice.

These thinkers affirmed a *sophia perennis,* a timeless wisdom which is the birthright of all humanity and which informs all traditional mythologies and religions. In their manifold forms and in their own distinctive symbolic languages, all these traditions, primordial as well as historical, give expression to an immutable and unanimous set of metaphysical, cosmological and spiritual principles which mystically converge in what Schuon called "the transcendent unity of religions". However, for the most part, for most people, these principles or axioms are only accessible and intelligible *in* and *through* the particular forms (myths, doctrines, texts, sacred art, rituals and so on) bequeathed to humanity through a series of Revelations, divine dispensations, of which the Descent of the *Quran* is the last. As Schuon writes, "In all epochs and in all countries there have been revelations, religions, wisdoms; tradition is a part of mankind just as man is part of tradition" (*From the Divine to the Human*). Each tradition has a formal integrity, a kind of homogeneity, which is protected by the principle of orthodoxy. To mix or "synthesize" forms from

different religious traditions would be as ill-advised and as futile as trying to speak several different languages simultaneously. As each religious tradition contains within itself all things necessary for our spiritual welfare it is for the individual wayfarer to commit to one tradition (in normal circumstances the one into which he/she is born) and to follow the prescribed path.

Each tradition has an outer and an inner dimension, the exoteric and esoteric, the visible and the hidden or, in Biblical terms, we might say the "letter" and the "spirit". Within the esoteric domain, accessible to sages, adepts, anchorites, mystics, *jnanins*, it is possible discern the metaphysical principles which constitute the *sophia perennis*. Almost always this understanding is attained not by abandoning or by-passing the unique forms of the tradition in question but by penetrating them, by seeing them as translucent, thus grasping both their implacable *necessity* and their *relativity*. In the peculiar times in which we live, the *Kali Yuga*, marked by the collision of religious traditions in all parts of the world, "there are those whose vocation it is to provide the keys with which the treasury of wisdom of other traditions can be unlocked, revealing to those who are destined to receive this wisdom the essential unity and universality and at the same time the formal diversity of tradition and revelation" (S.H. Nasr, *Sufi Essays*). This is the agenda of the perennialists in a world in which the prevailing mentality, indeed modernity as a whole, is a *negation* of all those principles and values vouchsafed by Tradition. (This is the central theme of Guénon's *magnum opus*, *The Reign of Quantity*, one of the cardinal texts of the whole traditionalist movement.)

So profound was the impact of the traditionalist writings that I made several resolutions which would alter my intellectual framework and my spiritual trajectory: to make a serious and sustained study of these writers; to try to fashion my inner life in conformity with these teachings; to devote my professional career, insofar as possible, to the dissemination of the perennialist outlook. Furthermore, I would remain mindful of Schuon's dictum that, whatever the external contingencies might be, no activity on behalf of the truth is ever in vain. I had since schooldays been convinced that I had a gift for teaching but now I had found

something which could truly be called a vocation – that is to say, a calling which went way beyond the exigencies of a "career", or "making a living", a *karma-yoga* which could be practised in the spirit extolled in the *Bhagavad Gita,* work pursued for its own sake and without concern about the fruits thereof. Henceforth my "career" (never actually a matter of over-riding concern) was not an end in itself but rather a means by which the "true work" could be accomplished or at least attempted. It was with such an ideal in mind that later, after I had embarked once again on academic work, that I resolved that I would take no payment beyond my normal salary for any endeavour which could be thought of as work in the vineyard of the Lord. So it was that I forfeited the royalties on all of my books and turned down offers of payment for talks, seminars, public lectures etc – not that such offers were frequent, nor that book royalties were in any danger of dramatically inflating my income! Sometimes I was happy to be reimbursed for expenses. I think the only exception concerning payment beyond expenses was when a journal based in Doha commissioned an article. I figured there was already too much money washing about in the Middle East!

The immediate result of this "turning about" was a re-examination of my attitude, somewhat ambivalent since university days, to religion in general and to Christianity in particular. By now I again wholeheartedly shared Cardinal Newman's conviction: "There is a God – the most august of all conceivable truths." I also believed that Christ was a Divine Messenger (one of many) with a teaching timeless and true for all "with eyes to see, and ears to hear". As Schuon observed, the eternal truths are always available but they cannot impose themselves on those unwilling to listen. I did not imagine, neither then nor since, that I had fathomed the great mysteries, nor that I had realized the noble teachings. But thenceforth I again thought of myself as a Christian, now by choice and conviction rather than simply by upbringing. But I saw no need to broadcast the fact and certainly had not the slightest interest in proselytizing. I intended to observe Wittgenstein's adjuration: "Make sure your religion is a matter between you and God only."

As well as refurbishing my inner life through prayer, meditation, and reading the Scriptures (but not yet re-entering the life of the Church) I plunged into wide-ranging reading about all those things which might come under the canopy of "religion" and "tradition". I was especially interested in Christian writers whose outlook was more or less compatible with perennialism. Most of these were the mystics of yore (Meister Eckhart, St John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Saint Seraphim of Sarov among them) or, from more recent times, people who had had some existential engagement with Eastern spirituality. Of these Thomas Merton was the most influential. I read his works avidly and was particularly impressed and moved by *New Seeds of Contemplation* and *Asian Journal*. I set about collecting all his works until it became clear that this would be a more or less endless enterprise and probably one of diminishing returns as more and more compilations were appearing like mushrooms after rain. It is no doubt true, as Marco Pallis observed in a letter to the Trappist, that he wrote too much. But heck, I'm not complaining. I found Merton a fascinating figure and a writer of rare grace and clarity. I also read several books by Bede Griffiths, an English Benedictine who had moved to South India to pursue the monastic life in a Christian ashram, Shantivanam, established earlier by the French monk, Henri Le Saux, known in India as Swami Abhishiktananda. It was not until some years later that I became more interested in the latter figure after Peter had again insisted that, unless I wanted to wear cement underpants at the bottom of Lake Burley Griffin, there was another book I *must* read. In this case it was Abhishiktananda's profound study of the *Upanishads*, *The Further Shore*. (Swami Shivananda made this book prescribed reading for the monastic novices at his ashram in Rishikesh which might be described as a remarkable vote of confidence; imagine the Pope prescribing Shivananda's writings on Christianity as an essential text for aspiring novices in Rome!) Another Christian writer to command my attention was William Johnston, an Irish Jesuit who spent many years in Japan where he immersed himself in the study of Zen Buddhism. I was also gripped by the spiritual journey of Simone Weil, travelling a difficult path between her own Judaic

heritage and the Catholic tradition to which she felt so powerful an attraction. Jung was another on my syllabus.

A recurrent problem which preoccupied me for several years, one that must be pondered by all thoughtful people, concerns the presence of evil in the world, in our time manifested in its most hideous guise in the Holocaust, the signature event of the twentieth century. Not a problem that can ever be entirely resolved but I found some comfort in the observation made by one of the many philosophers confronting this particular descent into bestiality: "In the face of the Holocaust the question to be asked is not 'Where was God?' but 'Where was man?'." The most persuasive theodicy was that centering on free will, given one its most powerful expressions in the work of Dostoevsky. As far as the related question of sin goes I am entirely of one mind with Emil Cioran: "I haven't much use for anyone who can spare Original Sin. Myself, I resort to it on every occasion, and without it I don't see how I should avoid uninterrupted consternation."

Three significant changes in my intellectual outlook deserve brief mention, each fuelled by my reading of the perennialist writers. Each was a kind of liberation. Firstly, political concerns became less pressing. I came to share Coomaraswamy's view that while politics are not unimportant, political problems are most often a symptom of a malaise whose deepest roots are intellectual and spiritual. Secondly, the perennialist writers helped me to escape the influence of modern ideologies and philosophies which now seemed like variations on a single profane theme. I became more aware of the tyrannical grip of scientism, especially in its evolutionist and Social Darwinian-progressivist guise. I gave up on "the Enlightenment Project" and the various other "pseudo-mythologies" (Guénon) of modernity. Thirdly – though this issue is more complex and ambiguous – I came to recognize "culturism" and its attendant cult of "genius" as yet another anti-traditional strand in the modern *weltanschauung*, one particularly favoured by deracinated intellectuals.

All through the late 70s I was making an intensive study of the works of Frithjof Schuon and the other traditionalists, especially Ananda Coomaraswamy and Seyyed Hossein Nasr. By now I had accumulated an extensive collection of the back issues

of the primary forum for traditionalist discourse, *Studies in Comparative Religion*. I eventually determined to pursue more formal tertiary studies. Inspired by the example of Peter, now enrolled in Religious Studies at Sydney University, I decided I wanted to write a postgraduate dissertation on perennialism, focusing on Schuon's writings. (How often I followed in the path of my brother, five years younger but often at least five years wiser!)

It was about this time that I made another small but not insignificant decision to give up recreational drug-use, which in my case meant marijuana, speed, LSD and magic mushrooms. Tobacco and alcohol were exempted. I made this decision on purely expedient grounds. Whatever therapeutic and social ends drug-use may have served earlier they had by now become a distraction, a left-over from my hippie days now best put aside. Unfortunately, I didn't have the resolve to deal with the tobacco addiction – the endless chattering nicotine monkeys in the mind – in the same manner as Peter: sometime during the Tarlina days he simply took a vow that he would not smoke for three months, a vow which he honoured and after which he never smoked again. Taking a vow was a matter of some weight. I think Peter took this vow more seriously than many young people these days apparently take their marriage vows.

My initial approach to the Religious Studies department was not encouraging for at least two reasons: Professor Eric Sharpe, Head of the Department, told me that my First Class Honours degree in History, and my subsequent study and work at La Trobe and Oxford, were not sufficient to gain admittance to the postgraduate program – a serious blow, perhaps a little below the belt; secondly, he had strong misgivings about the legitimacy and viability of my proposed research project; this was even worse! He also stated that should I wish to be considered for postgraduate work I would first have to complete at least one year of full-time study of several undergraduate and Honours units offered within the department. I think he hoped that such a prospect might be a deterrent and that I would simply go away. At this point the Professor had only a jaundiced understanding of Schuon and his work, wrongly categorizing him as some kind of "New Age" occultist and counterfeit "guru". He was not unfriendly

and by no means hostile to me personally but he clearly thought I was wasting my time. He hadn't reckoned on my commitment. The gist of my response to him was "OK, I'll resign my job, I'll move to Sydney, I'll study here full-time, I'll complete the necessary RS units. But then I want to do a Masters on Schuon." Implicit in all this was an undercurrent: "One day I might persuade you that Schuon is a figure to be reckoned with".

And so it was that I set forth. I uprooted myself from Canberra, lugged all my earthly belongings (mainly books) to Sydney, moved into a scungy old terrace in Newtown with Peter and his good friend Brian Macauley (known as "Thomas", reputedly because of some likeness to the doubting saint). I had saved enough money to keep me afloat for about a year so I was able to immerse myself in my new studies which encompassed courses on Scandinavian mythology and the Pagan-Christian encounter (one of the Prof's areas of expertise; he was married to a Swede and spent a lot of time in Uppsala), the Indian Philosophical Schools (taken by Arvind Sharma), Melanesian Cargo Cults (Professor Garry Trompf) and Methodology in the Comparative Study of Religion (in which all of the RS staff were involved). In the last-mentioned course we studied the work, particularly the rationale and methodology, of figures such as Mircea Eliade, Cantwell Smith, Joachim Wach, Rudolf Otto and Akë Hultkranz. This and Arvind Sharma's course I found to be the most engaging, interesting and useful. The Professor did me the courtesy of permitting me to attend staff and postgraduate seminars where we had all manner of interesting speakers; the one making the deepest impression on me was Zen Roshi Robert Aitken.

I worked hard and even gained some credit with the Prof with my first essay, on *Beowulf.* During the year I also wrote seminar papers on Ananda Coomaraswamy and Schuon, finding a sympathetic and supportive reader in John Cooper, a Zen teacher and tutor in the department. He gave me every encouragement. By the end of the year I had completed all the requirements, had attained good results and had whittled down at least some of Eric Sharpe's resistance to my proposed research project. On the basis of my results I was awarded a scholarship which would help keep

body and soul together over the next year. Because I had already done so much private reading and research on Schuon, and some writing, I was confident I could complete the Masters in a year.

The year in the Religious Studies Department had been a wonderful experience. The ambience was friendly, lively, provocative in the best sense, the staff congenial and the coursework interesting. The other RS students, of various ages, backgrounds and personal affiliations, were the most diverse and the most intellectually intrepid group I had encountered in any academic context. It was also a great delight to me to be pursuing these studies in the same department in which Pete was deepening his scholarship in Buddhist studies and Oriental languages. He went on to complete a doctorate in Sanskrit and Buddhist Philosophy, and later worked in the RS Department as the lecturer in charge of Indian Studies.

Social life was also pleasant. I had the opportunity to develop my friendship with John Hambly, met some new friends and caught up with old ones. My inner life had undergone a "turning about" but the outer life was largely the same: eating out with friends in low-rent joints in Redfern and the City, wandering around harbour-side, scavenging in second-hand bookshops, *yum-cha* in Chinatown, parties, movies, rock concerts, occasional excursions into the bush, frequent trips to Canberra. During the Sydney sojourn I also did some work for *The International Record Review*, a high-calibre but short-lived magazine which carried record and film reviews. I wrote a number of reviews of both kinds. The recompense was modest but one collected records for free and felt vaguely important going to the critics' previews of new release films, usually embellished by free food and drinks. As always, seeing one's writing in print provoked a pleasurable tingle and a pride quite disproportionate to the achievement. At this distance the only films I can remember reviewing were Woody Allen's *Manhattan*, *The Rose*, a rock musical with Bette Midler, and *Heart Beat*, a mediocre drama about Jack Kerouac and Neal and Carolyn Cassady. For years I kept my published reviews but these went south in one of my periodic culls. The only review I've retained was a retrospective on Dylan's *Blood on the Tracks* (one

of the great albums of the decade), written on the fifth anniversary of its release.

My "turning about" concerned the encounter with the perennialists and its immediate consequences. But there was another change, equally as fundamental though not as easy to locate in a temporal sense. Between my early university days and the end of the Majors Creek sojourn I had three significant and durable romantic relationships: with Di McManus, Jenny Owen and Virginia Ryan. As far as I was concerned, these had been deep and rewarding, each enriching my life in all sorts of ways. Being of the view that one's most intimate relationships should not be matters for public discussion I have been reticent about their significant place in my life. There were other encounters, mostly harmless and fleeting, excepting one episode where I inadvertently but carelessly wounded a younger person, something which caused me deep shame. One of those cases where one wilfully ignores one's better judgement, indulges in various self-deceptions and refuses to consult the moral compass. A whitened sepulchre. Time to grow up on that front as well.

My relationship with Virginia went through various phases and crises and interruptions but lasted through the second half of the 70s. It was in 1976 that I first met Rose Mazza. She was from an émigré Italian family which had sunk roots in New York City where Rose grew up. In the mid-70s she was travelling the hippie route in SE Asia, spending extended periods in India and Thailand. When her funds ran out someone told her that well-paid work could easily be found in Darwin. Thither she went, finding a job within a day or two of her arrival. Some months later the cataclysmic cyclone arrived, wreaking mayhem on the city and forcing most of the residents into evacuation. Instead of returning to her travels, as she had planned, Rose found herself in Canberra. And, as I like to think, Providence appointed that she should find her way to the School Without Walls where she landed as a science teacher. An Italian-American hippie from New York City! She kept bees, did spinning, dyeing and weaving, grew organic vegetables, drove about like a maniac in a crumpled old VW, smoked rollies, came to school bare-footed, loved parties and was tremendous fun. She was also veering towards the "cosmoid" end

of the hippie spectrum – herbs, crystals, acupuncture, Tarot, yoga – you know the sort of thing. And she had a funny accent. I was intrigued. By the time I came to know her better she was entangled in a serious relationship with a lawyer and I was still in a relationship with Virginia. But there were some sparks there, some chemistry as they say. I came to know Rose more closely when we both worked together in the production of booklet, *Starting Again*, which was full of contributions from students, teachers and parents about the school and the philosophy which had inspired it. A collage of articles, poems, drawings, photographs, cartoons and the like. I still have a dusty copy of it somewhere. A year or so later, during interruptions in our other relationships, Rose and I became more intimately involved. The emotional history of 1978-79 was volatile and convoluted, Rose also forming a relationship with Ralph Hiscox and giving birth to Joshua James in April 1979. Without re-entering this vortex I can say that by the end of 1979, on the brink of my departure for Sydney, three things had emerged from the turmoil: my relationship with Virginia had changed course, she now being enmeshed in a relationship with Giancarlo, an Italian diplomat whom she was soon to marry; similarly, Rose's relationship with Ralph was not a long-term proposition; and thirdly, my relationship with Rose was looming large. During the following year we visited each other frequently, she coming to Sydney, usually with baby Josh in tow, me going to Canberra and staying with them, now living in O'Connor with Noel, a SWOW colleague. By the end of 1980 I had asked her to be my wife; after a little hesitation she agreed. When I told Pete that we were getting married, his surprised reaction was "Why?" to which I replied that as a Buddhist he should know better than to waste time over the Indeterminate Questions. However, my understanding of and attitude to sexual relationships and marriage had undergone some deep changes, partly under the influence of the perennialist and Christian writers. My counter-cultural ideas and values were now being significantly modified. The traditional understanding of femininity, at least in its more positive aspects, foregrounds creativity, receptivity and compassion, and all the other qualities most readily associated with motherhood. Over-arching all these

is the identification of the Feminine and the Beautiful which, arising out of the nature of things, explains why for man (as distinct from woman) the female form must be the most beautiful and alluring of all forms, and a rich and resonant symbol. This kind of understanding, wedded to traditional Christian ideas about the sacramental nature of marriage, gave impetus to the search for a deeper and more meaningful commitment, one in which both parties would recognize and respect the central importance of spiritual growth. It was not necessary that both partners should be on the same path but crucial that each should support and encourage the other. We have maintained this resolve over forty years. I also pondered the Indian adage: "We don't marry the woman we love; we love the woman we marry", which I understood to be signalling something of key significance, namely the importance of the will in marriage, a useful antidote to the more sentimental vapours that had accumulated around romantic love in the modern West. In any event I was going to have it both ways: I was marrying a woman I already loved, and I had every intention of going on loving her, as I would declare in the sacred vows. At this time and for some years after Rose was seriously involved in Zen Buddhist practice, attending many workshops and retreats where she underwent rigorous austerities, particularly in those conducted by Zen Roshi Robert Aitken who had the most exacting expectations. Early on in our marriage we together attended a weekend workshop/retreat conducted by Father Patrick Jansen, a Catholic priest who also had extensive training in both Zen and Jungian psychology.

Before returning to Canberra where I would tie the knot, establish a family home and work on my research, there was a kind of epilogue to the year in Sydney. One of the RS students was a Catholic priest, Bob Stephens. He had recently been on retreat at Shantivanam, the Christian ashram mentioned earlier, presided over by Bede Griffiths. His account of his time there made the idea of a visit very attractive, made more so by the fact that one might also manage a visit to the holy mountain of Arunachala, the great Shivite temple at Tiravannamalai and the ashram which had been the home of one of India's most luminous saints, Ramana Maharshi. During her travels Rose had hugely enjoyed her time at

Kovalam in Kerala. A plan took shape, one which worked out well until the final stage. I had a couple of days in Arunachala and then a week at Shantivanam on the banks of the mighty Kaveri River. In Tiravannamalai I stayed at the Ramana Maharshi ashram. Perhaps they were besieged by too many Western tourists but I had the greatest difficulty in persuading the monk in charge to let me stay within the gated monastic enclosure. Finally he begrudgingly allocated me a small hut for my use, and for which, in appeasement, I felt obliged to make as generous a donation as I could afford. The monastery was very quiet, most of the monks being absent for some reason which I have forgotten, and no other foreigners in residence. Hence I was able to spend a few days of prayer and meditation in more or less complete silence and isolation. Whilst there I also read some of Ramana Maharshi's slender "writings" (actually transcriptions of his talks), a book by one of his Australian devotees, Paul Brunton, and Vita Sackville-West's fine book on St Teresa of Avila and St Therese of Lisieux, *The Eagle and the Dove*. I also made several visits to the nearby temple and climbed the holy mountain, Arunachala, the *axis mundi*, to within a few metres of its rounded peak. From there one looked down on the vast and ancient temple complex, a vantage point from which it was much easier to perceive its cosmic symbolism (elucidated in Adrian Snodgrass's magnificent study entitled *Architecture, Time and Eternity* and in a magisterial essay by Titus Burckhardt).

I reached Shantivaman after a long and riotous train and bus journey, completed on an ox-drawn cart. Here I joined in the daily life of worship, prayer, meditation, study and work, and was twice able to have a lengthy conversation with Bede Griffiths who was intensely interested in my account of perennialism and who at that point had no knowledge of the works of Guénon, Coomaraswamy or Schuon. He had a particular interest in the tensions between what were thought of as "religion" and "science". Some years later I noticed an article in which Father Bede was discussing the work of Seyyed Hossein Nasr and his critique of modern scientism. Whether my enthusiasm for the perennialists had anything to do with his later reading I know not. I'm pleased to think that such a case was at least possible.

Father Bede was an arresting figure. Tall, vital, still physically attractive despite the encroachments of old age which included a slight stoop. At this point he was 74, about the same age as I am at the moment of writing. His long years in India had also given a certain Indian accent to his bearing and manner of speech though he also retained his unmistakable Englishness. He gave *satsang* each afternoon, a motley assortment of seekers and devotees from all over the world gathered at his feet. As well there were the other permanent residents in the ashram and a few folk from the local village. Father Bede would give a discourse on some religious theme, after which there would be questions and discussion. He was softly spoken, very articulate, gentle in demeanour and radiating what the Buddhists would call *prajna* and *karuna*, compassionate wisdom. Certainly one of the most impressive and saintly persons I've had the good fortune to meet in this lifetime. Despite the radical differences between them he reminded me in some ways of Lama Zopa at whose feet I had sat during the Chenrezig retreat in Queensland.

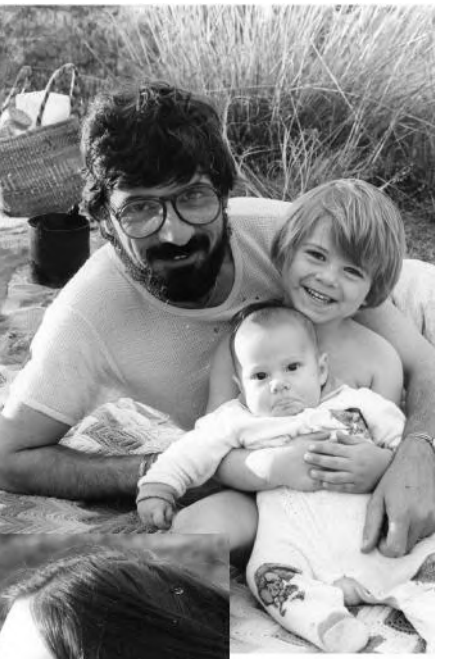
In the early morning and at dusk we worshipped in a beautiful small chapel which Father Bede had designed himself, using an ancient Syrian Christian liturgy but leavened with readings from the Scriptures of the East. The chanting and singing at the evening services was beautiful – evocative, soul-stirring, almost celestial. When we weren't engaged in worship, meditation or *satsang* we completed a few simple chores in the kitchen or garden, wandered through the palms and eucalypts along the banks of the river where one espied cattle bathing in the river, women doing their laundry, urchins at play. I also spent a lot of time in the library, another lovely building which Father Bede had designed and helped to build. It was well stocked, an assortment of books being left behind by the many wayfarers who had stopped over at the ashram. All in all it was a magical, inspiring and purifying week.

I returned to Madras to pick up Rose and Josh, and to team up with my old friend Brendan Moore and his recently acquired wife Suzie with whom we spent a couple of days in Kodaikanal, an old hill station in Tamil Nadu. Some peace and quiet before throwing ourselves into the chaos of Mahabalipuram and Madurai. Then by

train to Kovalam where we settled into village life, walks on the beach where local fishing craft were coming and going, sunsets over the Indian Ocean. While we were there, we discussed quite a long list of D & M (deep and meaningful) questions which Dad had prepared for us, concerning our hopes and expectations of married life. This very agreeable phase of the trip was cut short by baby Joshua suffering the onset of a fever. Our visit to the local hospital did little to allay our concerns so we caught a train back to Madras to fly home as soon as possible. As it happened by the time we arrived in Madras he seemed to have recovered his health and good spirits but by then the die was cast. In the day or two before we could fly out we walked on the beach, visited the markets and saw the buildings and grounds of the Theosophical Society headquarters which Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky had established almost exactly one hundred years earlier.

1980

Misha & Joshua



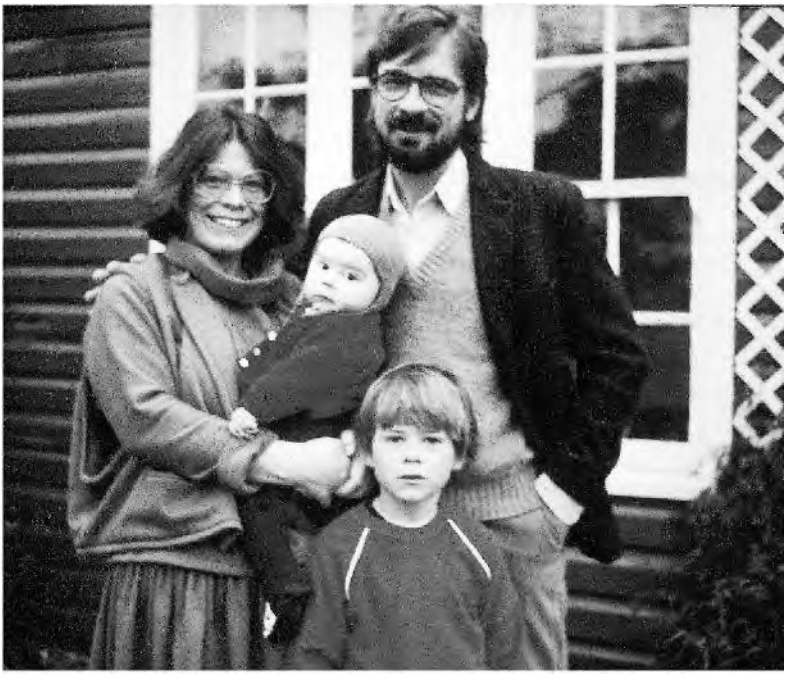
With Jesse,
Tharwa picnic,
March 81

O'Connor

South coast, mid-80s

7.

“The Full Catastrophe”
Family & Work in the 80s



Remember *Zorba the Greek*? Pondering his predicament, Zorba declares to his friend: "Wife, child, house, mortgage: the full catastrophe!" Such was now my plight. We were married by Dad in St John's Church at Ainslie. At that point in his address when Dad made reference to each of us bringing our own baggage to the marriage – no names mentioned – Josh perked up with a loud but unintelligible interjection Some sort of sixth sense at work. Everybody laughed. We had a party in the lovely grounds of the house where Rose, Richard and I were living in Aranda. Rose and I set off for our 24-hour honeymoon, one night sleeping on the floor at Tarlina, and a throw-together picnic on the Shoalhaven River, an old haunt. Josh must have been in the custody of Ralph or his other grandmother, Lea. Then it was back to Canberra for the school year for Rose and the research project for me. Soon after we had to vacate the Aranda house because its owner, a naval higher-up, was returning to Australia because he had been diagnosed with a terminal cancer. The agent found us another house, not as attractive but more centrally located in Ainslie, a short bike-ride from SWOW.

Rose and I had a fair bit of adjusting to do, especially in matters of domestic economy. One day I found her in the kitchen in a state of white heat. Either Richard or I had left an opened can of frankfurters in the fridge. Not only were frankfurters disgusting, leaving them in an opened can in the fridge was altogether unconscionable. Josh was with us for most of the time. I dare say all four of us had to make some accommodations.

One way and another I didn't really start work on my thesis until late March: only nine months left until my allotted deadline. I set up a study in the garage and constructed a plan. 14 chapters. 14 cardboard cartons lined up like soldiers on a long shelf running down the side of the garage. Over the next few months I pursued an incessant program of gathering and reading journal articles and other material in various libraries, the Chifley and Menzies at ANU, St Mark's in Barton, and the National Library. Computers and data bases were not yet part of normal life and there was a lot of leg-work to be done. As I accumulated each new item – an

article, a review, an index, a photocopied chapter from some obscure book or journal – I threw it into the box in which I supposed it belonged. After a few months of ferreting and scavenging in the libraries I settled into the writing, chapter by chapter. I would read everything in the relevant box and then start writing furiously, not paying any heed to the prose style and not much to the organization of the material. I followed the principle that getting something down on paper was the most daunting task, best accomplished as soon as possible. After that I found the business of re-organizing, editing, refining and polishing very enjoyable. Writing has always been a great pleasure. I count myself most fortunate that eventually I found a job where I was actually *paid* to research and write!

I was still expected to attend staff and postgraduate seminars at Sydney University, and to give a presentation myself. Somewhat to my alarm and without warning, an old friend from Dad's days in theological training turned up for my presentation. He was the Rev. Dr. Eric Osborne, Professor of New Testament and Early Church History at Queen's College, a world heavyweight in Patristic Studies. He was later to supervise one of my students doing a doctorate on Clement of Alexandria. My paper was on Schuon's understanding of metaphysics, theology and philosophy, the three being in a sort of descending hierarchy. Not the sort of thing to which Professor Osborne would take kindly I thought. But, as usual, I need not have worried. He was gentle in his questioning and gracious in his comments after the seminar. Perhaps he had fond memories of the time, nearly twenty years earlier, when he had accompanied Dad and myself to a test match at the MCG. He and Dad spent the day with an eye on the cricket but all the while discussing Queen's College, Methodist Church gossip and even a little theology as well. At the time Dad was studying for the Bachelor of Divinity to add to his Arts degree and licentiate in theology. The cricket derived an extra piquancy from the fact that the Rev. David Shepherd was playing for England. I remember wicket-keeper Barry Jarman taking a sprawling catch down legside in the last over of the day. England were 1/5. But Shepherd made a century the next day to carry England to victory.

(The series was drawn one-all.) Over the years Mum and Dad kept in touch with the Osbornes until Eric's death in 2007.

My Canberra social life resumed but in somewhat gentler and more family-oriented mode than in earlier days. Bushwalks in the Brindabellas, picnics at Tharwa and by the lake, card evenings with Caroline Dawson and Richard, dinners at Mawson, friendly relations with Josh's other grandparents, Lea and Adrian, as well as continuing involvement, now at some distance, with the SWOW community where Rose was still working. One new friendship was with Richard Kelly who had developed a serious interest in perennialism, providing me with an interlocutor with whom I could now bounce around some ideas.

Before long Rose was pregnant and we were on the lookout for a house of our own. Eventually we found a modest brick box in Dryandra St, up on the O'Connor Ridge. It commanded a splendid view over North Canberra to Mt Ainslie. With some help from Mum and Dad we were able to muster a deposit and purchase it. Soon Dorothy, Rose's oldest sister, came on a visit from New York. She was appalled by our lax attitude to domestic standards and spent the first couple of days scrubbing everything in sight. She was for many years the only visitor from Rose's family. It was about this time that Dad won a Churchill Scholarship which entailed some study in the USA. Mum and Dad took the opportunity to visit Rose's father, step-mother and some of her siblings in New York. They were overwhelmed by Italian hospitality and somewhat exhausted by the amount of food which was put in front of them several times a day. It was to be another couple of years before I could enjoy the same experience.

Back at my desk in Ainslie and then at Dryandra Street I kept my head down and was able to finish a draft by some time in October. I then spent another six weeks revising and rewriting. The whole thing had to be bashed out on a typewriter, wrestling with the formatting, the positioning of footnotes and such. How much easier it was the next time I had to write such a lengthy dissertation, for my doctorate in Cinema Studies, when one could change the text at a whim, excise, insert and move material about on the computer screen until everything was just so. The thesis was printed, bound and despatched to Sydney in December. I

could take a deep breath and enjoy the summer before confronting the prospect of a return to the classroom, destination unknown.

As was the convention at that time, I was asked by the Professor whether I had any suggestions as to who should examine my thesis. I grasped the nettle and nominated two eminent international scholars who would no doubt be rigorous but, I hoped, sympathetic as well. One was Huston Smith, the doyen of comparative religionists, the author of the wildly successful *The Religions of Man*, and now at Syracuse University but soon to move to the University of California Berkeley. The other was Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr, himself a leading perennialist but also an Islamic scholar of high international standing, well qualified in both science and philosophy. After graduating from Harvard he had returned to Iran to become Director of the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, the first institution of learning to be firmly anchored in the principles espoused by the traditionalist school. By this time he had published some dozen books and many acclaimed him as the world's leading Islamicist. So these two fellows had plenty of cred. I also knew from our conversations that Professor Sharpe held each in high regard. If they were to give my work their imprimatur I would surely have gone at least some of the way in breaking down his scepticism about Schuon. Some weeks later I received news that the examiners were pleased with my dissertation and that the degree would be awarded forthwith. I was immensely chuffed by the examiners' reports. Not only that, I had been awarded the Sydney University Medal for excellence in research. This could only have happened at the instigation of the RS department and, at the least, with the approval of the Professor. So, my plans of two years earlier had come to a happy fruition.

One disappointment during the year arose when I wrote to Frithjof Schuon, explaining the nature of my work and asking if I might be able to meet him in person. I was quite prepared to go to Lausanne, where he was then living, solely for that purpose. My letter was intercepted by Whitall Perry, Schuon's neighbour and assistant. Perry wrote me a rather cold letter stating that Schuon had no interest in academic work and that he only ever had

personal dealings with individuals who were seriously considering joining the *tariqah* of which he was the head. I don't doubt that both Schuon and Perry had good reasons for their scepticism about academics – one which I largely shared! But I was sorry about this rebuff for two reasons. I wanted Mr Schuon to see my work. I hope he would not have been displeased. More importantly it would have been a great privilege to meet face to face with the person who, in my mind, was the greatest metaphysician and religious philosopher of the modern era. Twenty years later when my first book had finally been published, by which time Schuon had gone to the Further Shore, Mr Perry wrote to me again, this time in much more friendly terms, commending my exposition of Schuon's *oeuvre*. I also had a similar letter from Mrs Schuon at about the same time. These letters meant a great deal to me, assuring me that people in Schuon's inner circle did not regard me simply as a smart-alec academic. Later I would be very pleased to meet Mrs Schuon in person in Edmonton and again in Bloomington. By this time Whitall Perry had also departed this world but I was able to meet his son Mark Perry who was working on new translations of Schuon's works.

Now it was time to return to the coal face. There were no openings at SWOW. I was at the mercy of Ralph Taber, the merciless man in the Schools Authority in charge of secondary school appointments. He gave me an unsympathetic reception. Oddly enough he later became friendly with my parents when they were living on the south coast. In the interim his wife had become an Anglican deaconess. Anyway, Ralph sent me off to Watson High School in one of Canberra's less salubrious northern suburbs. I was again confronted with a principal out of the old mould, not unlike Wally What's-his-name at Telopea. He was a short, angry Scotsman with a military haircut and an abrasive manner. He should have been a regimental sergeant-major, barking orders at a ragtag bunch of disorderly privates on the parade-ground. That's how he treated his staff. I was appointed as an English teacher, as I had been at Telopea and Dickson High Schools. Watson High was not much of a place to be but it was made tolerable by a very understanding Head of English Department, Helga McPhee, well known in school circles for her

active role in the affairs of the Teachers' Federation, our professional union. Helga went out of her way to make me feel welcome and to smooth my passage by allocating me some of the easier junior classes. Most of the English staff were friendly and agreeable folk. One of the better aspects of my appointment was that the school was only a few kilometres from Dryandra Street, an easy bike ride. But my year at Watson was purgatorial and I desperately hoped for an appointment to one of the new secondary colleges the following year.

Early in that year, 1981, Jesse Joseph was born in our new home at Dryandra Street, brought into the world by the combined efforts of Rose and Irene, our homebirth mid-wife. It was a difficult birth and the first twenty-four hours were anxiety-making with the regular doctor concerned about his apparently precarious state. But all was well. Jesse was a dear little chap, soon to be greatly fussed over by family and friends, and not least by Joshua who was immensely proud of the tiny fellow. But our happiness was short-lived. At the age of ten weeks, without warning, Jesse died of cot-death. One of the most sharply etched moments of my life, going to retrieve him from his cot in the early hours of the morning, only to find him dead. And then the heartbreak for Rose, the trauma for Josh, the wails of anguish from Mum when I told her the news over the phone, Dad's heartfelt declaration that he wished he could have died instead. Life turned altogether grey for a while despite the loving support we received from all sorts of people. For some reason I especially remember the huge bunch of flowers my cousin Scott brought to us, having immediately come up from Melbourne. I also remember how distressed our friend John Hambly was, and I recall a lovely letter sent by my former supervisor at Sydney University, Arvind Sharma. Of course, all of the family were devastated. The Anglican cleric taking the funeral at St John's, a nice enough fellow whom we had come to know, badly annoyed me during his eulogy by referring to the "evil" that had befallen Jesse. Our grief was deep and painful beyond words but we certainly never viewed his death in such a light. Most of our friends and all of our family could not have done more to comfort us, to look after us, to help us through this dark night. I also recall how kind Helga was when I

returned to Watson High, a week or so after Jesse's death. Not a word from the Principal. I wasn't expecting any.

It is often said that personal calamities of this sort challenge and perhaps destroy one's religious faith, assuming one has any to start with. In my case the opposite happened: our bereavement, in some inscrutable way, strengthened mine. Years later I came across Ludwig's Wittgenstein's declaration, paradoxical to many people of atheistic or sceptical bent, that it was only in pain and suffering that religious faith could be forged and tempered. Of course, Dostoevsky had worked over this theme in his great novels. In any event, the overwhelming impression at the time of Jesse's death was not that he had ceased to be but rather that he had gone elsewhere, gone, hopefully to a far better place. No doubt many people would dismiss this as sentimentality, wishful thinking, pie in the sky. Hadn't Dr Sigmund already told us that all religion was just "consolation"? Not how it seemed to me. I think Rose felt something similar. It's also often said, more persuasively, that such events test and frequently destroy relationships, particularly marriages. But again, this was not our experience. Living in the shadow of Jesse's death brought us closer together. So it seemed to me anyhow. Perhaps the deepest trauma was reserved for Josh, still not much more than two years old himself and quite bewildered by this shocking loss. A day or two after Jesse's death he deposited a large turd right in the middle of the lounge-room. It was not difficult to decipher the symbolism.

At the end of 1981 Rose and I went on a short holiday to Tasmania. Time in the south-western wilderness, with Watson High now behind me, was a healing balm. I can't remember a great deal about that trip, the first of several which we took to Tasmania together. But two things stand in quite sharp relief in my mind. The first was our incursion into the southern part of the Lake St. Clair-Cradle Mountain National Park where we camped in a very isolated spot, spending New Year's Eve there. As mentioned earlier, Rose had walked into the park in bare feet. The other memory is listening on the radio of our hire-car to the end of a Test match against England which ended with a heroic last-wicket stand by Alan Border and Jeff Thomson, only to fall short by a few runs when Thommo was caught in the slips by Ian Botham (who

else?). Such defeats linger in the mind for far too long. This one was matched only by the humiliations of the "unlosable" test in England, in the previous year, when Lillee and Marsh made their infamous bet. Another was the tragic loss in the second test at Edgbaston in the 2005 when Brett Lee and Michael Kasprowicz fell two runs short of victory, and yet another in 2019 when an epic innings by Ben Stokes turned a seemingly certain defeat into the most unlikely of English victories. I was visiting Pete and Wendy in Taree at the time. Stokes' innings was magnificent but quite shattering.

Some months after Jesse's death my friend and former colleague at SWOW, Biff Ward, put her rambling weatherboard house O'Connor on the market. Once again we totted up the figures, borrowed money from Mum and Dad. We sold Dryandra St and moved into Way St. The new abode had some advantages: much bigger than the Dryandra St matchbox, an unruly but spacious garden with room for chooks, nestled up against a park with plenty of space for small children and pets to cavort, close to a kindergarten and primary school modelled on the same general philosophy as SWOW and a possible destination for Josh, and closer to many friends. The house needed some rehabilitation but we set to with great enthusiasm. I even became something of a handyman and gardener, two very improbable developments. Rose was happy to once again be living with chooks, and before long we acquired the first of a long line of dogs, Alfie, a delightful little Sheltie.

Early in 1984 Misha Alex arrived – who knows where from – as cute as you could imagine with his dark hair and big eyes. He had the good fortune to inherit his mother's looks. Complications with his birth had been anticipated so at the last minute Rose abandoned the plan for another home birth and went to hospital. The birth was arduous but it wasn't long before we had a lively little imp on our hands. Josh was tremendously pleased. Somewhat apprehensive about the possibility of another cot death we bought a sensor pad and alarm for Misha's cot. A few nerve-shredding false alarms along the way.

At the end of that year we had our first family trip to New York. The flights in crowded Jumbos weren't enjoyable. Keeping a

nine-month old baby happy and quiet was a big ask. But it was all worth it as we had any amount of fun in New York, my first visit. Keeping track of Rose's many relatives was challenging – more characters than a Tolstoy novel! We ate a lot of Italian food. It was stirring to see the sights, many of them familiar from the movies: Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty, the Verrazano Bridge, the Brooklyn Bridge, Greenwich Village, Chinatown, the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Modern Art, the Staten Island ferry, Coney Island, the Empire State Building, the brownstones of Brooklyn, the Strand Bookstore and Central Park. Apart from socializing with Rose's family my most recurrent activity was visiting the Manhattan bookstores. Baby Misha and I, pram in hand, would take the bus into town and I would wheel him up and down the busy streets, tramping from one bookshop to the next. I was at that time setting up a second-hand bookshop in our house in O'Connor, and was in search of stock. Shipping rates were still cheap and I had half a dozen crates of books sent back to Australia. One particularly productive visit was to a Book Barn on the outskirts of Boston, a vast warehouse full of books. All hardbacks were $1, all paperbacks 50c. No time wasted on pricing! Jorge Luis Borges somewhere remarks, "I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library". Well, here was Paradise on earth!

We were visiting Boston for two reasons. Firstly, to stay with Bruce Stephens and his family. We had come to know them when Bruce was a curate at St John's. He was now doing postgraduate theological study in Boston. We spent a night in Boston and then travelled together up to Burlington in Vermont to see something of the snow-clad countryside of New England. My other motive was to see the Museum of Fine Arts where Ananda Coomarsawamy had assembled the finest collection of traditional Asian art to be found anywhere in the Western world. By this stage, under the influence of Coomaraswamy and Schuon, I had lost interest in most modern art, especially that of the 20thC, dominated as it was by the abstract, the surreal, the experimental "art" which was often ugly and profane. How squalid and petty most of it seemed next to the glories of traditional sacred art. I felt quite liberated from the sense that I ought to be able to

understand and take seriously the art and artists in fashion. I retained some interest in the Impressionist and post-Impressionists, particularly Cezanne to whom I had been introduced by brother Peter and his friend Peter Booth. I found almost nothing in the MOMA which stirred my soul but was impressed by the vast collection of Islamic art in the Metropolitan. But I most enjoyed the Museum of the American Indians.

The second-hand bookshop at home had grown out of my earlier involvement with the Canberra Jung Society. I had been to a couple of their evenings where people gave talks on Jung's work and related subjects. I met some interesting folk there. One was Blanche D'Alpuget, the novelist and later the second wife of Bob Hawke. We got on well. There was a bookstall run by an elderly woman whose name I have now forgotten. She had just about run her race with this little business and I agreed to buy her stock and "good will". For a year or so I carried on selling books at the monthly meetings and face to face at home to anyone who cared to pitch up. The financial returns were small and I didn't do much more than cover costs. But I conceived the idea of running a second-hand bookstore out of the Way St house, specializing in areas of particular interest to me – religion, philosophy, literature, cinema, travel. Over the next two years I scoured markets, fetes, estate auctions and other bookshops for stock. I built up quite an impressive little shop, open for a few hours every Saturday. But then a mean-spirited second-hand bookseller in Civic dobbed me in to the authorities for running an unlicensed business in a residential area. I suppose he was worried about the competition but really, this was laughable given the tiny number of people visiting the house. He also claimed that my customers were causing traffic problems by parking in Way St. This too was quite absurd. There were never more than two or three parked in the street at the same time. Besides, Way St was a *cul de sac* with almost no traffic. The bureaucrats, predictably, stuck by the book, quite impervious to my arguments as to why I should be allowed to continue. And so the enterprise came to an abrupt and unhappy end. I pillaged the best books out of the shop for my own library and sold the rest to a Sydney bookseller for a risible sum. The experience taught me how hard it is to make a buck out of second-

hand books. I never again complained about the price of a second-hand book. Trawling through second-hand bookstores in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne – and indeed, in any city in which I found myself – was a favourite pastime until recent years when the internet has all but destroyed the business as anything other than an anonymous on-line operation. Not the same thing at all! We are lucky to still have two excellent second-hand bookshops in Bendigo so the pleasures of book-hunting are not entirely gone.

At the beginning of 1983 I was appointed to a position in the History and Media Studies Department at Phillip College, a senior school for Year 11 and 12 students and much more attractive than the high schools. This happened not because Ralph Taber had become merciful but because there was a crisis at Phillip College. The fellow who had designed and taught a course on Ancient Civilizations unexpectedly resigned. I had a call from the Head of Department. I've forgotten his name but he was an exceptionally nice person who later took a job in the Senate. Did I know anything about the ancient Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Mayans and Aztecs? Well, the bald truth was that I knew precious little but I wasn't going to let this opportunity to pass me by. Without compromising my conscience and evading his question I replied that I could certainly teach units on these civilizations and would welcome the opportunity to so. So, this was the Emergency Exit. I did some hasty research and was soon teaching about the Rosetta Stone, ziggurats, pyramids and the wonders of Machu Picchu. Over the next few years I managed to ease my way out of this course and to replace it with one called Exploring Religions. Finding myself in a Department in which Media Studies were also taught I devised and taught classes in Darkroom Photography, a hobby since Tarlina days, and Cinema Studies, now with more than a decade of cinephilia behind me. The Head of Department was replaced by Rob Wilton whom I had known vaguely at CGS. He had been a day-boy a year ahead of me. Rob introduced some new courses about politics and political ideologies which I had studied at ANU. I was also saddled with another course about which, initially, I knew little: Latin American Revolutions. Another unit I devised was entitled The Nuclear Threat. Everything was falling into place. Rob became a good friend as did several other

colleagues at Phillip College. It was very satisfying work and the general school climate was relaxed and friendly. I spent seven happy years there.

One of my fondest memories is of a History Camp which Rob and I organized. It took place out at the Cotter Reserve, a lovely area to the southwest of Canberra and a popular picnic spot. About twenty students studying history units, Rob and myself holed up in some old huts out there for three days. We had a series of speakers on various political and historical subjects including my old ANU sparring-partner, Iain McCalman, now an academic well launched on a glittering career. He spoke about "history from below" – i.e., social history which concerned itself with the lives of ordinary people as distinct from the kings, emperors, generals, politicians and diplomats who peopled old-style history. In the same vein the English historian, Dennis Winter, author of the very fine *Death's Men*, talked about the experiences of the common soldier in the charnel-house of the Great War. We also enjoyed some swimming, bushwalking, campfires and other outdoor activities.

In 1985 I took leave-without-pay to look after Misha, now nearly one, while Rose returned to work, now posted to a Special School for disabled students. She also enrolled in a Masters of Education, specializing in counselling, a direction she was to take for the rest of her career. Nothing like keeping busy! Over the next five years I also taught an adult education class one evening a week, a three-hour class in Australian Literature, at Erindale College out in the new developments to the south. One year I also took over Peter Gordon's night-time matriculation class in Russian History at the TAFE College. It was quite a drive out to Erindale on a Monday evening. I listened to Robert Dessaix's book show on the ABC on the way out. The students at the evening class were all mature-age adults, mostly women. They were a joy to teach. Just in case I was in danger of running out of things to do – hardly likely! – late in the 80s I also enrolled in a Graduate Diploma in Media Studies at Canberra University.

Josh was now into his sixth year and enrolled at the Cooperative School, a short walk through the park at the back of our house. The Coop School was a sort of miniature SWOW with

appropriate modifications made for the age of the students. Rose and I were quite involved in school activities and became friendly with the teacher in charge, Judy Perry. We made a lot of new friends in O'Connor, especially Peter Gordon and Boo Chevalier (formerly John Hambly's girlfriend) and their family, living just around the corner. Our regular social activities included fiercely competitive card evenings where we fought it out for a few bucks, mah-jong, picnics with kids everywhere, visits to the cinema, excursions into the bush, barbecues lakeside. On Saturday afternoons I walked around to Richard and Vicki's place in Brigalow St to watch the AFL match chosen for broadcast. Collingwood often featured.

I spent many weekends with Josh and Misha down the coast, firstly at Tuross where Mum and Dad had bought a holiday house overlooking the lake. In the late 70s they built a new house not far away and to which they later retired. Eventually they moved to Batehaven, closer to the beach and to more accessible amenities. Rose came sometimes but more often than not she was glad to have a peaceful weekend alone at home. Dad loved taking the little fellows fishing on the surf beach where, in the early days at least, tailor and salmon were easily caught. He also introduced us to the doubtful pleasures of golf ("a good walk spoiled" as Mark Twain had it). Mum and Dad were now enjoying their retirement. We saw a lot of Mum and Dad in the late 70s and through the 80s.

During the 70s Dad had continued at Lifeline and Mum, freed from the sometimes irksome responsibilities of being the Rector's Wife, had been working first at St Mark's Library as a secretary and PA to the Warden, and then as the librarian at St Matthew's School in Page. She became very friendly with the nuns and enjoyed her work. Didie, as she was called by many, was a highly intelligent woman, much quicker off the mark than Dad, and gifted with many talents. She had sacrificed her promising undergraduate studies to help out in her father's engineering business during the war, had then married and been swept off to Tasmania and then India. After returning to Australia her life was largely consumed by the family and by a great deal of unpaid and often unrecognized church work. For most of her adult life she also had to live within the constraints of a paltry income. Such was

the lot of a clergyman's wife. She never complained, always making the best of whatever situation in which she found herself. She supported Dad in every possible way and no more loving mother could be imagined. In the years at Albury she had also cared for her father Joey, now suffering from mild dementia, and mother Lily, afflicted with diabetes and various other maladies. It was good to see her make a more independent life for herself in Canberra with more scope for self-expression and the flowering of talents which had not always found an outlet within the circumscriptions of parish life.

Mum had a lively mind, enjoyed talking about books and politics, didn't mind some benign gossip about the family, and always supported me 100% in whatever I was doing. She even took a sympathetic interest in the fortunes of Collingwood. Mum intuitively understood whenever I was going through a difficult patch, and without any explicit reference to a subject which I had not myself broached, she made it clear that she knew that my life was not always easy and expressed her love and support in ways which often did not require words. What more could one want from a mother?

The 1980s included many more bereavements than had occurred previously, the only earlier one having a serious impact on me being my maternal grandmother's passing in 1969. Now they seemed to come thick and fast, like dark clouds rumbling across a sunny landscape. First and foremost the death of precious little Jesse Joseph. He seemed like an especially bright angelic spirit and his abrupt departure was very hard to accept. A few years later Bob Hanley was killed on the expressway linking north Canberra to Woden. He was riding in the bicycle lane when a car smashed into him from behind, killing him instantly and leaving a horribly mutilated body on the slope below the road. Bob had been full of life and we had spent many happy hours with him at SWOW, at his home and in the bush. Not very long after this Bernie, a friend and colleague at Phillip College, a popular and affable teacher whose desk was adjacent to mine in the staffroom, hanged himself in his bedroom. This came to everyone as a complete shock. Some sort of serious trauma in his love-life had apparently triggered this desperate act. Soon after one of the

brightest students I had ever taught, a young woman named Allison Collins, a Year 12 student at Phillip and seemingly destined for a dazzling career in whatever field she chose, was killed in a car accident. She was driving an old VW which skidded out of control on the notorious bends of Clyde Mountain, on the way to the south coast. She too was killed instantly. She was an effervescent personality but also genuinely modest, and had been an enthusiastic student in several of my classes.

Late in the decade, Josh's grandmother Lea died after a long and distressing illness. Rose spent a lot time with her over the last stretch. It was then that I first became fully aware of Rose's exceptional empathy for people who were in a state of acute suffering, whatever the cause might be, and her rare ability to find just the right words. Sometimes it was not a matter of words but simply of *presence*, being really *there* with the other person. We were both fans of Ram Dass' hippie compendium, *Be Here Now!*, advice which Rose needed much less than I. She was also quite undaunted by suffering and death, able to look it straight in the face as it were. This is a kind of fearlessness which I certainly do not possess. I doubt many people do. Rose was not in the slightest bit sentimental in her ordinary dealings with people and her deep well of compassion was something which only became known to those who had cause to turn to her in their darkest hours. Lea had been a wonderfully loving and caring grandmother for Josh, and she and Rose were on the same wavelength. During the 80s we also saw a fair bit of Jan, Josh's aunt and one-time SWOW student, and her hubbie John who hailed from NZ. Lea and her husband Adrian were not on good terms during this last phase of Lea's life, which was sad to see. Nonetheless we maintained cordial relations with him as well. Dad took the funeral service for Lea and spoke beautifully, as he always did on such occasions.

The end of the decade brought another terrible blow. As mentioned earlier, throughout the 1980s one of my closest friends was John Hambly. For most of the decade he was living in Sydney and working at Sydney University. He drove down to Canberra frequently as he had become friendly with Rose and myself as well as others in our circle, particularly Richard and Bill Searl with whom he had shared his house in the late 70s. I also visited him

often in Sydney, staying overnight, first in Balmain and then in Leichhardt. His death, coming in his mid-40s from a massive heart attack, was a brutal blow to his daughter Tiffany, in her early teens, and to his partner of several years, the novelist Jane Hyde. John loved food and drink, parties, conversation and debate, films, travel. No doubt he lived too fast and too hard, especially as he was vulnerable to various ailments which he more or less ignored. He thought nothing of staying up talking until 4 or 5 in the morning, grabbing a couple of hours of sleep and then heading off to work primed with caffeine. John was of a sceptical and atheistic disposition but was always interested in other people's beliefs and ideas. We had many serious conversations or, more precisely, we had many conversations about serious subjects, and we were serious-minded about our subject matter, but John couldn't go for long without introducing a joke or an amusing anecdote. One of the bones of contention was Darwinism in particular, evolutionism in general. Me out of the red corner, full of fury, he from the blue, constructing an elaborate defence. Amongst his heroes were science broadcaster Robyn Williams and the American evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould. Neither of us ever succeeded in changing the other's mind but we enjoyed the constant sparring. Of all my friends John was, I think, the one who formed the closest relationship with Rose. Through me he had also become friendly with Bruce and Gael, regularly visiting them when he was in Melbourne. Bruce delivered a lovely eulogy at the funeral ceremony in Sydney. I still miss John. Nearly thirty years were to pass before I would again lose such a dear friend.

Sometime early in 1989 I received a letter from Sri Lanka. I had previously sent my Masters thesis, now in modified form, as a book proposal to Ranjit Fernando, the director of the Sri Lanka Institute of Traditional Studies. Among other things the Institute, essentially a one-man outfit, published a small number of books by perennialist authors. Dr Fernando had spent some time in Paris in his younger days, an aspiring artist moving in *avant-garde* circles, and had there met several people in the perennialist movement, Frithjof Schuon included. Ranjit himself became a perennialist and in due course established the Institute in Sri Lanka. Not surprisingly, his hero was Ananda Coomaraswamy and

Ranjit worked tirelessly to make his work better known in his homeland. Coomaraswamy was a prophet without honour in his own country, a situation which Ranjit fought to remedy single-handedly. He had already expressed some interest in publishing a book based on my Masters thesis. But he was writing to invite me to give the inaugural lecture in a series which he hoped would be a annual event, the Ananda Coomaraswamy Memorial Lecture. Would I like to come to Colombo and deliver a lecture on a subject of my own choosing? The only stipulation was that I should make some reference to the work of AKC in the lecture.

The visit to Sri Lanka was a kind of bridge between the decade that had just passed and the one in front. 1990 was to bring about what psychologists call a major "life-change". More on that presently. Ranjit met me late in the evening at Colombo Airport after the plane had flown low over the surrounding forests in which I could see hundreds of small fires burning in the village courtyards, quite an exotic sight. I discovered that Ranjit was a slight figure with a serious physical disability caused by a bout of polio when still a child. He could only move about with crutches and had a live-in servant/chauffeur without whom he could not manage many of the requirements of daily life. Fortunately he seemed comfortably set up financially though I imagine his daily needs were extremely modest. He was a little stiff at first but soon revealed a warm personality and an ironic sense of humour. He was also quite sensitive, perhaps as the result of the misfortunes that had befallen him. He was alone in the world, without any family. We soon felt altogether comfortable in each other's company. Ranjit treated me like visiting royalty. Nothing was too much trouble. He sent his manservant out for food from the most expensive restaurants in the area, close to the heart of Colombo. My spacious bedroom was adorned with fresh flowers daily, and I was greeted each morning by a platter of fresh fruit, peeled and cut up in inviting slices, pawpaw, mango, guava, lychees, watermelon. Because Ranjit found it difficult to get about in the city he usually stayed at home while I went on excursions to various tourist spots. I also visited the main museum in Colombo to look at early Buddhist statues and other artefacts on which

Ranjit had delivered informed disquisitions. His primary interest was in sacred art.

Eventually the day of the lecture arrived. Ranjit had whipped up some publicity by arranging a published interview in a major daily newspaper and a radio interview. Again, I was treated as someone much more important than I actually was. It wasn't an altogether disagreeable sensation. Anyway, here we were in a largish auditorium surrounded by tropical gardens. I suppose there were about seventy or eighty people in the audience. My subject was "The Spiritual Tradition of the Australian Aborigines". The foyer was bedecked with prints of traditional Aboriginal paintings and the like which I had brought from Australia. The lecture seemed to go well enough and the discussion was interesting though most of the questions were perhaps a little too polite. Afterwards Ranjit was very disappointed by the acoustics and told me that my microphone had not been working very well. Still, it was a relief to have the thing behind me. Ranjit published the lecture as a little monograph. A year or two later the lecture was reprinted in a *festschrift* for Huston Smith, edited by Arvind Sharma.

With the lecture done and dusted Ranjit took me on a tour of Sri Lanka. He hired a car and driver, and his helper came along as well. We drove north east to Sigiriya where I climbed the massive rock at the top of which perched the ancient fort, the most popular tourist attraction in the whole country. Then on to Gal Viharaya, the 12thC Buddhist site near the city of Polonnaruwa. I was keen to visit this traditional pilgrimage site after reading Thomas Merton's poetic description of the large Buddha statues in *Asian Journal*, a passage to which I have many times returned. From there we drove on to the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy where the holy relic was housed and where we saw monks and villagers performing *puja*. Each night we stayed in an up-market guest house or hotel. I shuddered at the probable expense but as Ranjit had not been out of Colombo for several years, and as he was enjoying the trip as much as I was, I dismissed my qualms. The trip lasted about five days and left me with many wonderful memories.

I think Ranjit was a lonely man who found it difficult to find friends who were on his intellectual and spiritual wavelength. He was always tremendously warm and generous in his dealings with me, and also lightened our relationship with a lot of avuncular banter which prevented both of us from taking ourselves too seriously. I was very grateful for his friendship and I like to think the feeling was reciprocated. I always felt that despite the differences in our ages, our backgrounds and our experiences we were kindred spirits. We maintained close contact over the next decade, exchanging letters every few months. In 1998 I was able to visit Colombo again, described later.

A few days before my flight back to Australia I fell prey to some sort of vicious tropical bug: fever, vomiting, dizziness, extreme fatigue. The ministrations of a doctor whom Ranjit summoned helped a little and I set off on the trip drugged to the eyeballs. The flight included a stop-over in Singapore where I spent one of the most miserable 24-hour periods of my life, incarcerated in a soul-less hotel and spending most of my time lurching between the bed and the toilet. I saw nothing whatever of Singapore apart from what I could discern, in my stupor, out of the bus window between the airport and the hotel. Somehow I managed the flight from Singapore to Sydney, my head between my knees for the whole trip. It was a relief to finally arrive back home, throw myself into bed for a few days before confronting another major upheaval.

mid-80s

late 90s

H., Peter Booth, Pete, Richard
at Wendy and Pete's Wedding, Broulee, 1995

Bushwalking with Pete, c 2000

Richard
at Bill's Wedding, Cairns, 2010
(Grand Final Replay day!)

8.

Heading South

A New Life in Bendigo

It must have been around July or August 1989 that I received an unexpected phone call. Here's how it went.

R: Hello, this is Roger Sworder calling from Bendigo. Am I speaking to Harry Oldmeadow?

H. Yes.

R. Good to speak to you. I've been reading your dissertation on Schuon and the traditionalists. A fine piece of work, fine piece of work, yes indeed ...

H. I'm glad you are finding something of interest in there. How did you come by a copy?

R. My wife met a young fellow at a party. The conversation turned to the subject of "tradition". He [who turned out to be my old friend Richard Kelly] said that he was reading a thesis, written by a friend of his, on just this subject ... so eventually it came into my hands. But let me ask you this, In your view do the traditionalists pay enough attention to Plato? [Roger clearly thinks not.]

H [mumble mumble, mental shuffle]... and after all, Schuon does acknowledge Plato as the pre-eminent metaphysician in the Western tradition...

[a conversation about Plato ensues]

R I want to tell you something about a program we are running in the Arts Department here at the Bendigo CAE

[a description of the Studies in Western Traditions program follows]

H That all sound most interesting Roger.

R Well, my dear fellow, the reason I'm ringing is to enquire whether you might be interested in joining us down here as a member of staff ...

One thing, including a long discussion with Rose, led to another. Before the end of the year I had made two trips to Bendigo, one to meet Roger and have a look around, the second for a formal interview for the position for which I had now applied. The grilling was conducted by no less than ten people: Roger and several other members of the Arts staff, the Dean of the School, the Staffing Officer, a community representative, someone from the College Council. Goodness, talk about over-kill! About eight candidates were being interviewed. I was told beforehand that four of the applicants were high-powered, all brandishing PhDs. I needed to be at the top of my game. Nonetheless, I felt fairly

confident that I was Roger's preferred candidate and I was quite relaxed. At one point Clive Faust, an eccentric poet and scholar, asked me whether, in the study of religion, I set more store by the work of René Guénon or Mircea Eliade. I suspected this might be trap calling for evasive tactics and answered that if it were a matter concerning the history or phenomenology of religion I would turn to Eliade but if the subject lay within the domain of metaphysics or cosmology Guénon would be the man. He seemed satisfied with this answer. Mick McGuane would have been proud of my side-step. The question may have been entirely ingenuous; with Clive it was always hard to know. In any event, all went well and soon after I was offered a three-year appointment as a Lecturer in Philosophy and Communication, a position which had been custom-made to cover Clive's probable retirement in the next year or two.

Now the nightmare of moving house, not made easier by the fact that by now I had accumulated several thousand books, not to mention all manner of domestic impedimenta. Packing, house-selling, house-buying, finding schools and the rest of the moving rigmarole. After scouting around we found a house we liked close to the centre of town – calling it the CBD would be a bit of a stretch. The estate agent inquired as to where else we had been looking, assuring us that the current location had more "tone" and that here we would find ourselves amidst "a better class of people". Well, that would be a clincher wouldn't it! We duly moved into a California bungalow with Art Deco pretensions in Brougham St.

We did a tour of the primary schools which might suit Josh and Misha. We decided on Camp Hill Primary, up behind Rosalind Park, housed in an old Victorian building. The attractions included a heavy emphasis on art and creative activities of one sort and another, not least a school circus troupe. Misha and Josh did a reconnoitre. Misha (aged 5): "I'm *certainly* not going to this school. It doesn't even have a sportshed! And Josh *certainly* isn't going either. You can't make him!" Well, these remonstrances had about as much effect as my protestations about being sent to CGS. It all worked out in the end. In 1990 Brian Hillman was Josh's teacher and we became friendly with the whole Hillman family, spending

many happy times with them over the ensuing decade before they moved away from Bendigo. Rose had landed a job as a counsellor at the Bendigo Schools Support Centre where Jenny Hillman also worked. They were soon as thick as thieves. Misha was super impressed by the fact that Brian had once been on the list at Richmond though he never played a senior game. Josh moved on to Flora Hill High School in 1991. He found it dull and stultifying, as he did the rest of his secondary education. Disappointing to see such a bright and gifted boy becoming increasingly alienated from school. By the time he reached Bendigo Senior College the damage had been done. Misha fared somewhat better, first at Camp Hill, then at Catholic College and finally at Bendigo Senior though his pathway was not without its bumps and detours. For the several years he was at Camp Hill I picked him up after school. Clambering into the car he asked the same question *every* afternoon: "What's for dinner Dad?"

The start of the AFL season was soon upon us. We decided to go as a family to a pre-season game out at Waverly in the far-flung south-eastern reaches of Melbourne. Myself apart, none of the family had been to an AFL game though Josh had played some junior footy in Canberra. (In one of his early matches, aged about six, stationed at full-forward, he spent most of the game holding hands with his diminutive opponent in the goal square.) The Pies were playing the Eagles. Rose was mildly interested, Josh a little more enthusiastic, Misha mesmerized. I was particularly keen to check out two of Collingwood's new recruits, Tony Francis and Scott Russell, who both played blinders. Francis blotted his escutcheon by getting reported for kicking an opponent, prostrate on the ground. Francis and Russell both figured prominently in the Grand Final that year when Collingwood finally broke its thirty-two year drought.

Misha was soon fully initiated and indoctrinated in footy lore. Over the next fifteen years or so we went to the footy regularly, seeing most of Collingwood's home games, still at Victoria Park, until the end of the 90s. We would make a day of it, leaving home early in the morning, usually picking up one or two of Misha's friends (more often than not John Woolman), stopping in at the doughnut caravan near Woodend, arriving in time to see most of

the Reserves game before the main event. Sometimes Josh came too. One year, in an act of adolescent defiance, Josh announced that he was going to follow the Melbourne Dees. He soon came to his senses. (Such a rebellion from Misha, then or in the future, was quite unthinkable.) It was still old-style footy at Victoria Park: mostly standing room, cramped and odorous toilets, the atmosphere thick with fulminations against the opposing team, the occasional fight, peanut-sellers, kids standing on beer cans, a lot of boozing, a generally amiable ambience. We usually went to the terraces on the city side of the ground. Here Misha and friend would climb up the steel frame of the tin cladding at the back, perching on a narrow iron railing from which they could watch the game. I would stand on an upper terrace, jostling shoulders with the milling crowd, slightly apprehensive that I was going to lose track of Misha and his friend. We had an "emergency routine" in case we ever became entirely separated. I always listened to the game on the radio, usually on the ABC where the commentators were Tim Lane, Peter "Smooth" Booth and "Crackers" Keenan, the last-mentioned reminiscing about long-past biffos and bust-ups. David "Swan" Mackay gave periodic reports from the other grounds; we were still in the era when all the games were played on Saturday afternoon. Scores from the other games would be put up on the scoreboard, provoking hysterical cheering or groans of despair. Carlton losing: euphoria; Carlton winning, dismay. After the footy we would troop into some cheap eatery in Carlton (we hated the Carlton footy team but loved the area) before heading home, all the while listening to footy post-mortems on the car radio. As they say in the classics, those were the days!

On one post-footy evening I had been trawling through the Carlton bookshops so we arrived later than usual at one of the Lygon pizza joints. Inside we spied a group of Carlton players sitting around a table, all in civvies. Misha was decked out in his Magpies gear – beanie, scarf, jumper, the full kit. I can't remember who the Carlton players were except for Mil Hanna, maybe Ang Christou. I urged Misha and John to wander over to their table to say hello. Misha was extremely apprehensive; "But we're for the Magpies. We hate Carlton. They won't want to talk to us." I assured the young fellows that no harm would come to them and

persuaded them to go over and say hello. As I expected, the Carlton players were as friendly as they could possibly be. It was a good early lesson for Misha that the "hatred" for the opponents on the footy field was only a kind of ritual and that the ethos of the game transcended these tribal loyalties. (Incidentally, my sister Pamela had, for quite arcane reasons, temporarily become a Carlton supporter, but nobly quit when she saw how much pain her ill-advised support for the Blues caused her elder brother. I didn't mind that Dad supported Richmond and Mum St Kilda as the principle that one *never* changed teams was still sacrosanct. Mum actually couldn't help herself: she never altogether abandoned the ill-fated Saints but, in solidarity with her son and grandson, by this time she was really a *de facto* Collingwood supporter.)

After a year or two Josh and Misha both started playing footy in Bendigo. Josh's enthusiasm waxed and waned and he played for a variety of teams, one year playing as a makeshift ruckman for Bridgewater. He called himself "the People's Footballer". Misha played for the very accomplished Sandhurst team which included the two Selwood twins (but not Joel), Nick dal Santo and Ricky Ladson, all to go on later to play AFL footy. They won the flag in the first season, Misha snagging a couple of goals from the half-forward flank on the QEO (Queen Elizabeth Oval, Bendigo's premiere sports ground). Watching the young chaps play footy and cricket became part of the family routine, sometimes interfering with our hitherto religious attendance at Collingwood games in Melbourne.

In 1992 Rose was idly reading the local rag on a Saturday morning. Without a word she abruptly left the house, returning a couple of hours later. "Get in the car Harry. We're going to buy a house in Mandurang", a rural area with some bushland and scattered houses and farms. Another couple of hours passed by which time we were in negotiations to buy a mud-brick house on 10 acres of bushland, about 10ks south of town. Not only would we get a sprawling house of pleasing design and a large area of uncleared bush, we would also inherit Sticks, a friendly, lazy dog of indeterminate breed. Deal done, other house on the market, packing up yet again ...

Life in the country was easy to take but not without its challenges and much more physical labour than we had been accustomed to. Dams, pumps, irrigation systems, septic tanks, dilapidated fences, weeds, firewood, snakes, burst pipes, fire-fighting preparations, kitchen renovations, altercations between dogs and kangaroos.

Things took a sudden turn for the worse on the work front. The recession of the early 90s (in which we lost the remnants of our savings, deposited in the ill-starred Pyramid Building Society) and a constriction in university revenue meant that my anticipated transition to a full-time tenured lectureship was put on hold, my workload nominally reduced to 0.8, my salary downgraded accordingly – not nominally. (This change in my status had not the slightest effect on my workload which didn't diminish in any way. I didn't want it to.) In fact my situation might have been very much worse. For a few weeks it looked as if I might be joining the dole queue but help came from a most unlikely source. Jeff Kennett, the recently elected and business-friendly conservative Premier, was so annoyed by the Federal government's cuts to the tertiary education budget that he tipped in funds from the state treasury to make up at least some of the deficit. He had saved my bacon which slightly tempered my hostility to his party. When I protested to the Dean that he and others had given me ironclad assurances that I would become tenured at the end of 1992 his only reply, spectacularly unhelpful, was "If you don't like it, get another job." The Dean belonged in the same lineage as my Principals at Telopea and Watson High: a short, choleric man of military bearing and demeanour, moustache to match, devoid of any fellow-feeling and a stickler for "the regulations". One always felt that he was holding a swagger-stick or perhaps a whip behind his back. Early on, after I had put a ding the size of a sixpence in the departmental car, he had given me the kind of dressing-down that a brutal officer might give a raw recruit for some lapse in discipline; humiliating, quite unnecessary and souring our relations thereafter. Some folks are like that.

1994 bought more major changes. Terry Mills, the outgoing Warden of the Halls of Residence – what would have been called a college on a metropolitan campus – persuaded me to apply for the

job. This entailed living on campus at the Halls and taking charge of the non-academic life of about 200 students. The perks were not insignificant: free accommodation with all utility bills paid, meals in the dining hall (the rest of the family included as well as any guests we cared to invite), house-cleaning and garden looked after, and a stipend which was roughly equivalent to the 20% of my salary lost at the end of 1992. I took the job and was to stay at the coal-face until the end of 1999 by which time I had finally reverted to my full-time salary, had been tenured and promoted to Senior Lecturer.

The Warden's job specifications were couched in some high-flown rhetoric but the work boiled down to this: "There are 200 students living here. Your job is to keep their worst impulses in check, deal with those who step out of line and keep the domestic staff on side (cooks, cleaners, gardeners, handyman and the like). While you're about it, encourage the students to study." The most important week-by-week work was selecting, training and working with the eight Resident Assistants (RAs), two for each of the four halls. These more senior students were charged with the prevention of anarchy in their Halls, minor administrative tasks and supporting the Warden. In return they were allocated larger rooms and their accommodation fees were reduced. We met together once a week for a couple of hours to sort out the problems of the moment. The "worst impulses"?: rowdiness, drunken hooliganism, sexual harassment, racial abuse. I didn't much enjoy that side of the work though I think I made a fair fist of it. One student from Cobram, attempting to justify some racist behaviour, told me in a reproachful tone that some of the students in the Halls were not like his mates at high school. I asked him if he thought the Halls would be a better place if they were entirely populated with students from towns like Cobram. He assured me that they would indeed. Where do you start?

Working with the RAs was one of the congenial aspects of the job. Each year, towards the end of the summer vacation, the Wardens and Senior Students from the different residential establishments (of which there were four) went on a training camp where we had workshops and talks about various aspects of the job (first-aid for instance, or dealing with racial and sexual

abuse) and social get-togethers. These camps were out in the country or down at the coast, enjoyable affairs. The last one I attended was in the old agricultural college at Dookie. Some years later Misha, now a policeman, was transferred to Shepparton. For the several years he and his wife Holly lived there Misha played footy for the Dookie team. Country footy at its best. I often motored over from Bendigo to watch the game, usually staying the night with them.

It was also in 1994 that Rose first became involved in what was to be a somewhat ill-fated enterprise, Fernwood, which had been established in Bendigo as a women's gym. The owners were now looking to start a chain of franchised gyms, the first to be in Ballarat. Rose had been a enthusiastic gym member. We met several times with the owners, Di and John, before deciding that Rose should commit herself to the Ballarat project. We invested a chunk of money in the enterprise. Rose found a flat in Ballarat where she would stay for several nights a week and threw herself into the demanding business of setting up a new gym. As I expected, she was very good at it. Things went well enough for a year or so but the new arrangements put some strains on all of us. Then, encouraged by the franchise owners, we made a poor decision: the installation of a manager who would take over most of the day to day work which Rose had been doing. Turned out he was not only incompetent but a crook as well. He made off with our money and then had himself declared bankrupt. Three or four years of very messy legal business followed, made even more tiresome by the fact that our lawyer was both lazy and incompetent. More money down the drain. In the meanwhile Rose pulled the pin, gave up the flat in Ballarat and returned to work in Bendigo. In the end, with the help of a new lawyer, we retrieved only a small portion of our money but were glad to wash our hands of what had turned into a grubby and anxiety-making entanglement. Since then Rose has worked in a variety of jobs with the Education Department and the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service. For a few years she did some teaching for La Trobe, including teaching an intensive postgraduate course in Hong Kong. She also enrolled in a PhD in coursework in the very challenging field of psychoanalytic therapy, completing the

coursework but baulking at the prospect of a research dissertation, not at all surprising given the other demands on her time and energy. Wherever she went she was highly valued, for good reason. I always found her attitude to the bureaucracy and the authorities very endearing. As far as possible, ignore them but when necessary give them what-for.

Time passed, life went on, Josh and Misha were growing up. By the mid-90s Josh had escaped school, done some intermittent work and travelling. I had also introduced the young chaps to the pleasures of bush-walking. On an early 90's two-day walk on Wilson's Promontory Josh carried an exhausted Misha on his back for most of the second day, the rest of us divvying up their packs. For a couple of years Josh was enrolled in the Outdoor Education degree at LTUB but eventually tired of that and moved into hospitality work, first in Bendigo and then in Swan Hill where he teamed up with Dani and her young son Jhordie. In 1998 Josh, Mish and I were joined by Bill Searl for a long trek on the Annapurna Circuit in Nepal, and another one in 2003 (described later). Misha followed much the same path as Josh once he had finished at Bendigo Senior: casual work, travel, enrolment in university (this time primary teacher training in Melbourne). Eventually he entered the Police Academy at Waverley, graduating in 2008.

The 90s put various stresses and strains on my relationship with Rose, and at one point we underwent marriage guidance counselling in Melbourne. For several years Rose also underwent sessions with a psychotherapist whom she had come to trust and who was helpful in sorting out some issues. I think it can be fairly said that the 90s were the most testing period of our marriage. The first decade had been tremendously hectic but generally happy and harmonious notwithstanding the normal family tensions and difficulties. By the time the third decade had come around we knew each other much more deeply and had found ways of negotiating our differences. The fourth decade was in many ways the best of all. But the 90s were a bit rocky.

During the first fifteen years in Bendigo I worshipped regularly at St Paul's and became quite involved in parish affairs: Vicar's nominee on the Parish Council for several years, lay reader, on the

cleaning and gardening roster, speaker at church functions, so on and so forth. St Paul's was moderately high church, had a fine choir, still used the *Book of Common Prayer* at some services. Eventually the constant and endemic squabbles and factions, a series of sexual scandals (two involving no less than bishops), acrimony and recrimination over various appointments, and the disgraceful treatment of one of the vicars forced me out. I shopped around at various other local Anglican churches which all tended in one of two unsatisfactory directions, the happy-clappy ultraliberal or the more alarming reaches of American-style evangelicalism. In more recent years I have taken to occasionally attending services at St Killian's or Sacred Heart Cathedral. On a more general front I am severely disenchanted with most forms of institutional Christianity. I have never lost faith in the Nazarene and the teachings of the New Testament, keeping my hand on the plough and not looking back, but I have lost faith in the Church. This has been painful. Given perennialism's insistence on the importance of following a regular and orthodox spiritual practice this has posed some on-going problems for me. (More about all this later.)

Some time early in the 90s I heard of the community radio station, 3CCC, operating out of an old railway station at Harcourt (about 20k south of Bendigo) and apart from one full-time staff member, run entirely by volunteers. I joined up, did some training and was soon running my own music program, Open Door, 7-9pm every Monday evening. The program was devoted to music which might come under the umbrella of "Country/Folk/Singer-Songwriter" music including traditional bluegrass, the alternative-progressive side of what was generally called "country" (eg. Willie Nelson, Merle Haggard, George Jones, Emmylou Harris), West Coast country-rock (the Byrds, Flying Burrito Brothers, Eagles), and the work of a wave of singer-songwriters who emerged in the 70s and 80s (Kris Kristofferson, John Prine, Guy Clark, Nanci Griffith). Occasionally I would mix things up with some blues or hard rock, maybe some Van Morrison. The music would be interspersed with anecdotes and commentary as well as station promo's and a few ads. I enjoyed chatting to listeners who would ring up to make requests, ask questions or discuss matters related

to the music. Tremendous fun. The station had a rudimentary library but I relied mainly on my own collection. For most of the 90s I was in Melbourne two or three times a month, searching through outlets far and wide for new music, spending far too much on CDs, now a serious challenger to books in the Expenditure Stakes. Late in the decade the station moved to Bendigo, first in the old Fire Station, then in the main drag near the TAFE, and finally in a rented house near the hospital. By the time the buzz had worn off, in about 2004, I had done nearly 500 two-hour programs and amassed a collection of about 1000 CDs. I gave most of them away.

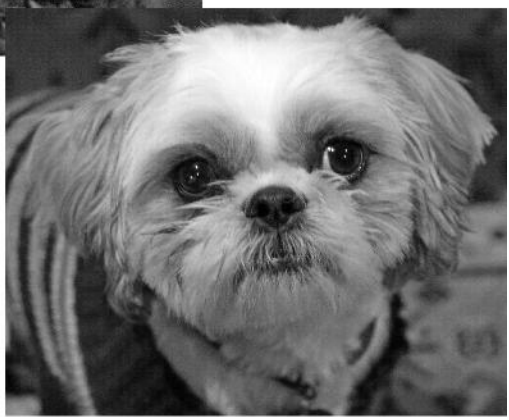
In 2004 we suffered our most severe trauma since the death of Jesse Joseph. Margaret, one of Rose's elder sisters, was diagnosed with CJD (Creutzfeld-Jakob disease), a rare, degenerative and fatal brain disorder, genetically transmitted. It took a long time for the doctors to correctly diagnose Margaret's illness. In the later stages she was physically emaciated, mentally deranged and psychologically disturbed, all deeply disturbing to Rose who visited her during the last weeks of her life. All this was bad enough but then there was the shock of discovering that Rose had a 50% chance of falling prey to CJD, that there was no treatment and that the disease usually struck one in the early 60s. At this time Rose was 54. A decision: should Rose take the tests which would determine whether she carried the mutant gene or not? Unlike her four surviving siblings, Rose took the test. The result was the one we feared. Now we also had to face the fact that Josh and Misha each had a 50/50 chance of carrying the rogue gene. There were also horrible implications for future medical and dental treatments.

We went to see a government-appointed counsellor in Melbourne, specializing in supporting people with potentially fatal genetic disorders. She was quite unhelpful and Rose found her crude and insensitive approach very upsetting, exacerbated by the fact that the counsellor seemed to be less well-informed than we were. Consultations with Dr Steve Collins, Australia's leading researcher in the field, were much more helpful. For a while we also became involved in the federally-funded national CJD support group. The medical knowledge about this rare disease was

extremely limited, as it still is, but on the basis of the then current research, the essential message, usually hedged about with all sorts of qualifications, was that there was every likelihood that the disease would "manifest" sometime in the next decade and that it would be fatal. This was a heavy burden to carry but Rose was able to draw on her deep resources of courage and fortitude, and on a kind of intuitive wisdom, fortified by the various religious and spiritual teachings to which she had been exposed. Remarkably but unsurprisingly I never once heard her complain about her predicament or indulge in "Why me?": she confronted the realities of her situation and resolved to live as fully as possible in whatever time might remain to her. In some ways the diagnosis was therapeutic for both of us: it triggered a reassessment of priorities, sharpened our focus on those things that really matter, and promoted a deeper gratitude for each new day. After living under this Damocles' Sword for more than a decade we were eventually told that the particular variant of the mutant gene which Rose was carrying actually had a much lower "penetration rate" than had previously been thought and that the fatal strike rate was now believed to be more like 20% rather than 90%+. This new research and the fact that Rose was passing through the age at which people seemed to be most susceptible gave us renewed hope that she might yet live a "normal" life. It also gave some comfort to Joshua and Misha (neither of them tested). We had been reminded often enough that things are "not always so", as Shunryu Suzuki summed up the central message of Buddhism, that everything in this life is impermanent, that the Grim Reaper could mow one down at any moment. But at least the spectre of CJD, while still there, had retreated somewhat.

So, 2004 was not an easy year. However, things went well on the work front where, to borrow the title of the ABC radio segment, it was "the year that made me": the publication of *Journeys East*, promotion to Associate Professor and the LTUB Research Award – which I shared with some scientific chap who was working on frogs.

Josh
Annapurna Sanctuary trek, 2009



Nugget
Akira
Hopi
Ed

Misha and Holly
Graduation Day, Police Academy,
Waverly

Aliya & Josh
Grand Canyon, Arizona,
2011

Pamela,
at Misha's wedding

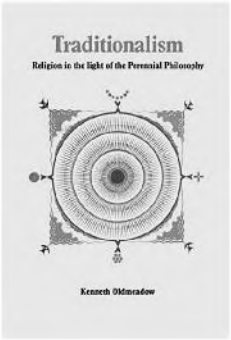
2007

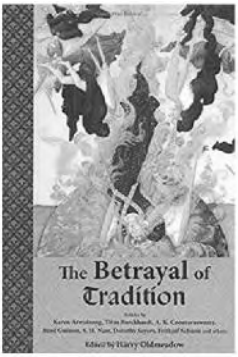
2010

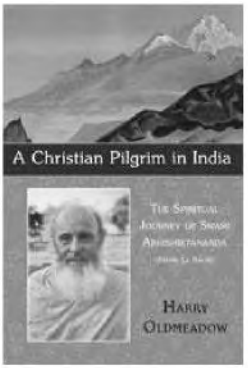
9.

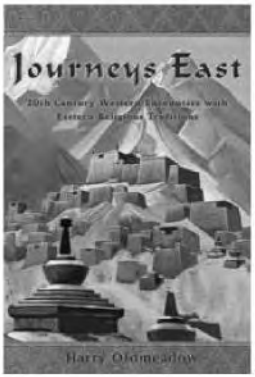
Hard at It

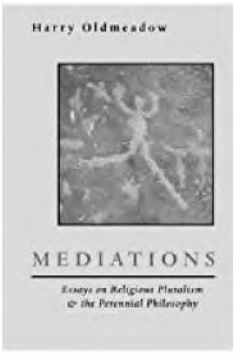
Teaching & Writing

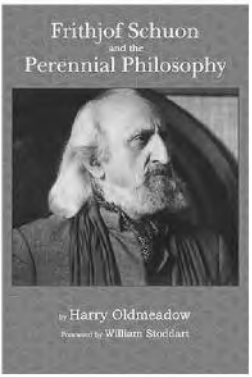


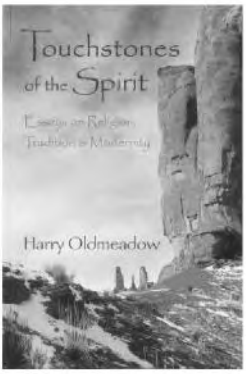


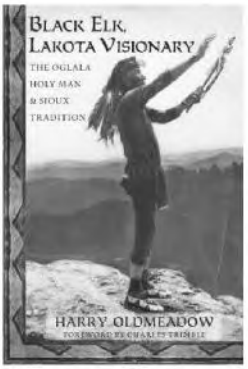












1990 was a very demanding year work-wise. I soon discovered that I had landed amongst a group of eccentrics, some of them quite a match for anything to be found in Dickens, or even a Monty Python sketch. I was a stranger in a strange land. My initial contact had been with Roger and as it turned out I was temporarily allocated an office next to his. On my first or second day on campus I was unloading cartons of books onto the shelves. Roger sauntered in and cast his eye over unruly piles of books which were now threatening to take over the whole room. "Hmm. Read all of these books, have you Harry?" Somewhat at a loss for a reply, not wanting to sound either boastful or unduly self-effacing, I mumbled something along the lines of "Er, er ... I've read quite a few of the them." "Oh well, no wonder you're so confused! Haven't you worked out by now that there aren't more than a dozen books worth reading?" It took me a few days to get on Roger's wavelength, his mode of address, his use of irony and so on. Unlike most academics Roger liked to pretend that he had read far fewer books than he actually had. If one took his utterances seriously one might suppose that he had read nothing but the pre-Socratics, Plato, the Bible, Blake, the Romantics*, the Chuang-Tze* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. His learning was actually both wide and deep but he wore it lightly and he had little time for any sort of intellectual one-upmanship. Among my other duties I was to tutor in Roger's first year class on Greek Mythology, Homer's *Odyssey* being the principal text. I was expecting some sort of program, a schedule of lectures, reading assignments and the like, something which would help me prepare for tutorials. I asked Roger about this. "Oh no no, there's no outline of the program. We just go where the reading takes us." "Well, what do you want me to do in the first few tutorials." "Harry, my boy, just come to the lectures. You'll soon get the hang of it." Deciphered: "I give the lectures. You run the tutorials however you see fit." Benign *laissez-faire*, sink or swim. Roger took to calling me "my boy" early in the piece. Although our ages were almost identical, he adopted a tone which might be described as affectionately avuncular. In nearly twenty years of working very closely together – we many times taught

courses collaboratively – never a cross word. I came to value him deeply as a colleague and friend. He had an unpredictable mind. Twenty-five years later he was still surprising me.

The resident eccentric in the Arts Department was Clive Faust. On the rogue's gallery of staff portraits outside the main office, Clive's name appeared under a cut-out of Batman. Like a wary Kalahari tribesman, Clive refused to be photographed. When I first took Misha on campus he was mightily impressed to find that I would be working with Batman! Clive loathed the university bureaucracy and took not the slightest notice of the regulations. He left all university correspondence, circulars, directives etc, in his pigeonhole until it could hold no more. He would then transfer the still unopened mail into a carton and thence to the hopper. He sometimes failed to turn up for his lectures. During the first week of the semester I heard a student in one of his classes recount Clive's response when asked his name: "You don't need to know." He often lost students' essays and assignments. He intermittently and reluctantly attended the small meetings of the Humanities staff but refused point-blank to attend School meetings. Nor did he participate in Open Days. And so on. How did he survive? Well, for starters, the Humanities Department in those days was largely autonomous, affairs being managed as the staff thought fit. There was very little of the managerial interference which was to become the plague of academic life in the corporatized and massively over-regulated bureaucracies of the new century. By then you needed forms in triplicate to procure a pencil.

Clive had been one of the prime movers behind a course entitled Studies in Western Traditions, a program to which Roger was whole-heartedly committed. Clive was deeply learned in many aspects of both Occidental and Oriental traditions. In some respects he was not only a close friend of Roger's but also, I think, a kind of mentor – but not in matters pedagogical or administrative; the idea of Clive advising anyone about "classroom management" or "teaching style", or how to balance a budget, would be deliciously absurd to anyone who knows him! – but on matters philosophical and literary. I never knew Roger to defer to anyone's else's judgement in these domains, not openly anyway.

Roger admired Clive's erudition, his deep immersion in Eastern philosophy and his considerable but obscure attainments as a poet. He also admired Clive's eccentricity which, I supposed, he took to be not only a repudiation of "normality" but a kind of cloak for a deep commitment to learning and writing. Among his other experiences Clive had spent an extended amount of time in a Zen monastery in Japan, about which he rarely spoke. He was, at this time at least, a serious Buddhist practitioner. Clive's oblique teaching style, if it could be called that, didn't suit a lot of students and there were many who found his lectures difficult to follow. His long suit was with the more gifted students, several of whom told me, over the years, of the indelible imprint Clive had left not only on their minds but on their souls. And as both Roger and Clive believed, as I did, that the Humanities disciplines were largely concerned with self-discovery, souls as well as minds were involved in the whole business. Even more so than Roger, Clive was thoroughly familiar with and sympathetic to the writings of the perennialists with whom I had been preoccupied for the last decade, especially Guénon and Coomaraswamy. It was *massively* exciting for me to discover through my early encounters with Roger that I would be working in a department where several of the staff were intimately conversant with the traditionalist perspective. Some years later, when we had recruited three research fellows onto the staff, I think we could fairly say that in no other academic institution in the world, never mind Australia, could there found such a concentration of perennialist scholars. My previous experience had been working with people who were entirely ignorant of this perspective or, if they knew anything at all about it, were far more likely to be either hostile (usually mildly) or, more often, indifferent. What a welcome change to find myself amongst people who, to varying degrees, shared the same fundamental values and assumptions, people who were actually capable of understanding and respecting my own work in making the perennialist outlook more widely known. Elsewhere this vocation, as I had come to regard it, had been either ignored or tolerated, never enthusiastically welcomed and valued. In this context Roger's support was of inestimable value. I still remember the thrill I felt when, soon after my arrival, I saw him heading for

the lecture room, armed with some art prints and a copy of Schuon's *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*. (I surmised that he would be referring to Schuon's aphoristic essay on "Aesthetics and Symbolism in Art and Nature".)

Apart from a nod or two in the corridor my first encounter with Clive occurred when I sought some advice. (It was typical of Clive that he had not attended the dinner downtown which Roger organized to welcome my family to Bendigo, which was altogether fine with me as I had enough on my hands with the others.) My initial teaching responsibilities included a compulsory first year unit called Communication. This was a year-long portmanteau course – some might call it a rag-bag – which encompassed segments on myth and symbolism, visual language in art and advertising, and cinema studies. Given the expanding enrolments, particularly of mature-age students, it was time to offer a night-class. Clive would teach the daytime course, I the night. The unit had been designed by Clive and was very much his baby. The only information I had about the course was the skeletal and somewhat cryptic description in the College Handbook which indicated that the writings of John Berger and Walter Benjamin were the central texts. Under these circumstances it seemed only proper that I should seek some guidance from Clive. Before that I drew up a rough outline of how I might proceed. I took this outline to Clive's office. He looked it over, giving the odd sniff and grunt. Handing it back he said, "No, we don't do things that way here." "I see," I said (a flagrant lie: I didn't see at all!). "How *do* you do things then?" "You work it out", he replied with a dismissive wave. At this point I decided that Clive's attitude was very much the same as Roger's – i.e., the ball was in my court. I discussed this episode with Rodney Blackhirst, a former undergraduate who knew and admired Clive and who was now a tutor, also working on his PhD about some arcane aspect of Platonic philosophy. He explained that Clive would not have been happy with my way of structuring the cinema screenings chronologically. Clive, he said, repudiated historical approaches to any subject. Anyway, I soon found my feet, taught Communication my own way and had no trouble with Clive.

I must not linger too much on my other colleagues or this will turn into a different kind of book. But a few things must be said. Rodney too was not out of the conventional academic mould. He was just finishing what turned out to be a brilliant and highly original dissertation on Plato. (Roger too had written his doctorate on Plato, at the ANU. It was very short, less than half the prescribed length apparently. This caused some consternation amongst the examiners but he was eventually awarded the degree on the grounds, one supposes, that as it was twice as profound as most dissertations it was appropriate that it should be half the length!) Rod was into ancient gardening practices, astrology, number symbolism, homeopathy, alchemy, esoteric movements of the most obscure kind, and a convert to Islam. His general outlook could be described as Platonic-Sufi. His next research project was to be on the Gospel of Barnabas, an apocryphal medieval text of mysterious provenance. Rod lived in a ramshackle place out in the country with his hippie wife and three small children as well as a menagerie of unruly animals. Anarchy prevailed.

Gwen Adcock was a middle-aged/oldish spinster who taught New Testament Studies. She rather gave the impression that she had always been middle-aged. She might easily have been found in a Barbara Pym novel. Gwen had been working for many years on a Masters concerning some occult inscriptions at Durham Cathedral. She ran a dog-minding kennel out on a country property where sheep, goats, dogs, birds and various reptiles shared her living quarters. She was also a bell-ringer at St Paul's Anglican Cathedral. At the end of semester another staff member, Maurie Nestor, was returning from a year's exchange teaching in Montana. Gwen was putting on a late lunch out at her property to welcome back Maurie and his wife Marcia. We were all invited. But somewhere along the line Gwen forgot about me, Rose, Josh and Misha. When the four of us turned up she was momentarily flustered but then retreated to the backyard, grabbed a passing duck, wrung its neck and marched triumphantly back into the house, plucking the poor creature's feathers. The deceased creature eventually found its way onto the dinner table. There was plenty to go around. I came to know Gwen better through our mutual connection to St Paul's.

Along with Roger the person with whom I was to develop the most enduring friendship was Maurie Nestor who was in charge of the Literature and Art History. But my first meeting with him was not all that promising either. This occurred late in 1989 when I was in Bendigo to be interviewed. At Roger's invitation I pitched up at his office mid-morning. He and Maurie were poring over reams of paper, students result sheets which had to be ratified before disappearing into the maw of the university Bumbledom. The deadline, apparently, was looming. Roger immediately lost all interest in the task at hand on which Maurie remained intensely focused. After a perfunctory greeting Maurie wanted to get back to work. Roger was in conversational mode and wanted to discuss all sorts of things despite Maurie's repeated insistence that they really must get the result sheets finalized. Maurie's frustration was mounting to the point where some sort of detonation seemed likely. I discreetly withdrew. It soon turned out that Maurie and I had a great deal in common: many shared literary enthusiasms (Willa Cather, Dostoevsky, Dickens among others); an interest in American history and culture, and a taste for Appalachian and bluegrass music; travel writing (Thesiger, Jonathan Raban, RL Stevenson) and the history of exploration in both Australia and America; and, crucially, we were both what is usually described as "die-hard" Collingwood supporters which actually means that we are quite irrational people. We can't help ourselves. We were also both cricket tragics. Maurie was of Irish background and a devout Catholic. He and his wife Marcia became close friends. (Maurie did have his shortcomings: he evinced no enthusiasm for Henry James.)

Other members in the department included John Penwill, a classics scholar, Epicurean, co-editor of the international journal *Ramus*, an expert on Roman literature, and a North Melbourne supporter. Also something of a sybarite. After politely enquiring about my own interests at the welcoming dinner he told me that he never read anything written after Virgil. Bob Tucker was in charge of Philosophy. He was an ebullient alcoholic, sceptic, and Peter Singer enthusiast, given to frequent and provocative reference to the anti-God brigade (Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens et al.) Al Gabay taught History. At one time he had been

hanging out with my university-days friend Helen McCallum. He was interested in Swedenborg, spiritualism, and American religious movements as well as more conventional subjects in the fields of British and Australian social history. He was working on a book about Alfred Deakin and spiritualism. He was a Buddhist, soon to be very actively involved in the development of the Atisha Centre and the Great Stupa outside Bendigo. There was another elderly woman, Enid Barclay, a friend of Gwen's who taught Medieval Studies. She belonged in the pages of an Agatha Christie manor-house mystery.

Philosophically, ideologically and in terms of life-experience we were a mixed crew. To complete the snapshot of the Humanities staff I should perhaps add that Roger was a disciple, of sorts, of Swami Chinmayananda – not the marathon runner, the other. Thus, on the staff we had a quasi-Hindu Platonist, a Muslim with Platonic proclivities, an Epicurean-Lucretian, a Catholic, a couple of Anglicans, a Zen Buddhist, a Tibetan Buddhist and a hard-line atheist. We also covered most parts of the ideological spectrum though the prevailing wind came from the Right rather than the Left, certainly a change after SWOW and Phillip College. For the most part we all worked together happily. Most of us had, at the least, traditionalist leanings. Many years later I joined three of my colleagues in a presentation at the inaugural Bendigo Writers' Festival, each of us elaborating themes under the title "Against the Spirit of the Times", a phrase which Brian Coman later used to entitle his excellent book about ancient and modern philosophy.

Brian, a few years older than me, had spent his working life as a research scientist and field biologist. He worked for many years for the CSIRO in the field of pest control and wrote a surprisingly interesting and entertaining book on the history of the rabbit in Australia, *Tooth and Claw*. He was a man deeply versed in the classical philosophy, in the Christian tradition and in British literature. He had also imbued the folklore and the Bulletin-era literature of Australia, and had an inexhaustible fund of bush anecdotes and yarns drawn from his own life and from the bards of yesteryear. In some ways he was a quaint but charming relic from another era. He could recite an astonishing amount of poetry, plucking lines from memory for any occasion. He was the

most engaging raconteur of the group. Having moved into semi-retirement Brian came to LTUB as a mature-age student to pursue studies for his second doctorate, this time on traditional understandings of the natural order and their pertinence to contemporary debates about "the environment" (a term I dislike; a metallic and abstract word). Brian was a lively contributor in the postgraduate and staff seminars, and also did some tutoring in my Eastern Religions unit. He remains a good friend. In retirement he has put the teachings of Coomaraswamy about the arts and crafts into practice, mastering the mysteries of making boats and canoes by hand, and the arts of printing, book-binding and the production of marbled paper. He and a former student, Jess Milroy, put together my little anthology *Wellsprings* and so did a good deed in a naughty world.

Other interesting people included the extraordinary Lithuanian scholar Dr Algis Uzdavinys who was a Research Fellow in the department for two years before his untimely death. He was an astonishingly erudite scholar who seemed to know everything about the ancient world. The more esoteric the subject, the more Algis knew. In a tribute after his untimely death I wrote this: "Picture a seminar room in a provincial Australian university where we find twenty-odd students, postgraduates and staff members listening to a talk on ancient theurgy. Out front, a large, bearish man with a booming voice, a shaggy beard and unruly hair, energetically gesticulating as he answers a question about some recondite aspect of ancient Egyptian cosmology or Pythagorean mathematics or Babylonian funerary rites. Each question or comment from his interlocutors sets off a phosphoric chain-reaction of coruscating ideas, dazzling his listeners with the fizz and sparkle of his insights, his discourse punctuated with rumbling laughter. The talk endlessly ramifies in many directions as the speaker explicates his subject with the most infectious enthusiasm."

Tim Scott, one of my former students, also became a Research Fellow. Tim and I had a lot in common. He was another one-eyed Magpies man, and also an Anglican. Unlike me he was also a talented song-writer and musician. He did a superb job as editor of the *Eye of the Heart* (about which more presently). He wrote the

definitive study of ancient Judaic metaphysics, *Symbolism of the Ark.* I wrote a "puff" for the publisher, Fons Vitae, praising it as "an exemplary work in the exegesis of traditional metaphysics, cosmology and symbolism. It belongs to a scholarly lineage stemming from the pioneering labours of René Guénon and Ananda Coomaraswamy but makes its own distinctive contribution...".

I have spent some time recalling my colleagues. With most of them I spent the greater part of the next twenty-two years. But of course my main business was with students. I have always believed that education is essentially about the *meeting of minds and souls*, an interaction which is only possible face-to-face. Much of what goes on in university these days has little or nothing to do with these vital encounters. I enjoyed nearly all aspects of the actual teaching – lectures, tutorials, seminars, supervision – and developed rewarding relationships with many students. Two in particular, Paul Weeks and Steve Maber, have in later years become my closest friends in Bendigo, along with Maurie and Roger. Paul wrote a fine doctoral thesis on the reception of Tibetan Buddhism in the West, focusing on the work of Anagarika Govinda and Marco Pallis. Steve only completed study to fourth year Honours level, writing a well-crafted exposition of the principle of orthodoxy, a subject which he would have been unlikely to pursue elsewhere. Somewhere Frithjof Schuon remarks that if his work had no other result than bringing some individuals back within the fold of a religious tradition, his work would not have been in vain. I was pleased when this seemed to be one of the fruits of my own endeavours, as it was with these two. Of course, as an academic scholar and teacher my primary task was to stimulate, discipline and enrich students' intellectual life, not to persuade them to adopt any particular worldview. In fact, I always encouraged to disagree with me, to generate some creative intellectual friction. Over the years I taught and supervised many highly gifted and sometimes dazzlingly bright students whose work gave me great satisfaction. Here I mention only three: Andrew Itter who eventually published a distinguished book on Clement of Alexander, Ian Irvine who has since written several books and become a highly creative teacher at the Bendigo

TAPE, and Christine Street whose research led me into the previously unexplored territory of Kashmiri Shaivism. I have already made mention of Tim Scott and Brian Coman. Shane Kendall, Mark Stone, a local artist, and Sue Karecki were three others with formidable intellectual gifts.

My teaching commitments varied over the years but the units which I taught many times included the following:

Greek Mythology: a close textual study of *The Odyssey*, augmented by *The Hymn to Demeter*, Hesiod and *The Symposium* (tutoring only).

Philosophy ofReligion: philosophical arguments for and against religious belief; Anselm, Aquinas, Nietzsche, Marx, Otto, Freud, many others.

Eastern Religion and Philosophy: an introductory survey course of the major religious and philosophical traditions of India and the Far East.

The Modern Era: a close textual study of Guénon's *The Reign of Quantity* followed by an examination of modern trends in philosophy, literature, and post-modernist "theory".

Communication: Visual language in traditional art, advertising and the cinema.

American Cinema: a study of the classical Hollywood system, genres (usually noir, the Western, melodrama) and post-classical independent cinema. The methodology of film criticism.

World Cinema: European, Asian and Australian "art cinema". The history of "film theory".

Romantic Literature: Blake and the major Romantic poets. Novels by Emily Bronte, Flaubert, and Dickens. (I usually taught only the section on the novels – which Roger didn't think were literature-proper! – but twice taught the whole unit when he was on leave.)

The Humanities in a Scientific Era (a fourth year Honours seminar program)*;* the "idea" of the Humanities from Newman and Arnold down to the present (postmodernism, the onslaughts of "Theory").

I put a lot of time and energy into postgraduate supervision, and found it rewarding. I knew from my own experience that many academics paid only cursory attention to this task while others all too often railroaded postgrads into pursuing studies which were bent towards the supervisor's interests rather than those of the student him/herself. I tried hard to avoid these pitfalls, as did

brother Peter who took on a lot of postgrad supervision at Sydney University. We both knew how often supervisors gave less than adequate support to postgrads. My own experience was mixed. Arvind Sharma was a sympathetic supervisor of my MA dissertation. His policy was one of benign neglect. After reading each chapter in draft form his advice usually amounted to little more than "Good work. Keep going." I was not unhappy about this. I knew far more about my subject than he did and I was confident about what I was doing. Later, when I was doing a doctorate in Cinema Studies at La Trobe Bundoora, Lorraine Mortimer proved to be an ideal supervisor: seriously interested in and engaged with my work, supportive without being unduly interfering, rigorous in her criticisms, full of helpful suggestions.

Yet another aspect of my academic work was serving on the editorial panels of various journals and peer-reviewing submissions. This could sometimes be tedious but I usually enjoyed such work. The publications involved included *Australian Religion Studies Review*, *Sophia* (not the traditionalist journal based in Washington DC but a long-standing philosophical journal based at Melbourne University), and *Metro* (a cinema and media studies journal based in Melbourne). From time to time I would also receive requests from academic publishers who wanted me to review scholarly books on subjects in which I supposedly had some expertise. This was much more demanding and often rather thankless. The recompense was usually a voucher entitling one to a selection of unwanted books. But, in any event, like postgraduate examinations, one didn't take on such work for monetary reward. Anyone who did so would soon conclude that it wasn't worth the candle.

The examination of postgraduate theses was a time-consuming and demanding task which I always took seriously. Candidates who had sacrificed years of their lives to complete their dissertations deserved no less. In most years I would have one or two such examinations, ranging over a diversity of subjects from the cinema of Akira Kurosawa to the philosophy of Nietzsche to the writings of Guénon and Schuon. I had myself been grateful to the five examiners who all took a good deal of trouble in writing detailed reports on my two postgrad dissertations: Seyyed

Hossein Nasr and Huston Smith on my Masters, and Leland Poague, Victor Perkins and Brian McFarlane on my PhD.

One interesting experience was participating on the government appointed panel to consider the application of the Melbourne College of Divinity for full university status. This entailed several months of work interviewing dozens of academic theologians, considering submissions and formulating a detailed list of recommendations.

Early in my time at Bendigo I took on the Presidency of the Bendigo Shakespeare and Literature Society which was a community group based in the Arts Department. John Penwill was my immediate predecessor. My primary duties were finding speakers for and chairing our monthly talks, held in a variety of venues, and generating publicity for these events, usually by way of posters which I designed and distributed myself. I myself gave at least one talk each year. Frances Mills, a one-time student, postgrad candidate and tutor, served as the Secretary-Treasurer throughout my tenure, meticulously attending to correspondence, the keeping of the books and so on. I enjoyed this work though the search for new speakers could be bothersome. It was always a bit anxiety-making before a meeting, waiting to see how many people would turn up. Usually there were fifteen or twenty people, sometimes more. I could always count on John, Maurie and Frances to be there. But on two or three occasions the audience slumped into single digits. This was embarrassing but the speakers concerned usually took the small numbers in good humour – all excepting one, a local novelist of some standing who berated me for expecting him to perform before a mere handful of listeners. Big egos some of these people! (As Alex Miller is the best-known novelist living in these parts I should add that it was not he; I wouldn't want to inadvertently besmirch his reputation.)

In normal times my work comprised lecturing and the other tasks attendant on running a unit, administration of the Philosophy and Religious Studies course, departmental business such as the coordination of the B.A. as a whole, and Honours and postgraduate supervision. Along with my work as Warden of the Halls, my church commitments, my radio program, not to mention family and domestic matters, I was VERY busy. This left little time

for research and writing. But there was always the windfall of sabbatical leave, six months every three years. During these periods I was either researching overseas or working at home. I worked at a frenzied pace, immersing myself in the project at hand, and wrote in a kind of white heat. I was fortunate in that I always found writing easy and enjoyable. When I was going full-pelt I could churn out several thousand words a day. The main problem was switching off at night. I would often awaken suddenly in the small hours, fumble around for pen and paper and scrawl out some notes arising out of some question which had been causing some unconscious perturbation. These major writing projects were, chronologically: my doctoral thesis on the film theorist and critic, Robin Wood; a handful of scholarly articles and the preparation of the final manuscript for *Traditionalism: Religion in the light of the Perennial Philosophy* (published 2000); *Journeys East: 20th Century Western Encounters with Eastern religious Traditions* (2004); *A Christian Pilgrim in India: the Spiritual Journey of Swami Ahbishiktananda* (2008); *Frithjof Schuon and the Perennial Philosophy* (2010). Here and there I scrounged time to work on my other books and articles. (A full listing can be found in an appendix to the present volume.)

Another more or less voluntary aspect of the work was giving public lectures, talks, seminars and such, regularly for the Shakespeare Society and the Bendigo Philosophical Society, and by invitation at conferences and meetings in different parts of Australia and overseas. Amongst the many groups and institutions which I addressed or under whose auspices I spoke were the Sri Lanka Institute of Traditional Studies (Colombo), the Temenos Academy and the Matheson Trust (London), *Sacred Web* (Edmonton), the Australian Theosophical Society, the Australian Association for Religious Studies, the Melbourne School of Philosophy, Daybreak Spirituality Group (Bendigo), Rocklyn Satyananda Ashram (near Daylesford), the Bendigo Jung Society, the E-Vam Institute (Melbourne), the Australian Psychological Society, the Janssen Spirituality and Inter-faith Centre (Melbourne), the Shiva Yoga Ashram (Mt Eliza) and the Australian Sufi Centre (Sydney). I also gave a number of talks in schools and at other universities, and was several times interviewed for TV

and radio programs. (A selection of my talks can also be found in the appendix.) Most of these events were occasions where I met many interesting scholars, writers, teachers, psychologists, monks, nuns, swamis, wayfarers and seekers of all kinds as well as fellow-academics.

Perhaps here I will recall just two such occasions. In 2008 I was invited to deliver the keynote address at the Annual Conference of the Australian Theosophical Society in Adelaide. I wrote back to the National President of the TS pointing out that I had written sympathetically about René Guénon's excoriating attack on the theosophical movement in one of his early books. In this light the Society might want to reconsider their invitation. She wrote back insisting that I was the speaker they wanted. As well as the opening address I was to give another lecture on the second day. OK. Rose and I arrived the evening before the conference opened, soon installed in comfortable quarters at St Mark's College. The next morning the hall was full, something like 150 very distinguished-looking people, mostly middle-aged or elderly. For reasons which were never entirely clear to me I had chosen to make the central theme of my talk a blistering attack on the assumptions and pretensions of modern science, and to contrast these with the sacred sciences to be found in traditional civilizations. As usual the talk was more or less extemporized with the use of some flimsy notes. I fired up. I was vaguely aware of some unrest in the audience but there was no turning back. Question and discussion time was not scheduled and I was followed by other speakers and activities. In due course the assembled throng drifted over to the dining hall for lunch. The President approached me in a slightly conspiratorial manner and confided that she had been confronted by a deputation complaining about her choice of speaker for the opening address, outraged by some of my claims. Turned out most of these were high-powered scientists from some of Australia's most prestigious universities. I replied that I was sorry if I had caused her any embarrassment and offered to leave the conference if she thought it best. No, she enjoined me to stay and asked if I might be able to smooth the waters in my talk the following morning when my subject would be the "environmental crisis". I also told her that I

had meant what I said in my opening address, that I stood by my claims but that I would be more than happy to discuss them in a plenary session the next day, to hear whatever criticisms anyone cared to make and to further discuss any issues of mutual interest. All good. Soon after I was stealthily approached by a small group. They had come to apologize for the antics of the first deputation and to assure me that they had found my address interesting and inspiring. I felt caught in some kind of vortex but thanked them warmly for their support. Later a few of the original complainants joined me for what turned out, eventually, to be quite an amicable discussion, some strong differences of opinion notwithstanding. The next morning I was the very model of diplomacy. Call me Metternich. I prefaced my talk with some conciliatory remarks about the previous day's tempest, clarified some remarks which may well have been misconstrued, and delivered my talk on the environmental crisis, stitching in some freshly-minted comments about the vital role science had to play in the protection and preservation of the natural order. I was warmly applauded and the ensuing discussion was (mostly) pretty friendly. What I had initially failed to take into account was that my audience was made up in very significant part of people who adhered to one of the original aims of the Theosophical Society, the reconciliation of "science" and "religion". There was a disproportionate number of academic scientists in the audience who were appalled by some of my remarks about the ways in which a properly-constituted science should take place within a larger religious and philosophical framework. Not surprisingly, this medicine was far too strong. However, by the end of the Conference we had at least managed to ventilate some important issues in a more or less cordial fashion. This happy outcome was largely because of the sensitivity and tact of the President in smoothing badly ruffled feathers. Subsequently she published a short article of mine on Schuon in the TS magazine. So, all was forgiven.

The other occasion I recall here occurred in 2001, an Inter-Faith gathering at the Balmain Town Hall, organized in the wake of 9/11 by Sheikha Fatima Fleur Nassery Bonnin of the Australian Centre for Sufism and Irfanic Studies. A large crowd had gathered to hear speakers from various faiths addressing the most urgent

issues arising out of the terrorist attack on the NY Trade Centre. My talk was entitled *Islam and the West: the Context of Recent Events*. I put my heart and soul into it. At the end of my talk Fleur Bonnin, a woman of quiet modesty and imperturbable dignity, rushed over and gave me a massive hug and whispered blessings in my ear. I was deeply moved. Soon after 9/11 my friend and colleague, Rod Blackhirst and I collaborated on an article on the same subject, the only time I ever co-authored something ("Shadows and Strife: The Confrontation of Islam and the West", *Sacred Web* 8). At this point I might add that the most sympathetic audience to whom I ever spoke was at a Sufi Centre Conference in Sydney in the previous year. I didn't do very well with my talk – too long, too cerebral – but the atmosphere at that conference was extraordinary. Nearly all the people were of Middle Eastern background. They were quiet, courteous but exceptionally warm. I've rarely sensed a collective spiritual radiance as powerful – perhaps at the Shoshone Sun Dance, perhaps at the Satyananda Ashram, on a smaller scale at Shantivanam.

To return to LTUB. The Humanities program overall flourished for the first fifteen years I was in the saddle. Shortly after my retirement I was asked to write a short piece about the program, especially *viz* Religious Studies, by this time in disarray and being dismantled altogether. I reproduce that piece as I wrote it at the time. It will give some idea of the work in which we were involved and of the fate that awaited us, lurking like a venomous reptile in a dark corner.

Religious Studies at La Trobe University Bendigo, 1990-2012.

I arrived at LTU Bendigo at the beginning of 1990 to teach in the BA Humanities Program. At that time all Humanities students did a major in a course called Studies in Western Traditions (SWT), an integrated course which incorporated the study of philosophy, literature, history and art history. This major included a good deal of material about religion but was not a Religious Studies course as such. In the early 90s, under various pressures, the SWT course was rejigged so that all of the units previously taught under that canopy were incorporated in what now became the three major

offerings in Humanities: Philosophy & Religious Studies (PRS), Literature and History. We also had smaller satellite courses in Media and Cinema Studies, art history and classical languages. What had formerly been two departments within the School of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, were now consolidated into one department.

By the mid-90s PRS was flourishing. On a rotating basis we offered about a dozen different units. An honours and postgraduate course had been introduced in 1992. PRS was attracting a large number of students. Over the next decade PRS was one of the mainstays of the Arts Program at Bendigo. We had the largest and most successful Honours and postgraduate programs at Bendigo in the Arts field. PRS reached its zenith in about 2006/7 by which stage we had attracted an external grant of $500,000, over three years, from a private donor. This money was used to employ three Research Fellows, one of whom had the responsibility for editing a journal which we had set up, *The Eye of the Heart*, which produced four issues with contributions from distinguished international scholars. (We had earlier published a series of monographs under the title "Studies in Western Traditions Papers".) The three research fellows were Dr Algis Uzdavinys from Lithuania, a man of such erudition that in the sub-continent he had been referred to as "the new Coomaraswamy", Dr Peter Chang who had just completed a doctorate at Harvard, an expert in Chinese traditions, and Dr Tim Scott, a graduate of our program and the author of *Symbolism of the Ark* as well as many scholarly articles in traditionalist journals. Bendigo LTU had established itself as a major centre of Traditional Studies, and was attracting students from around Australia and overseas. The general approach of the PRS program was articulated in the first editorial of *Eye of the Heart*, written by Tim Scott. It reads, in part, as follows:

Eye of the Heart: A Journal of Traditional Wisdom arises out of the perceived need for an academic journal that recognises traditional approaches to the study of philosophy and religion. There are in fact numerous journals of both philosophy and religion. Those which might be labelled academic tend, on the whole, to approach their subject through the application of contemporary theoretical models and analytical procedures that may well be described as non-traditional, at best. These

have their value, but this intellectual *weltanschauung* does not have exclusive right to academic recognition and worth. The many non-academic publications in this field range from the highly questionable (to say the least) to some of the most exciting and intellectually stimulating works available. Still, even the best of these are rarely allowed the academic recognition they deserve. We hope *Eye of the Heart* may go some way to addressing this situation.

A few words about the name of this new journal will not be out of place. Our first criterion for choosing a name was that it should be universal. The phrase "eye of the heart" fits this as the quotes from the various traditions on each page of the journal website show. We opted for a name in English, eschewing technical or obscure languages as these might suggest emphasis on either a particular tradition or a linguistic approach. So while *Oculus Cordis* may have lent a certain esoteric panache or even a scholarly credibility it was, in the end, not true to the inclusivity to which we aspire. Similarly, there was debate about the subtitle, *A Journal of Traditional Wisdom*, the issue being the use of the English word "wisdom," which has been so tainted by New Age abuse. Again, if we had opted for the Greek *sophia* we would have saved ourselves some angst. But we have chosen "wisdom" to remain true to our original idea. It remains to explain our use of the term "traditional." Those who know the work of the Philosophy and Religious Studies department here at La Trobe, Bendigo will know that several members–but not all–of the editorial board are sympathetic to perennialism. However, we are not aiming to make a specifically "perennialist" or "traditionalist" journal. In the first place we feel that this niche is well filled by such publications as *Sophia: The Journal of the Foundation of Traditional Studies*, *Sacred Web: A Journal of Tradition and Modernity*, *Connaissance des religions*, and the recently re-released *Studies in Comparative Religion*. Secondly, as the editor I am keen to develop the content of *Eye of the Heart* beyond a purely perennialist current, to move beyond the traditions that perennialism is usually associated with, and to open perennialism itself to a wider dialogue. I am well aware that there are many people sympathetic to a traditional study of philosophy and religion, who, at the same time, may have never heard of perennialism, or who may even be hostile to elements that they perceive therein. Our intention with *Eye of the Heart* is to facilitate a forum where a variety of perspectives may be expressed. Our fundamental tenet is that the great philosophical and religious traditions of the world are treated with respect in light of the Reality they express.

PRS was taught primarily by myself, Dr Roger Sworder and Dr Rod Blackhirst with some input from other staff members. The three of us were regularly producing scholarly publications and supervising many postgraduates, as well as teaching and carrying out a range of administrative and community responsibilities. On top of the large grant we had attracted we were more than holding our own in keeping the wider department afloat financially. On almost any conceivable measure (student survey results, retention rates, graduation rates, postgraduate completions,

publications etc) PRS was clearly the most successful Arts program on the Bendigo campus.

From the time of my arrival until about 2005 there had been many administrative changes at both Bundoora and Bendigo. But generally the La Trobe campus adopted a policy of benevolent neglect; we were left to manage our own affairs. However, over a period of time the metropolitan campus exerted more and more control over the whole of the Bendigo campus, often with disastrous results.

I cannot remember the precise chronology but sometime around 2006 or 2007 the La Trobe School of Humanities and Social Sciences appointed a new Dean, David de Vaus. It was a period of acute financial pressures and political turmoil within the school. de Vaus seems to have been given a brief to slash and burn programs and to implement draconian staff cuts. There were various "reviews", "rationalizations" and "restructures" at all LTU campuses, including those at Bendigo, Mildura and Shepparton. The Bendigo Program was reviewed by a panel set up by the Dean and chaired by a Sociology professor (whose name I have forgotten). I was one of the panel members. Our review was carried out over a period of some months. At the penultimate meeting of this panel the Chairman conjured a list of recommendations which bore no relation whatever to our deliberations over the preceding months. The central recommendation was that PRS no longer be offered as a major at Bendigo, and that the Honours and postgraduate program be terminated. These recommendations had clearly been hatched up by the Dean and the Chair, and presented as a *fait accompli*. Most of the Panel acquiesced, no doubt many of them relieved that their own area had been spared. (The weakest link in the Bendigo Arts Program was undoubtedly in the Sociology-Politics area – poor retention rates, no honours program, no postgraduate program – but that was part of the Dean's fiefdom and thus sacrosanct.)

I made the strongest possible protest at this meeting, immediately resigned from the panel and wrote to the Vice Chancellor requesting a meeting to explain how the Review Panel had violated all normal protocols and made a mockery of promises of a fair and open review. The VC replied in a letter

which was covered with the Dean's fingerprints; many of de Vaus' favoured slogans and rhetorical flourishes, used at a meeting with the Arts staff in Bendigo, were repeated *verbatim* in the VC's letter! My protests were dismissed out of hand and the VC refused me an audience. Other student and staff protests met with similar summary responses from the university apparatchiks. In any event, the Dean had enough power, and enough accomplices, to dress up this fraudulent "review" and to railroad through its factitious recommendations.

The egregious behaviour of the Dean and some of his henchmen at La Trobe can be simply explained. de Vaus had a pathological hatred of anything to do with religion. He espoused a Marxist-cum-postmodernist ideology which saw religious phenomena in entirely negative terms. He believed that the study of religion as such (no matter how dispassionate and scholarly that study might be) had no place in the university, certainly not in "his" school. He was also ruthlessly ambitious and quite prepared to adopt any means whatever to achieve his ends. His animus to our program was ideologically fuelled and based on an almost complete ignorance of what actually went on at Bendigo. (Amongst other scandalous lies was the absurd claim that the PRS at Bendigo were running some kind of "cult"!!) The Review's "recommendations" were quite irrational as PRS was making a significant contribution to the viability of the Arts Program at Bendigo. All attempts to discuss the issues and to negotiate a reasonable outcome were peremptorily brushed aside by the Dean and by the Chair of the Review Panel. I regret to say that the behaviour of the majority of the Panel and of our Social Science colleagues at Bendigo can only be described, at best, as pusillanimous.

I will not go into all the unhappy and sordid details of how the PRS Program was completely dismantled. Suffice it to say that by 2012, apart from a few residual postgraduate students who were still in-stream, PRS had disappeared altogether. Roger Sworder and I were effectively retrenched under cover of the so-called "Voluntary Redundancy" scheme. Rod Blackhirst was retained on a very part-time basis to supervise the remaining postgraduates but had no teaching responsibilities. Over a period of about four

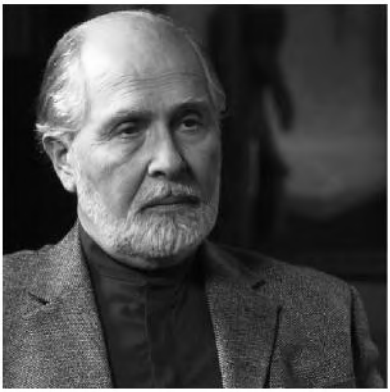
years (2008-2012) *all* of the staff who had been part of the original Humanities program were removed, one way or another. None of the staff concerned, some of whom had served the university with distinction for thirty years or more, were given any formal farewell or any sign of recognition. (There were some informal events arranged by students and former graduates, outside the university, but absolutely nothing of an official nature.) Such staff replacements as were made in literature and history came from Bundoora graduates who were in sympathy with the Dean's ideological disposition. By 2012 the Dean had taken up a new and more senior appointment at one of the Queensland universities, leaving behind a mess from which the School has still not extricated itself.

The extirpation of PRS (and of the whole Humanities Program as it existed over the previous two decades) at the Bendigo campus was a disgraceful episode and a case-study in academic politics of the most squalid kind. In many respects it is a story which has unfolded at a number of Australian universities where thriving Religious Studies programs have been emasculated or destroyed root and branch, not because of any failure on the part of those concerned but because Religious Studies has often been a "soft target" under the utilitarian, managerial and materialist ethos of the contemporary university, an institution which now hardly deserves the name.

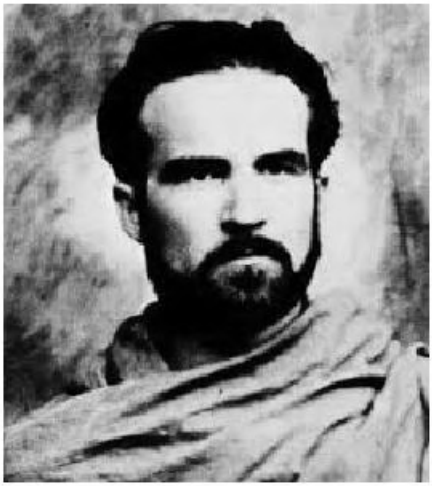
To end on a more positive note. It was a great pleasure and privilege to work at LTU Bendigo for 23 years and to be part of a vibrant, distinctive and creative program in the field of Religious Studies. I have studied/researched/taught at many universities – ANU, Sydney, LTU Bundoora, St Johns College Oxford, Canberra – but nowhere did I meet with more distinguished scholars, extraordinary teachers and engaged students than I did in the Bendigo Arts Program. I am profoundly saddened by the disappearance of a program to which I dedicated most of my professional life, and appalled by the way in which my colleagues and students were treated. Nonetheless, I count it as a great blessing that for so many years I was able to contribute to this remarkable program.

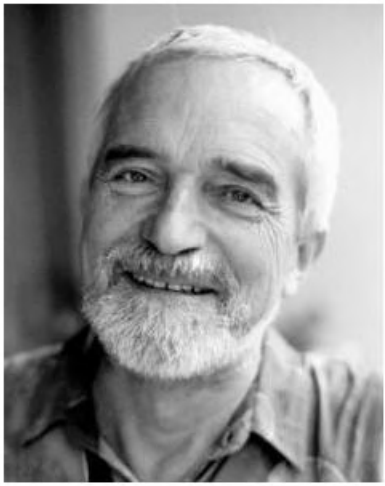
Colleagues & friends:
Roger Sworder Maurie Nestor & Brian Coman Rod Blackhirst

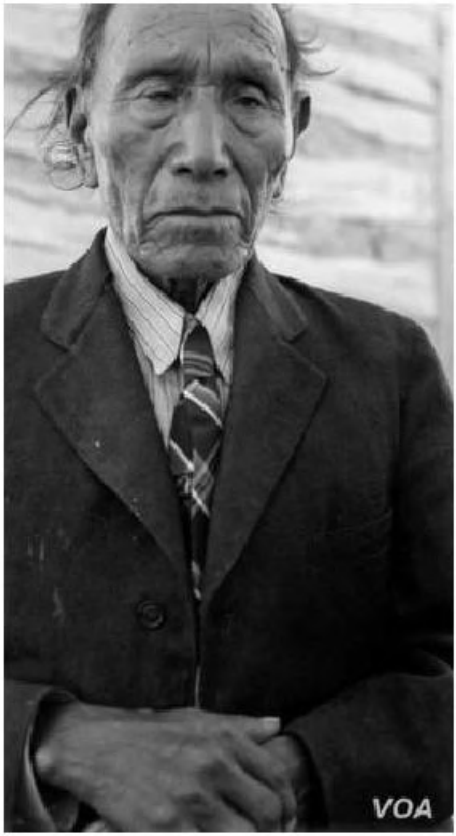
Waleed Al-Ansary, Joseph Lumbard, David Dakake, Maria Dakake, Caner Dagli, Michael Fitzgerald, Reza Shah-Kazemi, Ali Lakhani William Chittick, James Cutsinger, Huston Smith, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Jean-Louis Michon, H.O., Catherine Schuon — at the Sacred Web Conference, Edmonton, 2006



William Stoddart, Seyyed Hossein Nasr;
With Arthur Buehler & Fleur Nassery Bonnin







Some of my research subjects;
Mircea Eliade, Robin Wood
Abhishiktananda, Black Elk

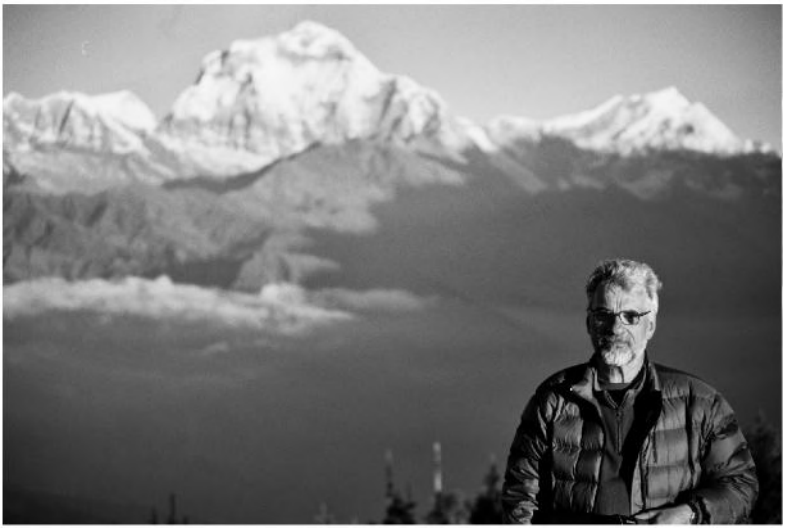
Misha, Bill Searl, Dipak Gurung

Pratap Gurung

H, Misha, John Woolman, Josh near Manang, Nepal, 2003

10.

Travels



Martin Buber claimed that "All journeys have a secret destination of which the traveller is unaware". I'm sure he is right. I've been lucky enough to do a fair amount of travelling – for work, for spiritual nourishment, and just for the fun of it. The three destinations to which I keep returning are the USA, the sub-continent and New Zealand. There have been less frequent trips to England, Europe and North Africa, some of which I described earlier.

The USA has been attractive for several reasons: as Rose's homeland; until recently, as the most vibrant centre of cultural and intellectual life over the last half century; and for the beauty and grandeur of its landscapes, particularly in the West. Earlier I mentioned a family trip to New York in 1984. Since then I have been on two work-driven trips. In 1994 I spent a month in New York and Toronto doing research on the work of the film critic Robin Wood. Three weeks in NYC. Rose's niece Sondra kindly vacated her condo for me and put her car at my disposal, generosity well beyond the call of family duty! It was a sweltering summer, made even more unpleasant by the odours drifting over from the immense Staten Island tip (finally closed in 2001). Manhattan was filthy, smelly, noisy and, at times, seemingly dangerous. I was slightly apprehensive when using the subway at night. I was very pleasantly surprised by the transformation which had taken place when I next visited again ten years later. Mayor Giuliani had cleaned the place up no end. (Eventually he went completely tropo under the spell of the mad demagogue!)

I did most of my work in the library at Columbia University, West Side, cheek-by-jowl with Harlem. In the downtime from my work I watched World Cup soccer matches on TV, trawled through the second-hand bookshops in Manhattan, visited Rose's family. Dorothy, Rose's eldest sister, was planning to visit some friends in Burlington, southwest of Toronto, and I was to visit Toronto to meet Robin Wood. Dorothy suggested I should hitch a ride with her. We rolled through the green farming country of Pennsylvania, up to Buffalo and the stupendous Niagara Falls where we spent a night in a motel, not far from the locale of Henry Hathaway's

Hitchcockian *Niagara*. Thence to Burlington. I caught a train to Toronto, spacious and cosmopolitan, reminding me of Melbourne.

Wood lived with his partner Richard Lippe, also a film scholar, in a tiny apartment mid-town. I stayed in a grimy hotel across the street. Robin, perhaps scarred by his many jousts with fellow academics, was rather wary when we first met but he soon relaxed and we spent many happy hours in his apartment. I taped an interview of several hours with him but otherwise we just conversed. When two serious cinephiles come together it's not difficult to figure out the main topic of conversation. Richard, a shy and retiring fellow, joined in intermittently. Robin also organized for me to meet with some of the staff at *CineAction!*, the journal which he edited. During my visit Robin issued an invitation which I couldn't refuse. He was a great Leo McCarey enthusiast. On discovering that I had never seen *Make Way for Tomorrow* (1937) he insisted that I do so forthwith. Out with the video. A wonderful film, as one expects of McCarey.

Robin was a complex and fascinating character. He had been deeply wounded in his childhood and youth, partly because of his gayness, had suffered an unhappy marriage about which he harboured some residual guilt, and was now aggressively "gay", not in any stereotypical effeteness but in his conversation and outlook. He could be quite abrasive. One could discuss hardly any topic without the intrusion of gender politics. This was sometimes tiresome. He had been entirely seduced by one of the more absurd slogans of Paris, 1968: "Nothing outside politics!", a formula both bleak and barren. However, when not pontificating he was charming, immensely film-literate and insightful even if one did not always share his strident political views. In any event, he was enormously helpful. For my own part I found his earlier film criticism, in quasi-Leavisite mode, richer and more nuanced than his later work where ideological considerations sometimes overtook the "moral seriousness" and the sensitivity to textual particularities which had informed the earlier work.

On the afternoon of my departure I made a train trip out to a far-flung suburb to a shop specializing in film posters. I was hunting posters for several Ford and Hitchcock films. I left clutching a large cylinder full of treasures. That evening I travelled

by train back to Burlington to rejoin Dorothy. I left the cylinder in the overhead rack, never to be seen again. I wasn't happy. But Dorothy and I had a pleasant trip back to NYC via Albany.

Rose and I returned in 2003 for another family visit, this time staying with her sister Margaret and husband Michael. We had a lot of fun with them including a visit to Amish country in Pennsylvania and to Atlantic City where we trod the boardwalks but resisted the gambling dens. Little did we realize that Margaret, an effervescent personality, would soon be struck down by CJD, as recounted earlier. It was also on this trip that we visited another of Rose's sisters, Maryann, and her husband Walter who lived on the New Jersey coast, also spending a night in Cape May.

One day in Manhattan I was day strolling down Broadway when a young dude – no other word for him, these days called "a person of colour" – fell into step beside me. His opening conversational gambit signalled that he was talking to "Steven Spielberg". I responded in kind and we had quite a long conversation about "my" films. After a couple of blocks he gave me a smart salute and floated off sideways into a bar. The intriguing thing about this conversation was that I was never sure if he actually did indeed think I was Spielberg or whether he was just enjoying a game in which he had found a willing accomplice. If he had any ear at all for accents he must surely have known that mine could not have originated in the USA.

I was twice more in Canada which I found very agreeable. In October 2006 Rose and I attended the *Sacred Web* Conference in Edmonton which was dressed up in is finest autumn apparel. The city was chosen as the venue partly because of its large Muslim population, the oldest in Canada, largely Syrian and Lebanese in origin. The first mosque in Canada was Edmonton's Al Rashid Mosque, built in 1938. At the Conference we had the opportunity to meet many prominent perennialists. It was an honour to meet Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the most widely-known living traditionalist scholar and the examiner of my Masters thesis twenty-five years earlier. Other people in attendance included my other early examiner, Huston Smith, Michael Fitzgerald, James Cutsinger, Reza Shah-Kazemi, Jean-Louis Michon and the organizer of the

conference and editor of *Sacred Web*, Ali Lakhani. Ali and his wife Nazlin were warmly hospitable and solicitous of our welfare.

Huston Smith had written a gracious Foreword for my book *Journeys East*. However, by this stage he was suffering from some mental confusion and was, I think, rather overwhelmed by the conference where he was very much in demand. I was able to speak with him only briefly but I'm not sure he ever quite made the link between his interlocutor and the book for which he had written the Foreword. Seyyed Hossein Nasr was an immensely impressive presence, quietly dignified, somewhat grave, more formal in demeanour and dress than the more casual north Americans. He gave an hour-long address, without notes, word-perfect and without any pauses or stumbles. He was kind enough to speak to me warmly about my work. He too had written about *Journeys East* in fulsome terms when he had been asked by World Wisdom for a "puff" (the short quotes from well-known people that appear on the covers of books, many of which I had myself written for World Wisdom publications). We were also able to become acquainted with several people from World Wisdom, particularly Mary-Kathryne Nason who had worked on the production of *Journeys East* (2004), and Gray Henry from Fons Vitae, a publisher specializing in Sufi literature. It was also a special honour to meet Catherine Schuon. She and Rose hit it off immediately. On our departure she gave Rose a beautiful turquoise pendant, crafted by Native American women from the southwest. Michael Fitzgerald and various others told us about the majestic landscapes around Jasper and Banff, also in Alberta province. We resolved to return to visit these places and did so in 2013, book-ending the trip with time in Vancouver, more scenic, vibrant and diverse than Toronto, though the weather was inclement as, apparently, it so often is.

Before the Edmonton Conference Rose and I had been in Wyoming. At the invitation of Michael Fitzgerald, the director of World Wisdom Publishing, we were attending the annual Shoshone Sundance on the Wind River Reservation. Michael had been closely associated with the Indian folk in this region, had been adopted into the tribe, had written many books about their spiritual tradition, and had been a patron of the Sun Dance,

contributing a great deal of money, time and energy to the preservation of the old ways. The Sun Dance was conducted on strictly traditional lines and was not open to anyone outside the tribe. However, Michael was permitted each year to invite three or four guests who could be counted on to observe and participate in the appropriate spirit rather than as gawking tourists, something that happened in other places where the great rite had been commercially tarnished. By now World Wisdom had published *Journeys East* and I had conducted some correspondence with Michael. What a pleasure it was to meet him and to develop a friendship which only deepened over time. We seemed to have an intuitive understanding of each other which sometimes went beyond words. I deeply admired and respected him for his indefatigable work with the Native Americans, for the immensely important service he performed in keeping the works of Schuon and other perennialists in print, as well as for his personal qualities: generosity, self-effacing piety, good humour and sensitivity.

The Sun Dance, described in Black Elk's *The Sacred Pipe* and explicated in Joseph Epes Brown's *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian*, was an overpowering experience, one of the most extraordinary of my life. The three-day ritual began each morning at dawn when the dancers gathered at the opening of the Lodge while Sun Dance Chief James Trosper intoned prayers, followed by chanting and the beating of drums attuned to the rhythms of the very cosmos, the fiery orb of the sun slowing appearing over the eastern horizon. Throughout the day and night the thirty-odd dancers swayed back and forth between the central tree of the lodge, the *axis mundi*, and the outer circumference, praying, chanting and whistling their eagle-feather pipes. Above us all, high in the tree, were an eagle and the head of a buffalo, cardinal in the symbolic vocabulary of the Plains Indians. At the base of the tree a small fire, the burning of sage and other herbs filling the air with a sweet aroma. Throughout the three days the dancers fasted, abstaining from all food and drink but, somewhat comically, indulging in cigarettes, the customary gift brought by the many folk who were not dancing but participating in the

chants and prayers. The last day included a healing ceremony in which Rose and I were "smudged" by the Chief.

Even more intense and cathartic was the Sweat Lodge ceremony to which I will return later. At the end of the Sun Dance we all enjoyed a feast in the house of James Trosper. He was a quiet man, taciturn in the way of Native Americans, not given to idle chatter and certainly not a fellow with whom one might indulge in a little gossip. He had a kind of inviolable dignity and presence which seemed to me to exemplify the spiritual genius of his people. On departing the reservation we were able to give him some small Tibetan mandalas, painted on cloth, in which he was greatly interested. We then spent several days in the Grand Teton National Park, Yellowstone and the Bighorn Mountains before heading back to Denver through Sheridan, Casper, Medicine Bow, Laramie, Cheyenne and Fort Collins, all places with a mythic aura generated by my many years of watching Westerns. In case you didn't already know: Wyoming is the windiest and the most sparsely populated of all American states south of the Canadian border, which is the longest international boundary in the world.

In 2009 Rose and I did our most extended overseas trip together, starting in Wyoming, then Bloomington, New York, and on to Italy. We again had the privilege of attending the Sun Dance and Sweat Lodge ceremonies and rejoining folk we had met in 2006. I enjoyed the chance to explore the wide, open spaces surrounding Lander, provoking reminiscences from my reading – Zane Grey's fine *Riders of the Purple Sage*, the novels of A.B. Guthrie, and such. The camera was given a serious work-out. On leaving Lander we drove up through Dubois to Colter Bay and then to the Lost Creek Ranch, overlooked by the jagged skyline of the Grand Tetons; *Shane* country. Here we stayed for the best part of a week, courtesy of Michael's extravagant generosity. And here occurred a small event with unforeseen ramifications. Part of the daily program at the ranch was horse-riding. Rose was immediately hooked. So began an obsessive interest in all matters equine. Within a matter of days of returning home, where we had just sold our country property to move into town, Rose was making inquiries about horses. A few months later she had acquired Rusty, a lazy but handsome and amiable quarter-horse

on whom she was to lavish countless hours and endless affection. Best not to mention the expense. Before long Rusty was agisted on the Eppalock property of fellow horse-lovers Angie and David Mellor.

From Wyoming to Bloomington, Indiana, the home of the Fitzgerald family and the headquarters of World Wisdom publishers who by now had put out several books which I had written or edited. Here we spent time with the family and friends of the Fitzgeralds, and with some of the World Wisdom staff. It was a pleasure to meet the poet Barry McDonald, who had been my first contact with World Wisdom, and Clinton Minnaar who has done most of the spade-work on my World Wisdom books. Some years earlier I had examined his impressive postgraduate thesis on Schuon, written in South Africa. Whilst in Bloomington we stayed in John Murray House, a beautiful cottage on the Fitzgerald property, adorned with Native American artefacts and sacred objects from all over the world, and quite a number of Schuon's original paintings. The cottage was a superbly appointed little gallery of religious art as well as being a tranquil haven. We were also able to pay our respects at the grave of Frithjof Schuon in the woods nearby. Michael conducted a lengthy interview with me which subsequently appeared on the DVD *Frithjof Schuon: Messenger of the Perennial Philosophy*, produced by Deborah Casey, a companion piece to Michael's biography of the same title, published simultaneously with my own book, *Frithjof Schuon and the Perennial Philosophy*.

After Bloomington we flew to New York, once again visiting Rose's family, catching the sights, and spending time in New Jersey with Rose's niece Debbie and her husband Mike Lezzo. There was a stream of other family members coming and going. Under my influence Mike had become interested in AFL, even becoming a Magpies fan, poor chap! We were able to watch some footy games on cable TV. Observing the traditional principle of reciprocity I became a semi-serious New York Yankees fan. Derek Jeter was the Hero of the Day. We returned to New York again in 2013 after visiting Vancouver, Jasper and Banff. Mike took me to one of the last games ever played at the old Yankee Stadium, against the much reviled Boston Red Sox. We also went to a Steely

Dan gig in Manhattan and the Broadway show *Chicago*, and spent time with Josh and Aliya, then enmeshed in the hospitality business in Manhattan.

But back to 2009. From New York we flew to Italy. The proverbial inefficiency of the Italian bureaucracy was on display at the airport where we simply collected our bags and walked out into the street: not a customs/immigration/security person anywhere in sight. When we were leaving the country the immigration officials, this time on hand, were bemused by the fact that our passports showed no evidence whatever of our arrival in Italy. If only more countries were run this way! We had signed up for a seven-day tour: Rome-Siena-Florence-Venice-the Dolomites-Lake Maggiore. This was a magical experience despite my disappointment in the many churches and cathedrals we visited in Rome, including St Peter's. Rome seemed to be almost totally swamped by the profligate Late Renaissance and Baroque styles, which brought to mind the telling observations of Frithjof Schuon who wrote of "the dramatic titanism, and the fleshly and vulgar delirium, of the megalomaniacs of the Renaissance, infatuated with anatomy, turmoil, marble and gigantism ... a sort of posthumous revenge on the part of antiquity". He characterized the Renaissance as a whole as "that Caesarism of the bourgeois and bankers". (On one occasion I repeated these observations during a lecture; they provoked complete pandemonium and, in one student, a veritable paroxysm of indignation.) The Byzantine, Romanesque and early Gothic styles, the purest architectural expressions of the Christian spirit, were hardly to be seen anywhere in Rome. Later on the trip the great duomos of Orvieto and Milan, and above all the Basilica of Apollinaris outside Ravenna, were much more ravishing and more inspiring than anything we saw in Rome. Schuon: "When standing before a cathedral, a person feels he is placed at the center of the world; standing before a church of the Renaissance, Baroque or Rococo periods, he merely feels himself to be in Europe." In the duomos of Orvieto and Milan, and in the Basilica of Apollinaris one indeed felt at the centre of the world, in the presence of Eternity.

The churches, villages and landscapes of Tuscany were captivating as were Venice, Vicenza, Verona, Bolzano and Cortina.

After the tour we travelled by train to Milan, thence through Genoa to Cinque Terre, the five fishing villages perched on the cliffs of Liguria, strung along the dramatic coastline like glittering jewels. Each day we walked along the cliffs and through the vineyards and orchards, stopping here for a coffee, there for a plate of freshly-caught sardines, and somewhere else to buy some little memento. Rose had been learning Italian for some time and the previous year had spent a month in Siena doing an intensive course. She was able to understand most of what was said to us and to make herself understood to the friendly locals. I was busy with the camera. The only fly in the ointment was the presence of large groups of German tourists, mostly middle-aged and obese, who insisted on marching about half-naked, talking loudly and boisterously issuing orders. They were almost as offensive as Australian tourists often are.

In 2011 I enjoyed one of the best travel experiences of my life when I did a solo road trip, starting in San Francisco, on to the epic spectacle of Yosemite, down the San Joaquin Valley to Mojave, listening to Merle Haggard and Willie Nelson as I rolled through Bakersfield. Across the Mojave desert, arid but austerely beautiful, up to Flagstaff where I met Josh and Aliya, flown in from NYC. We spent two nights in an up-market motel on the southwest rim of the Grand Canyon. Good food, great shops. Stretching out to the horizon the astonishing formations and earthy colours of the great canyon land, the hues enhanced by the covering of snow, a dramatic contrast of glistening white with the red, ochre, and purple of the escarpments, the lazily winding Colorado River far below. Emanating from the landscape, the vibes of the primordial peoples who had lived in these parts, undisturbed for centuries before the arrival of the *wasichus*, as the Lakota called all non-Indians.

No one who is a serious cultist of John Ford films could approach Monument Valley without quivering. I arrived at the only functioning motel within the vast Navajo reservation, late one afternoon, blizzard blowing, visibility negligible. However, I could visit the small hut in which Ford had shot some of the interior scenes of *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, John Wayne playing the immortal Nathan Brittles. The hut had been turned into a kind

of shrine, not for Ford but for Wayne, the All-American hero. Fortunately the next day brought sunshine and blue skies. Because it was mid-winter (January) the area was free of the summer throngs. I headed out to reconnoitre, stopping several times to photograph the towering red monoliths, almost expecting *that* stagecoach to come rattling around the next bend. It was so cold that I could only take a few photographs at a time before jumping back in the car and thawing my frigid hands on the heater. At that time one could only penetrate into the heart of Monument Valley on a tour bus run by the Navajo people. I was so crestfallen when discovering that the bus was not running that the friendly woman at the motel offered to make a phone call to one of the regular bus drivers. "There's a fellow here who has come all the way from the Australia to see Monument Valley. Any chance that you could crank the bus up and take him around?" Half an hour later a mini-van crunched through the snow and ice in the car park, out jumped a diminutive and wizened old woman, smiling broadly. I had a personal tour lasting several hours, stopping wherever and for as long as I wanted, the spectacle enhanced by the driver's anecdotes. Ford and Wayne were actually amongst the first Europeans to take a serious interest in the Monument Valley region and many of the European names of the monoliths were bestowed by Ford himself. Thus, for example, the famous "Three Sisters" had a special Irish-Catholic resonance. I knew from my reading that however unpalatable one might find the "patriotic" conservatism of both Wayne and Ford, and despite the stereotypical treatment of the Indians in Ford's early Westerns, both men had been held in high regard by the Navajo for their unusually respectful attitude to all things Indian. Ford, I understand, was also the first director to insist that Native Americans be paid the same rates as the rest of the cast and crew.

From Monument Valley I swung across northern Arizona before entering Colorado where Zion and Bryce national parks beckoned, both spectacular and beautiful beyond any imagining. On the way back to San Francisco I detoured south along the coast to visit Monterey, site of the legendary folk festival, the Big Sur coastline, and Salinas which I wanted to see because of the John

Steinbeck books: *East of Eden, Cannery Row, Of Mice and Men*. The Steinbeck museum in Salinas is well worth a visit.

I did one other solo photographic trip in America. After we visited Alberta and Vancouver in 2013 Rose flew east to spend an extended period with her family. I hired a car and set off to explore Washington state, Idaho and north-western Montana, the Glacier National Park being the pinnacle of my journey, both literally and metaphorically. Here too I was in country which I knew from my reading of authors such as Ivan Doig, Jonathan Raban, Norman Maclean, Deirdre McNamer, James Lee Burke. Apple orchards, the rugged beauty of the Cascades, the vast undulating farmlands, the mighty Columbia River, the majestic peaks, waterfalls and lakes of Glacier National Park, the forests and snowy slopes of Mt Rainier. On the return journey from Whitefish to Mt Rainier I found myself late one afternoon on a long and thinly populated stretch, nightfall approaching. I consulted my map. Ritzville sounded promising but it was further away than I had anticipated. Well after dark I rolled into the only motel-proper in town, a modern, multi-story tower of glass, chrome and concrete. Ugly but just the thing after a very long drive. Sorry. Booked out for a convention. Not a single room to be had at any price. What to do? Advice: try the "motel" down behind the rail yard. The "motel" turned out to be one of those flea-pits where one is assailed by the queasy odour of urine, stale cigarette smoke and flat beer; the bed linen was greasy, the carpet was ragged and stained, the TV didn't work, the "hot" water was tepid, the décor 1960s kitsch, and next door were a couple of rowdy yokels. I thought I should be paid to stay. But what could one do? From a certain amount of stealthy human traffic I suspected the place was operating as a sex-pad. On an earlier occasion I had stayed in something similar in Nevada when I had neglected to make any booking and found myself late at night confronted by the choice of the dump on offer or sleeping in the car, worrying about the local hoods or an officious sheriff. I was out of my Ritzville dive very early in the morning. I had rarely come across a town more ill-named. The following night I treated myself to a swanky hotel-resort high on the slopes of Mt Rainier. In the very well upholstered restaurant the breakfast waiter, an Afro-

American as it happened, quizzed me in at length about AFL football.

While on photographic excursions in the USA I must also mention the Utah trip done with Josh in October 2019. I flew into Salt Lake City from L.A. (the worst airport in the western world?), Josh arriving from Washington DC where he now lived. We hired a car and headed for a small town a couple of hours to the south. After installing ourselves in our down-at-heel motel we ventured into the countryside for a look-see. Drove for quite a few miles down a deserted dirt track in search of a vantage point from which we could watch the sunset. No luck, turn around and head back. Puncture. The repair kit doesn't work. Stranded. No reception on Josh's mobile. Josh climbs a ridge and manages to rouse someone in the Thrifty office in Salt Lake City. He is told to ring the road service HQ – in Chicago or some such distant place. Reception intermittent, phone battery low, darkness descending, temperature dropping, stomachs rumbling, bodies shivering. Eventually an old gringo turns up in a huge tow-truck covered in blinking lights and chains, clanking and rattling. He must tow the car back to Salt Lake City. Oh no! At this point I had been going for close on thirty hours with virtually no sleep, and no food since the early hours of the morning. We clambered into the cabin, fighting for space amongst bits of machinery, clothes, magazines, take away food cartons and all manner of other detritus. A slow-motion three-hour trip back to SLC. ("This rig cost me $90,000 bucks. No way I'm shakin' it to bits on this ole road. I ain't in no hurry.") After a good deal of navigational confusion we find ourselves at the address given to us by Road Service: we are in the middle of an industrial wasteland, no signs of life anywhere, nothing that could possibly be a car-yard/repair shop as described by the voice on the phone. Another phone call. We had been given the wrong address. Meanwhile, anxiety is mounting because the Thrifty depot at the airport where we hope to get a replacement car closes at 1am, now not far off. We head to the new address, several miles away from the airport. Josh gets on the phone to Thrifty and demands that they send a Uber to pick us up. We get to the new destination. No sign of any Thrifty yard there either! We leap out of the truck at about 12.55, abandon the driver and ask

the young Uber driver, who has been waiting for us for fifteen minutes and is on the brink of giving us up, to drive at high speed to the airport. She does. The Thrifty office, thanks be, is still open. However, the guy behind the counter can't give us a replacement until he has verified that the original hire care has been delivered to the address in question. He rings someone at the address in question. No answer. "No, sorry, them's the regulations. Can't give you another car until I get verification." "How are you going to do that?" "Well, short of driving over there now – which I'm not gonna do – I'll have to ring them again in the morning." "What are we supposed to do?" "Don't know". Josh moves into Pressure Mode: an irresistible mixture of charm, eloquence, bush-lawyer malarkey and veiled menace. It rarely fails. The guy agrees to give us another car forthwith. The only thing available is a vastly superior, four-wheel drive Jeep, much more suitable! By now Josh has done his snake-charmer routine to perfection and the guy has become positively friendly and anxious to help. "You can take the Jeep. No charge for the up-grade. Sorry you guys have had such a hassle." We part the best of friends. It's now about 1.30 am. Fatigue and hunger. A two-hour drive back. Maccas the only outlet open. Greasy chips and cheeseburger, washed down with Coke, never tasted so good. Back to the motel about 3.30am for the first real sleep since leaving Bendigo about forty hours previously. But we were on the road again early the next morning, heading for Arches National Park outside Moab.

Over the next nine days we blissed out over a phantasmagoria of desert and alpine colours and formations, canyons, buttes, monoliths, arches, cliffs, boulders, dunes, lakes, rivers, waterfalls, forests. A photographer's paradise. Our route went like this: Monticello, Arches National Park, Canyonland NP, Moab, Richfield, Canyon Reef NP, Moab, Monument Valley, Chinle, Canyon de Chelley, Zion NP, Bryce Canyon NP, Richfield, Park City, Salt Lake City. Josh came equipped with all his para-gliding gear and was able to get in the air near Richfield. To use the repellent jargon of the psychologists, it was good to spend some "quality time" with him.

My favourite travel destination has been Nepal. My trips:

1974: the Annapurna Sanctuary, with Richard;
1998: the Annapurna Circuit, with Bill, Josh and Misha;
2000: the Annapurna Circuit with Bill & Di;
2003: the Annapurna Circuit with Bill, Richard, Di, Josh, Misha, and John Woolman;
2009: the Annapurna Sanctuary with Rose, Josh, and Misha;
2011: The Lukla-Everest Base camp trek (solo)

On the four treks between 1998 and 2009 we were accompanied by our friend and *sirdar*, Pratap Gurung. Bill and Di had met him on a Peregrine trek in 1997. Pratap took charge of all matters relating to our transport, the porters, accommodation. He became a good friend and one of the most impressive people I've ever met; completely honest and trustworthy, resourceful, efficient, very adept at handling people, calm and decisive in a crisis, always good company, relentlessly cheerful, full of jokes. Like many people in Nepal his life was hard and making a living was not easy. He also faced various family difficulties and crises with great fortitude and stoicism.

The Everest Base Camp walk was by far the most physically challenging but, it should be added, the climb over the Thorung-la Pass on the Annapurna Circuit is no easy matter either. In both cases one reaches an altitude of about 17,000' where altitude sickness can easily set it. I did the EBC walk with Chandra, a friend of Pratap, as my guide and a toothless, garrulous, dim-witted but amiable old man from Lukla as a porter; he was a tough old hombre. It was mid-winter (January) and there were very few other trekkers about. One night near Namche Bazaar I was so cold that it was actually frightening; apparently the temperature was minus 30. When I inquired whether this was Fahrenheit or Celsius my interlocutor had no idea. But it seems that minus 30 on either scale is much the same. Whatever. Bloody cold however you gauge it! All of the treks were hugely enjoyable but none more so than the 2009 walk through the Annapurna Sanctuary with all of the family present, Rose for the first time. The highest point was Annapurna Base Camp where we witnessed a monstrous avalanche down the vast perpendicular south wall of Annapurna, first climbed by Chris Bonington's 1970 expedition. So enthusiastic was Rose about this experience that soon after we

returned to Australia she booked into the longer and gruelling Lukla-Gokyo Lakes-Everest Base Camp-Island Peak trek. I could not accompany her because of work. But she was altogether intrepid. She found the going pretty tough but also a huge buzz. She came home with many stories, including an account of being stranded in Lukla (site of the world's most dangerous airfield; perfectly obvious when you fly in!). I did the Lukla-Everest Base Camp section of the same walk in 2011.

Nepal held many attractions: the fertile co-existence of two great cultural and religious traditions, the Hindu and the Buddhist, the latter with a strong Tibetan flavour; the friendly, easy-going people whose dealings with each other as well as with foreigners are, almost without exception, marked by a courtesy and generosity which I have not experienced anywhere else in the world (New Zealand comes closest); the variegated landscape ranging from the jungles and rivers of the south to the awesome peaks and ranges of the Himalaya and the nerve-tingling spectacle of the Titans of Machapucchare, Dhaulagiri, Annapurna, Gangapurna, Manaslu to the west of Pokhara, Ama Dablam, Lhotse, Nuptse, Everest, Pumori to the north-east of Kathmandu. Once seen never forgotten. As Ruskin said, "Mountains are the beginning and end of all natural scenery." But more than that, they are the supreme symbol of transcendence, of the Divine Substance Itself. For this reason a walk in the high mountainous regions cleanses the soul as well as the body. The gentle Buddhist ambience contributes to this spiritual therapy. No doubt some folk will find such a claim high-falutin but such was my experience and such is, in part, the explanation of my frequent returns to Nepal. Then too there were the attractions of Pokhara and of Kathmandu itself: Kopan Monastery, Swayambunath Stupa, Pushpatinath Temple and ghats, Durbar Square, Boudnath Stupa, Pilgrims Bookshop, the ancient site of Patan, the hustle and bustle of Themal. It was a great disappointment when a projected trek in March 2020 with Joshua, Misha and several of their friends had to be cancelled because of the Covid pandemic. Now I wonder if I will ever be blessed with another opportunity of seeing the snowy peaks, the happy faces of the villagers, the sacred sites.

At the end of the 1998 I took Josh and Misha to see the sights of Benares. This entailed a long bus trip to the Indian border, another bus to Gorakhpur, thence by train to the holy city. The travel agent in Pokhara sold us tickets for the whole journey but instructed us that we would have to pick up the train tickets for the final leg in Gorakhpur where we would meet his agent. Long and tiring bus trips, hassles at the border where one moved abruptly from the laid-back atmosphere of Nepal to the noise, bustle, and aggravation of India. Arrive in Gorakhpur late afternoon. Go to the address we've been given where we are to meet the agent. Nobody knows nuthin'! What agent? What tickets? We've been scammed, my only experience of this kind over my six visits to Nepal – but perhaps the scam was at the Indian end. "OK, when is the next train and how do we get tickets?" "Booked out sahib, no more seats until tomorrow's train". But, as travellers in India know, there's nothing that can't be fixed with a little monetary lubrication. Out come the American dollar bills, the green frogskins as Lame Deer called them. Tickets materialize. But the next train doesn't go until the early hours of the morning. We've been travelling since dawn and by now darkness has descended. Where can we find some accommodation for a few hours where we can wash, eat and sleep? "No problem sahib. Come this way." A dingy, windowless room with green slime on the walls, an evil smell, a rusty bed with a tattered mattress which might house any number of insects, even some small reptiles. We decide to sleep on the platform at the railway station which turns out to be just as squalid as the "hotel". Human and animal excrement *everywhere*. Misha, Josh and I are quite unanimous that Gorakhpur is the most horrible town we have ever had the misfortune to visit. (I knew from my reading of John Moffit's *Journey to Gorakhpur* that the city was not without its redeeming features but we certainly didn't see any of them.)

The train trip was not much better. We had sleeper tickets which entitled us to a bunk each. By the time the train clanked out of the station in the small hours our six-bunk cabin housed something like thirty people, most of whom clearly did not have tickets. We tightly clutched our belongings and tried to snatch a little sleep, a losing battle. Eventually a conductor came, examined

the tickets of the six of us who actually had them, and ignored the others. When I protested that our carriage had been invaded, that we were entitled to a bunk each and suggested he should remove the free-loaders, he asked me, with that sideways head-nodding which one sees everywhere in these parts, where I thought he should send them. He said that all the carriages were the same (i.e., overloaded with non-paying passengers), that it was customary to allow the poorest people aboard without tickets, that I must be hard-hearted indeed to be so indifferent to their plight, and that he proposed to do nothing. He put me to shame. I had no answer. I bore the rest of the uncomfortable journey in better spirit.

Alighting from the train I hailed a rickshaw and asked the driver to take us to the Blue Star hotel, recommended in Lonely Planet. Now came a trick to be played on the hapless and unwary tourist. He took us to a hotel, rather sleazy but adorned with a large sign, "Blue Star Hotel". We register, pay money and get installed. But the place is a dump. Further investigation reveals that this is *a* Blue Star Hotel but not *the* Blue Star Hotel listed in Lonely Planet. By now Josh, Misha and I are all suffering from gastric trouble and some fever. I am too exhausted to pack up and go in search of the other Blue Star, so we stay, cramming ourselves with dodgy pharmaceuticals purchased from a nearby street vendor. We watch cricket on TV. We have a couple of excursions to the Ganges River temples and ghats, and to Sarnath, but the whole episode is a downer. Josh and Misha are perplexed by my apparent enthusiasm for India and can't get back to Pokhara quickly enough. Back in that pleasant city Josh goes to confront the travel agent. He has disappeared. Josh puts the frighteners on the hapless youth who is now working at the travel "office". We decide not to bother trying to retrieve the money for the illusory train tickets. We are so happy to be back in Nepal that it doesn't seem to matter. We enjoy the local cafes and bars, the lakeside, the street stalls. We watch the ill-fated Rugby World Cup in a bar.

At the end of that trip Josh and Misha flew back to Australia while I caught a plane to Colombo to meet up again with Ranjit Fernando. The Australian scholar Adrian Snodgrass was in residence with Ranjit, there to deliver another Ananda

Coomaraswamy lecture in the series which I had inaugurated in 1990. I was installed in a nearby hotel. After Adrian's lecture on architectural symbolism, Ranjit, Adrian, his wife Judith and I headed south on another excursion to the tourist hotspots on the south-eastern coast where we saw many temples, churches, archaeological ruins, beautiful beaches and, circling back inland, the Agiriya Cricket Stadium in Kandy, scene of some epic tests and the horrific collision of Steve Waugh and Jason Gillespie in the following year. It was to be the last time I would see Ranjit. We continued a friendly correspondence but a few years later I heard, with great sadness, that he had passed away. Another friend gone.

In 2005 Rose and I spent a few weeks in India with two purposes: my research on Abhishiktananda and a sojourn at the Satyananda Yoga Ashram in Rikkia in the Bihar region. We flew into Delhi, spent a hideous night in a pokey little room down a side alley after our hotel booking was abruptly cancelled in favour of some pilgrims who had arrived for a religious festival. The hotel manager was a little apologetic but explained, as if rehearsing a self-evident truth, that pilgrims must always take precedence. I could appreciate the principle if not its specific application. We spent a day with Pete who was in Delhi in transit to Bodhgaya. Then by train for another appalling night in Ambala before going on to Shimla where I was meeting Bettina Baümer, a friend and associate of Abhishiktananda. Our accommodation could hardly stand in sharper contrast to that of the two previous nights: we were in the magnificent Vice-Regal Lodge, site of many diplomatic meetings and political machinations when Shimla was the summer capital of the British Raj. It had now become a research centre and library where Bettina had plenty of clout. She lived in a modest but charming cottage in the grounds. Bettina was unexpectedly absent so we had a few days to enjoy the sights of this lovely hill station and to gaze at the snowy ranges to the north. She eventually returned and I had many long conversations with her, not only about Abhishiktananda but other subjects of mutual interest. Bettina, of Austrian birth but living most of the time in India, is an Indologist and expert on Kashmiri Shaivism as well as being President of the Abhishiktananda Society for many years. She could not have been more hospitable or helpful.

From Shimla we did a hop, skip and jump over to Rishikesh, a holy city on the banks of the Ganges, nestled in the cradle where the mighty river emerges from the Himalayan range. The entire old part of the city is a sacred precinct, dotted with ashrams, yoga institutes, temples, monasteries, libraries and the like, all pervaded with an atmosphere of devotional piety. The whole area is strictly vegetarian – no meat can be purchased or consumed – and most of the visitors are there on pilgrimage, retreats, yoga courses and the like. It must be one of the very few towns in India where you can be quite free of pleading beggars, hustlers and spruikers. Indeed, many of the people who had performed some service for us were reluctant to take any payment other than our gratitude. "I am glad to have been of service" was a sincere utterance we heard many times. I particularly remember a fellow in a chaotic shop which sold all manner of goods, including cameras and other such devices. The vendor was hunched over, badly crippled. I had foolishly left the battery charger for my new digital Nikon in the "hotel" in Delhi. He went to extraordinary lengths, unsuccessful in the end, to procure a replacement. He was also very helpful in the problematic business of booking rail tickets, the nearest station being in Hardwar. We had planned to travel to Benares by train. He booked the tickets. Then, for reasons I've forgotten, possibly illness, we decided to abandon that plan and go to Rikkia via Delhi. We asked him to cancel the tickets. But shortly thereafter we discovered that two young American women – hippie pilgrims they might be called – wanted to go to Benares but were short of funds. We offered them our tickets if we could abort the cancellation. On returning to see our man in the shop and putting our request to him he was perplexed; "Cancel the cancel??" "Yes please, if possible, cancel the cancel". Duly done. Tickets retrieved and handed over to our young friends who had been staying in the same hotel. Each evening they sang *kirten* on the hotel roof, a sound of celestial sweetness. A couple of rail tickets hardly seemed sufficient recompense.

The two main attractions in Rishikesh were the Shivananda Ashram and the Shiva Temple with a large figure of the deity standing in the shallows near the edge of the river. Most days we attended evening *puja* at the temple as well as making several

visits to the Shivananda Ashram where we found a room in which monks had been chanting continuously, 24 hours a day without interruption since some time in the late 1940s. There were still at it. Powerful vibes!

I had also planned to visit Uttarkashi, Abhishiktananda's last home where he had built a small shack on the banks of the river, one of the upper arms of the Ganges. But alas, the road to Uttarkashi, some hours away by bus, was blocked by a landslide. Instead I went to a holy site on the banks of another tributary of the Ganges, Badrinath, high in the Himachal Pradesh Himalaya and a great pilgrimage site associated with the revered sage Shankara. Winter was nearing and traffic up this road had almost ceased. I hired a driver and a Jeep to take me there. The night before departure Rose became violently ill with gastro trouble and was unable to come. I left her in the care of Dipak, a young Nepalese fellow who worked at our hotel. Out the front of the hotel at dawn I spotted the Jeep and driver. As soon as I climbed into the front seat a large number of Indians and the two young Americans, still in town, piled into the back. Word had got about and I was now accompanied by a large crew of free-loaders! Slightly miffed, I tell the driver that as I had paid for the hire of the Jeep I was calling the shots. These folk were welcome to hitch a ride but no one else was to sit in the front passenger seat and he was to take instructions from me and no one else. Agreed. Thus I preserved a balance between standing on my rights and meeting the needs of these people – most of whom, it must be said, thought nothing at all about this arrangement, commonplace I daresay. We had a slow trip over the crater-ridden road to Joshimath, a straggle of teetering huts and jerry-built edifices where we were incarcerated in a slum dwelling passing itself off as a hotel. Dogs barking all night. I always think of it as a locale for a B-Horror movie, *Revenge of the Mad Dogs ofJoshimath.*

Next morning we arrived in Badrinath. Just in time! The whole town was about to close down for the winter. We had arrived on the last day that the temple and shops were open. I strolled around the town, visited the temple and then did a long walk up the rugged slopes behind the town to get a better view of Neel Kanth ("Blue Throat"), the vertiginous mountain spire which

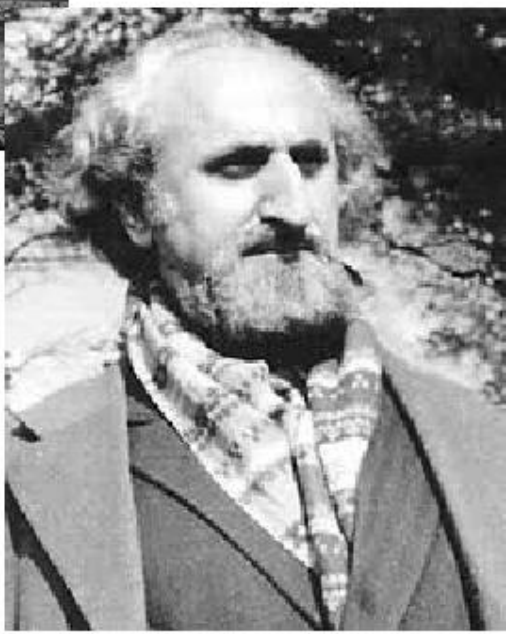
is assimilated with Lord Shiva himself. We were not far from Changabang, which Peter Boardman and Joe Tasker climbed in 1976. This epic is vividly described in Boardman's book The Shining Mountain which I had read some years earlier. Unfortunately, Changabang was not visible from anywhere on our route into Badrinath. (Boardman and Tasker both perished high on the treacherous northeast ridge of Everest in 1982.) More on our time in Rikkia later.

Here two other trips deserve brief mention. In 2012 I went on only the second organized tour/trek of my life: a five day walk along part of the Larapinta Trail in the West Macdonnell Ranges of central Australia. I had first visited this region in 1979 when Bill Searl and I did a seven-week trip in an old camper van, travelling up the east coast to Cairns, across the Atherton Tableland to Charters Towers, on to Tennant Springs and then down to Alice and surrounding parts including Ayers Rock (as it was still known, now Uluru), the Olgas (KataTjuta), Kings Canyon (Watarrka), Gosse's Bluff (Tnoraia) the Western Macdonnells and Trephina Gorge. It was a marvellous trip. Now, more than thirty years later it was good to be back.

Rose and I had signed up for the Larapinta Trail walk the previous year but I had been unable to go because of the sudden onset of a disabling malady which was eventually identified, after many false diagnoses, as polymyalgia, caused by some dysfunction in the immune system. Rose put me on a stringent three-month diet of uncooked fruit and vegetables, a remedy which worked where all else had failed. Hard work. Rose went on the Larapinta walk while I stayed home. Now it was my turn. I think the outfit was World Expeditions. A party of about ten, a diverse group from all over Australia and a couple from overseas. We had a NZ guide with a couple of sidekicks, including a young indigenous fellow. It was a fine walk, arduous in parts but not particularly challenging except for the nocturnal climb of Mt Sonder (Rwetyepme), up the steep and rocky slopes in darkness and biting cold, to reach the summit just before sunrise, our efforts rewarded by the vast 360-degree panorama. Only a handful made it to the summit.

The other most memorable recent trip was to Western Australia in 2017. Peter and Wendy had purchased a space-age

camper-trailer and teamed up with old friends Peter Booth and family, Geoff and Marina Smedley, and Richard and his partner Patsy, to form a three-vehicle caravan. I joined the party in Perth and stayed with them for a month, camping most nights in national parks. Our route: the Benedictine monastic settlement at New Norcia, Kalbarri, Geraldton, the Gascoyne River, the Kennedy Ranges, Ningaloo, Chichester NP, Hamersley Gorge, Karijini NP. At the end of the month they continued northwards into the Kimberley while I flew out from Mt Tom Price. Travelling with these old friends was a great pleasure, especially spending an extended period with Pete and Wendy. I had never seen anything of this state and discovering the glories of the Western Australian outback, especially the Pilbara, was exhilarating. I took about two and a half thousand photos on this trip!



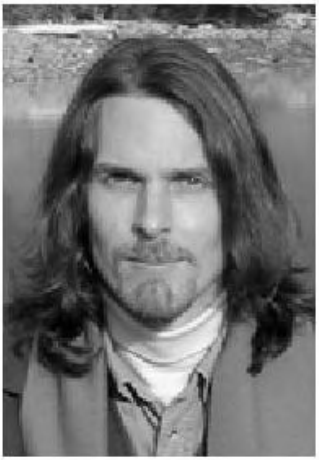
Catherine Schuon
Frithjof Schuon

Rose at FS's grave,
Bloomington, 2006

Michael and Judy Fitzgerald
Rose and friends, Shoshone Sun Dance
Wind River Reservation, Wyoming, 2009

Michael & H.O., rafting on the Snake River

Rose at the Lost River Ranch, Wyoming



Gray Henry, Reza Shah-Kazemi
Clinton Minnaar, Keith Critchlow
Juan Acevedo

Karen & Rose, Grand Teton National Park,
Wyoming, 2009

Rose, Banff, Alberta, 2013

11.

The Inner Journey

There are certain aspects of a life which are best left veiled rather than exposed to the public gaze. The spiritual life is one of these, especially in its devotional aspects. But nor will it do, in an autobiographical narrative, to leave it out of the picture altogether. Earlier I wrote about the great "turning about" in my consciousness and outlook which happened in the late 70s. What's on offer here are some fleeting glimpses of the journey, stopping off momentarily at several crossroads and way stations.

After I became seriously engaged with perennialism I wrestled with the problem of how to make the kind of formal affiliation which the perennialist writers insisted was the *sine qua non* of spiritual life. I had always remained sympathetic to the Anglican tradition in which I was raised but had become somewhat detached and drifting. I messed around for a while with Tibetan Buddhism but decided that Christianity was my proper homeland. I thought hard about becoming either a RC or an Orthodox but finally decided that the Anglican Church, particularly at its Anglo-Catholic formation, was where I belonged. For the next twenty years of so, as well as feeling a deep commitment to Christ, I observed most of the outer forms and became quite involved in church affairs at St Paul's in Bendigo. But by about 2005 I had undergone so many frustrations and disillusionments with the Anglican Church that I found myself again drifting away. Once more I thought about the RC and Orthodox traditions but could not bring myself to go to Rome for reasons which might easily be surmised – a Church riddled with all sorts of problems, divisions, confusions and corruptions as well as the more historical problems of excessive authoritarianism, legalism, exclusivism and triumphalism, not to mention the scourge of paedophilia and such. Orthodoxy too posed problems though these were of a different sort. To cut a complicated story short I decided that I would intensify my Christian practice but loosen my ties with the church. So, I have tried to maintain some sort of practice in isolation; not very satisfactory. I occasionally attend services, mainly at RC churches where I take communion even though this might violate their protocols. I hope God doesn't

mind. (The protocols seem to vary in different parts of the world.) While I share the intellectual perspective of the perennialists and am existentially committed to Christianity I have fallen short in the observance of the religious forms. I hope I have not left myself open to the charge Disraeli made against Gladstone: "He made his conscience not his guide but his accomplice." In truth I am just another confused wayfarer stumbling along as best I can. I would never advise anyone against committing themselves to a tradition if that is where their inner light is leading them. In principle I am entirely in favour of this kind of adherence. For my own part I take some comfort from Schuon's affirmation that in the late days of the Kali Yuga, such as we are now in, the requirements on believers are much less stringent than in previous times and that there is hope for those who keep even a small part of "the law". He also affirms that the Invocation of the Name (in whatever tradition) is the surest refuge in these times. That practice, of course, is available to anyone, anywhere. Perhaps we can also take some comfort from the Biblical assurance that the "wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth".

Perhaps at this point I might be permitted a small digression on the problematic subject of "God". The Big Question! Insofar as "God" is an intellectual problem we are faced with two wild implausibilities: either the time-space tissue of relativities which we call the universe created itself, or it was created by some antecedent power, Aquinas' First Cause, God. (For present purposes emanationism can be understood as a variation on the creationist position.) Then too, some claim that the question of creation doesn't arise because the universe is self-existent and eternal. But, to me at least, this seems manifestly absurd. Thirdly, one might take the easy way out, the agnostic position. In any event, as Carl Jung so nicely said, "Is man related to something Infinite? That is the telling question of his life." Insofar as "God" invites belief or disbelief (or suspension of both belief and disbelief) I have no problem with believing, as distinct from knowing. But I share Wittgenstein's view that the arguments for and against God's existence are *post hoc*; our life experiences, not ratiocination, lead us to certain beliefs. As to the "classical proofs",

the most compelling is the Ontological. Anselm is right: the knowledge of God is inscribed in our very being. Then too there is also the powerful argument which Schuon refers to as the "experimental or mystical proof", namely "the unanimous witness of the saints and the sages". Nonetheless, I occasionally feel myself to be in the uncomfortable position which Erich Heller so acutely diagnosed, exemplified by Kafka: "In Kafka we have the modern mind, seemingly self-sufficient, intelligent, skeptical, ironical, splendidly trained for the great game of pretending that the world it comprehends in sterilized sobriety is the only and ultimate real one — yet a mind living in sin with the soul of Abraham. Thus he knows two things at once, and both with equal assurance: that there is no God, and that there must be God." On the much misunderstood subject of sin I share E.M. Cioran's position: "I haven't much use for anyone who can spare Original Sin. Myself, I resort to it on every occasion, and without it I don't see how I should avoid uninterrupted consternation."

On the whole *belief* has not been my problem. For me the real perplexity lay elsewhere: How are we to *understand* God, to *relate* to God, to *experience* God? One answer is that the Divine Plenitude has Itself furnished us with all that is necessary through the Revelations from which have issued forth the world's great religious traditions, and that whichever tradition to which we adhere, it will provide the answer to these questions and show us the path. The problem for many wayfarers is that religious institutions (*not* the religions *per se*), have become so corrupted by the forces of modernity that they have lost all clarity, all authority, all efficacy, no longer fit to teach and guide the faithful. In this situation one is thrown back onto one's individual resources, necessarily severely limited and compromised by what Chögyam Trungpa called "the bureaucracy of the ego". Nonetheless, one can still draw spiritual nourishment from a religious tradition as best one can, cleaving to those beliefs, values, and practices which have withstood the onslaughts of modernity. My own difficulty is to feel, to experience, to know God as a *living reality*, uncluttered by cerebration, abstractions, arguments, elaborations. For me this reality is most powerfully felt in Jesus Christ — "God's face turned towards man and man's

face turned towards God", in Abhishiktananda's graceful formulation. I also feel a divine presence in the natural order, and in the rites and sacred art vouchsafed by tradition. Among the various names and appellations of God the one I like best is that used by some of the Native Americans, "The Great Mysterious". Whenever I feel some theological bafflement I take comfort in Simone Weil's wise words: "The mysteries of faith are degraded if they are made into an object of affirmation and negation, when in reality they should be an object of contemplation." Weil's reflections take on added weight if one believes, as I do, that all formulations about God are metaphorical. Meister Eckhart must have had something like this in mind when he asked, "Why does thou prate of God? Whatever thou sayest of Him is untrue." God escapes all definitions and conceptualizations. All we have is signposts; in Zen idiom, the finger pointing to the moon. In the meanwhile one tries to keep one's hand on the plough.

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Some experiences. Earlier I made passing mention of our participation in a Sweat Lodge ceremony in Wyoming in 2006. Picture the scene: we are on the Wind River reservation, near Fort Washakie in Wyoming. High prairie country with the sharply etched Wind River Range running north-south on the far side of the reservation. Night-time, with the vast dome of the sky glittering with countless scintillating stars. The cold air bites. During the day we have constructed the lodge, a small shelter made of buffalo skins thrown over a framework of saplings. It rises only a few feet above the ground and has one small opening outside of which there is a deep pit filled with large stones, heating in the coals which have been burning all day. Inside the lodge is a smaller hollow in which the hot stones are placed during the ceremony. The Sun Dance chief, James Trosper, is conducting the rite.

About two dozen people have gathered, all of them members of the Shoshone tribe apart from Rose and myself (Michael and his son Joseph having been adopted into the tribe). Earlier in the week we have been participating in the Sun Dance. The people

gathered here have been told that Rose is suffering from a potentially fatal condition, and that this particular ceremony has been organized by Michael and the Chief primarily for her benefit. Scantily but modestly clad we all manoeuvre our way into the lodge. No room to move in the darkness, pressed up against other bodies. The rite itself consists of the consecration of burning herbs, formal prayers, chanting and spontaneous petitionary prayers uttered by participants when the Spirit moves them. Water is regularly sprinkled on the stones in the small pit creating a fiercely hot sauna and inducing the sweating from which the rite takes its name. The heat is almost unbearable, the atmosphere intense, the effect quite hypnotic. After about an hour we crawl out into what is now an infinite cosmic space. We breathe the sharp mountain air, drink water, relax. Then back into the lodge.

As described in Black Elk's *The Sacred Pipe*, this is a ritual of purgation and cleansing, of healing and reconciliation, of renewal. Every aspect of the ritual is redolent with symbolism, always the case in traditional rites, symbols in motion one might say. There are several things which make this Sweat Lodge such an unforgettable experience: the reverential care with which the preparations are made; the dignity and solemnity of the celebrant, not unlike a priest conducting the Eucharist; the fervour of the participants; the rhythmic chanting which somehow seems to originate not in the individuals but in the universe itself, the chanters being a medium for forces and energies which infinitely surpass them; the humble and heartfelt terms in which the devotees address the Creator and formulate their petitions; the almost violent intensity of the experience, cathartic beyond any imagining. But what is most powerful and overwhelming is hearing the purity and fervour of the prayers offered up for Rose. Here are a group of people who, for the most part, are strangers to us yet they are praying with the utmost sincerity for Rose, and with an implacable conviction that their prayers are not in vain. (Since then I have often pondered the possibility that Rose may well still be here because of those prayers.) I was transported by these prayers and really felt as if I were close to the Gates of Heaven, in the presence of the *mysterium tremendum*. It was inspiring, uplifting and profoundly moving. At the end of the

ceremony, about midnight, I stumbled out once again into the night, and cried like never before or since, buckets of tears. It was if my whole body was being drained of tears, a veritable and spontaneous torrent, a cleansing overflow washing away an accumulation of sins, confusions, anxieties. It is hard to speak of such things and I feel a certain tremble go through me whenever I recall the Sweat Lodge, one of the most precious experiences of my life, one for which I am ever grateful.

Another experience, not as mystical but remarkable nevertheless, was spending several days at the Satyananda Ashram in Rikkia in the parched landscape of Bihar, the most poverty-stricken region of India. For some years Rose had been immersed in the ancient philosophy and practices of yoga as taught by Swami Satyananda and by the various gurus in that lineage. (The *hatha yoga* widely practised in the West is only a small and preparatory part of a much larger program of study and practice in which both *bhakti-yoga* and *karma-yoga* are pervasive.) The previous year she had spent several weeks at the ashram studying, working, meditating. Now we were here for a great religious festival, the *Satchandi Mahayajna*, held every ten years and in conjunction with the movements of the heavenly bodies. Several thousand people were gathered together in the extensive grounds of the ashram. Tents, kitchens, dining areas and temporary constructions of one sort and another dotted the landscape, encircling a vast marquee in which the main events took place. Most of the people had come from all over the sub-continent but there were several hundred folk from elsewhere, many from SE Asia as well as the West.

For the first two days we gathered in the marquee to chant, pray, meditate, listen to discourses from Swami Niranjan and Swami Satsangi. The assembled folk were divided into three groups: to one side a large group, mainly Indians, who had committed to ceaseless prayer and chanting during daylight hours, in the middle people from elsewhere, on the other side throngs of people from the local area. Colour and movement all about. On the third and fourth days the giving of gifts. Coming from the impoverished villages in the arid hinterland, no less than ten thousand(!) people walk across the stage, receive the blessings

of the swamis, each one also receiving a material gift. For children, books and gaily-coloured clothes; for householders, practical gifts like farming implements, seeds, ropes, buckets, blankets; for the elderly and infirm, money. All of this came from the donations which had been gathered for the purpose over the previous ten years from all over the world. Quite apart from its spiritual significance it was logistically impressive: all day long trucks bearing these gifts rolled in and out of the ashram. Here was *caritas* in Indian garb. This was not "social welfare", not a "hand-out" in anything but the most literal sense, not "charity" in the profane sense in which the word is so often disparagingly used: it was an expression of an *indivisible* love of God (here in the form of Krishna and various other devis and deities) and of humankind, an indivisibility which humanists and humanitarians so often fail to understand, a transformative power infused with grace. This indivisibility, articulated in Christ's two great commandments, is one of the impregnable bastions of all true religion. This two-sided or two-way love, if one can put it that way, offers far more hope for humanity than all the "reforms" envisaged by Utopians, revolutionaries, social engineers, activists and ideologues, and all those who think that a somewhat cloudy "humanism" or a profane ideology, answerable to nothing outside itself, generated out of purely human and secular impulses, and often of a sentimental order, can "save" the world. The Hindus know better.

When we registered for this festival we had been warmly welcomed and given helpful explanations and instructions. No mention of money. At the end of our time we sought out some of the organizers to ask about what payments should be made. No payment necessary but donations possible. No fleecing of the devotees here.

These two encounters with the sacred, high in the alpine plateau of Wyoming and on the blistered plains of northern India, signal two abiding sources of spiritual inspiration in my life: the primordial mythological traditions of indigenous peoples, especially those of Australia and the American West; and the great historical religious traditions of the East. Neither of these ever eroded the bedrock of Christianity but rather they strengthened and enriched it. Over the last few hundred years, it seemed to me,

the Christian Churches had become preoccupied, obsessed one might say, with two religious elements, always indispensable but now become tyrannical and totalizing: belief and morality. Belief all too often reduced to a catalogue of abstract, lifeless propositions, morality degenerated into moralism where rules and injunctions lurk like sadistic schoolmasters, cane in hand. This kind of literalist belief and punitive moralism are often part and parcel of a bogus religiosity and stultifying legalism. Religion, properly understood, is always concerned with *knowing* – knowing ourselves, the world, God (under whatever name) – and with *being* — being our true selves, being in the world, being in conformity with the Real. For the Christian the key to fuller being is love, not as a sentimental disposition but as an expression of a deep awareness of the nature of things. Furthermore, as Abhishiktananda so vividly reminds us, "the mystery to which it points overflows religion in every direction". The primordial peoples and the traditions of the East never lost sight of these ontological realities, often providing salutary antidotes to the ossification which has taken place in Occidental religious forms and practices. Of course, their cosmology and mythology is integral, two dimensions of religion sadly neglected in the modern world. (Berdayev: "Religious philosophy is always bound up with myths and cannot break from them without destroying itself.")

Also often ignored or misunderstood in the modern mentality is the place of Beauty and its inextricable connection to Truth and Goodness, as Plato told us. Here is another formula for penetrating to the heart of the *religio perennis*: Truth-Beauty-Goodness, a divine trinity which is inscribed in our spirit and which permeates the Creation, quite beyond the reach of a profane "aesthetics". As Marsilio Ficino so elegantly put it, "Beauty is that ray which parting from the visage of God, penetrates into all things." Or more succinctly Emerson: "beauty is God's handwriting." It is critical in spiritual alchemy, the transformation of the soul. Schuon sees it this way: "Beauty is like the sun: it acts without detours, without dialectical intermediaries, its ways are free, direct, incalculable; like love, to which it is closely connected, it can heal, unloose, appease, unite or deliver by its simple radiance." Beauty is

manifest in the saints and sages, the natural order, and in sacred art and ritual.

Sacred sites, natural and man-made, have been an on-going source of inspiration and refreshment. One I remember clearly was Muktinath, high in the Nepalese Himalaya and a pilgrimage site for Hindus and Buddhists alike. This was on the 1998 trek. As we walked up through the Kali Gandaki Valley I noticed a change in the mood of our two porters, simple mountain men of reserved temperament, shy and taciturn. The day before we climbed up to Muktinath I mentioned this change in mood to Pratap. "Have these chaps been on the raki?", I asked. "No", said Pratap. "Well, they seem more animated than usual, even a bit agitated. What's going on?" "Oh, that's because they are excited about visiting the holy places in Muktinath." To circumambulate the temples, spin the prayer wheels, intone the prayers, make offerings of flowers – these were the highlight of the trip for them. Simple faith, a sense of proportion, a sense of the sacred. How much we could learn from these folk!

The Himalayas are full of *chortens* (small wayside shrines), temples, monasteries, hermitages, walls and stones painted with mantras, mandalas and the resplendent figures of the great Bodhisattvas, prayer flags fluttering in the breeze, carrying the devotions and supplications of the people to Heaven. The general ambience is perfumed by a piety which emanates a benign influence on all, man and beast alike. One also feels a strong spiritual presence in the great temple and stupa sites in Kathmandu: Swayambunath, Boudnath, Pushpatinath. Another place where I felt something similar, though in a different spiritual register, was in the medieval Tuscan town of Siena, dominated by the 12thC duomo, but full of churches, chapels, shrines. The whole town is permeated by the centuries-old devotion of the people to the Holy Virgin and to the great mystic, Catherine of Siena, the first woman, along with Teresa of Avila, to be declared a Doctor of the Church. Everywhere one senses the presence of the Divine Feminine, a large part of the town's distinctive charm. In such places the past is still very much alive and present, not entirely occluded by the hustle and bustle, the profane hurly-burly of modern urban life. Earlier in this account I have made some

mention of the many other sacred sites it has been my good fortune to visit: Polonarruwa, Madurai, Arunachala, Rishikesh, Benares in the sub-continent, Fez, the majestic cathedrals of England, France and Italy.

I wrote earlier about the mystical power and beauty of landscapes so here I will confine myself to a few observations about animals. One of the attractions of primordial traditions is the central role of animals in their spiritual economy. They recognize the truth of Meister Eckhart's axiom that "every creature is a word of God". The alienated modern mentality generally understands animals through one or more of the following distorting lenses: *utilitarianism* (animals are to serve man's ends in whatever way we see fit), *evolutionism* (animals, "red in tooth and claw", as biological organisms engaged in the endless "struggle for survival"), *sentimentalism* (animals as pets, as "cute" etc). Of course, each of these answers to a real aspect of animals but all together do not, cannot, amount to an adequate understanding. A few thoughts:

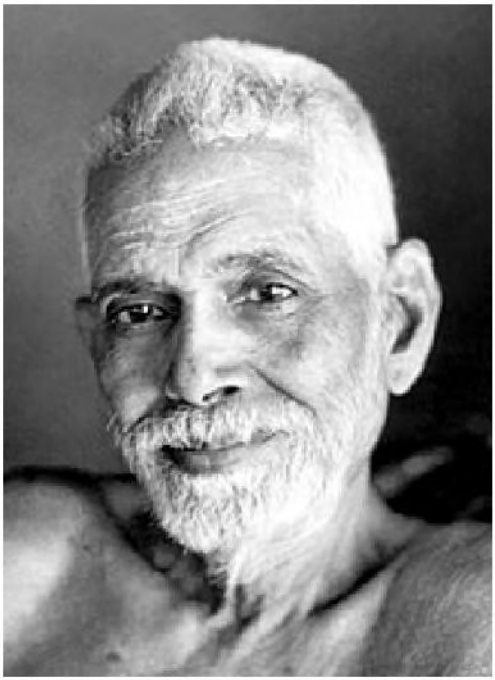
- The dumbness of animals, their inability to speak to us for themselves, their vulnerability, must impose on us certain responsibilities.
- There is something deeply moving about watching animals *eating*, a process which links them to us but which also, in some mysterious fashion, seems to tether them to the terrestrial world. Likewise, there is something about animals at *play* which also stirs the soul.
- Loving and caring for a single creature, whether pet, work animal or co-resident, whether mouse or elephant, can be a way of reverencing all creatures. (Gandhi must have had something of this in mind when he declared that "cow-protection" was at the heart of the Hindu tradition.)
- Animals seem to me to be an irrefutable proof of Plato's doctrine of archetypes. Dogs in all their wonderful diversity are all embodiments of an unmistakable "dogginess".
- Is there, within the domain of normal human behaviour, anything more abhorrent than the idea of killing animals for sport?

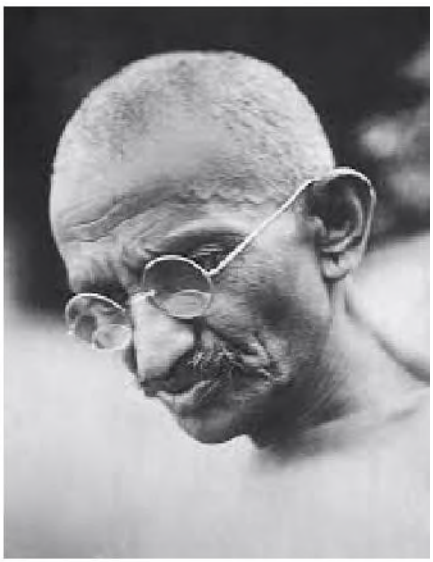
I like this passage from Romain Rolland (a writer I came to know through Stefan Zweig): "To a man whose mind is free there is something even more intolerable in the sufferings of animals than in the sufferings of man. For with the latter it is at least admitted that suffering is evil and that the man who causes it is a criminal. But thousands of animals are uselessly butchered every day without a shadow of remorse. If any man were to refer to it, he would be thought ridiculous. And that is the unpardonable crime."

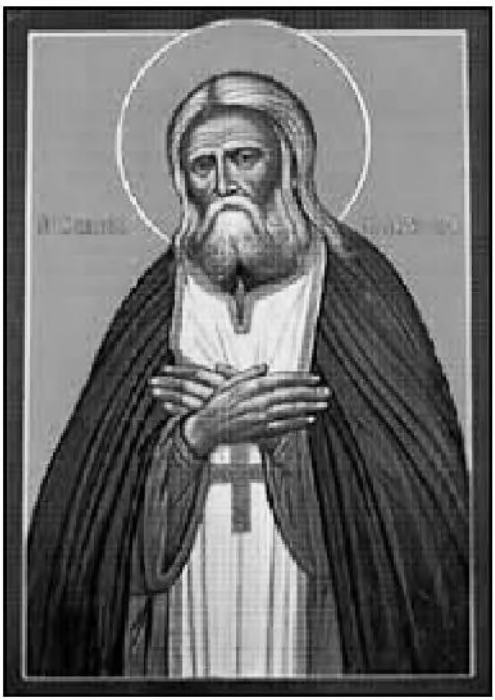
The Scriptures of the manifold traditions offer us another source of spiritual guidance and renewal. A great deal of mischief has been caused by the unhappy tendency of many Christians to treat the Bible as a Revealed Book, in the nature of the *Quran*, rather than as a collection of diverse texts, written by many hands, over many centuries. They give to this highly uneven collection of writings what, in a Christian context, is properly due only to God and to his mediators, Jesus, the Virgin, the saints. Bibliolatry, a perversion which lies at the heart of evangelical American fundamentalism. I find much of the Old Testament difficult of access, often harsh and cruel, and, in parts, theologically and morally unpalatable. At the same time I deeply appreciate and revere the Judaic tradition which bequeathed to the world the most rigorous form of monotheism and the most lofty ethical ideals. The Jews owe allegiance to the Torah, the Pentateuch – the first five books of the Bible as we know it, the textual foundation of the Abrahamic-Mosaic tradition. But this is no reason for Christians to indulge in Bibliolatry. The New Testament is another matter. Inspired, written "in the Spirit"; this does not mean infallible, especially where we can discern a heavy cultural and historical imprint, nor does it require us to understand it in narrow literalistic terms. The crux of the teaching is to be found in the Four Gospels of which, to my mind, John is the most appealing, Matthew the least (too much messianic fervour). Of the Gospels the Sermon on the Mount and the parables, along with the narratives about Christ's Passion, provide us with the substratum of Jesus' teaching. Of the rest of the Bible the parts which speak most directly to me are the Psalms and some of Paul's Epistles. Other Scriptures and religious texts which have loomed large at

various points along the way include the *Upanishads*, illuminated by Ahbishiktananda's peerless exposition in *The Further Shore*, the *Bhagavad Gita* with its teaching about *karma-yoga*, the *Tao Te Ching* and the *Chuang-Tze*, the mystical poetry of Rumi. Outside Christianity it has been India which has brought me closest to the Wisdom of the Ages. Few have written about India as well as Bede Griffiths, the English Benedictine who spent the second half of his life in that country. Here are a few words from his *The Marriage of East and West*: "But there is something more in Indian culture than a search for harmony between man and nature, conscious and unconscious; there is a profound awareness of a power beyond both man and nature which penetrates everything and is the real source of the beauty and vitality of Indian life." These words might apply equally well to culture of the Plains Indians of North America and indeed to most indigenous cultures. I believe in that power, one that is necessarily both transcendent and immanent. I don't much mind what words you use to describe it but I altogether reject the pantheistic notion that "God" is exhausted by the universe – this is to want the immanent without the transcendent, a bit like holding fast to the Second Commandment while rejecting the first (a position often espoused by those who want to reduce Jesus to no more than an ethical teacher). Or, it might said, like searching for a one-sided coin.

To conclude these rather unruly jottings here are some words from Black Elk to which I often return and which no one can ponder without profit: "We should understand that all things are the work of the Great Spirit. We should know that He is *within* all things; the trees, the grasses, the rivers, the mountains, all the four-legged animals and the winged peoples; and even more important we should understand that He is also *above* all these things and peoples."







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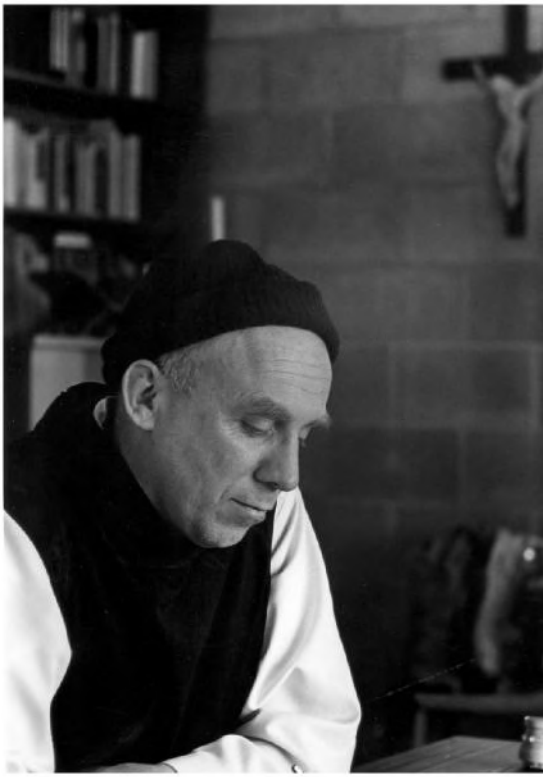
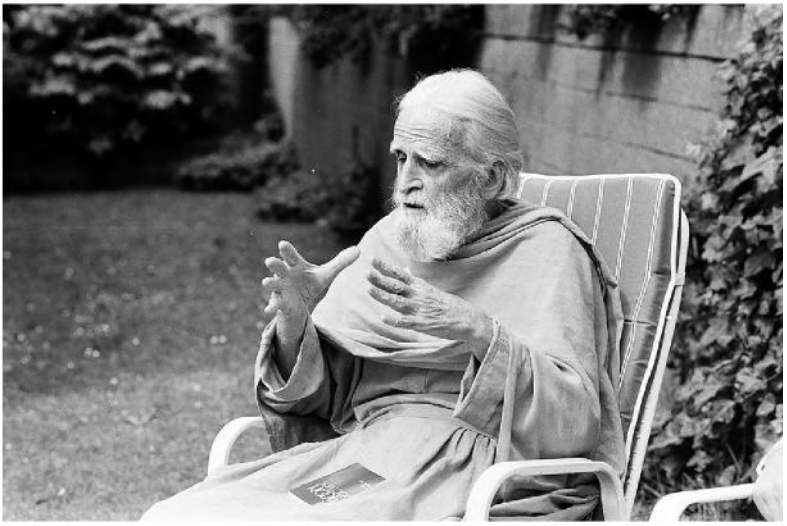
Mahatma Gandhi



Thomas Merton
Bede Griffiths



12.

Loafing in the Shade

Retirement Years

Forced retirement: a stealthy hoodlum creeping through the dark to cosh one from behind. I had been of a mind to continue at La Trobe for another year or two when the events outlined earlier came to their unhappy conclusion, the complete dismantlement of the Humanities course. Now I had no realistic choice but to pack my bags and quietly leave by a side door. I should acknowledge that the university allowed me to remain as an Honorary Associate for the next six years, enabling me to retain my office which was useful for storing books and for working when I needed frequent access to the library. I missed the more congenial aspects of my job, the teaching especially, but seen retrospectively, retirement at that point was probably all for the best. As one so frequently hears from fellow-retirees, "How did I ever find time for work?" I soon fell into a pleasant rhythm in which I could, amongst other things, continue with my scholarly work without all the frustrations and aggravations of an environment which was becoming increasingly hostile to the kind of program we were running in the Humanities. Retirement, in tabulated form, looks something like this:

"Work"
Major Writing Projects
Helping others with their work
Articles, reviews etc
Talks, interviews, podcasts
"Home & Family"
Family (dogs included)
Kitchen, House & Garden
"Recreation"
Cinephilia & Bibliomania
Photography
Social life
Travel
"Forest-Dweller"
Spiritual Life

A few words about each.

Work

In 2014 I enjoyed a trip to England to give some talks and seminars for the Matheson Trust and the Temenos Academy, and to conduct a doctoral *viva* at the Prince's School. A wealthy patron of the Matheson Trust, a fellow who travelled incessantly, surrendered his horde of frequent flyer points, cashed in for my first-class ticket to London; my only elevation into that rarefied realm. It wasn't hard to take. The main go in England was a talk at Lincoln Hall, "Looking Forward to Tradition", later published in the *Temenos Academy Review*. I departed from my normal practice of extemporizing talks and instead wrote up the lecture, to be read on the night. As it turned out, a bad move. Reza Shah-Kazemi, whom I had met in Edmonton and a couple of times in Australia, was the Chair. Earlier he had indicated in a letter that I should speak for one hour. On the night, five minutes before I'm on, he says that I should make it 45 minutes. A quarter of my talk must be vaporized. My very tightly-structured lecture fell into disarray as I omitted slabs of it here and there as I went along. Goodness knows how anyone made any sense of it, if indeed they did. But the audience was very polite. I was glad to meet Peter's friend and former doctoral student, Stephen Cross, the author of several books, most recently on Heidegger and Buddhism. (Imagine supervising such a thesis: bravo Pete!) I also conducted a two-day seminar at Birbeck College with about fifteen people in attendance, all keen to learn something about perennialism. With eight hours at our disposal I could explore my themes in some depth. Reza gave me some useful back-up. Then I spent a day at the Prince's School where I met Emily Pott, a contributor to *Eye of the Heart*, and Keith Critchlow, prime mover in the Temenos Academy. This left a couple of days for sight-seeing. I found London a much cleaner, more vibrant and attractive city than it had been on my last visit in 1971. I felt more in sympathy with Dr Johnson's claim that "a man who is sick of London is sick of life". Then it was off to Cambridge where I was to give a lecture on "Puzzles and Conundrums in Religious Education". The lecture was poorly publicized and only four people turned up, two of them my hosts in Cambridge. I suggested we all go to the pub instead but they insisted on hearing my lecture, this time very

much off-the-cuff. Throughout my stay in England I was well looked after by Juan Acevedo, a Venezuelan perennialist employed part-time by the Matheson Trust. I enjoyed my time with him and his wife Judith at their home in Cambridge. Once my duties were concluded I hired a car and dashed off to the Lakes District for some R&R, hampered by miserable weather but still excited to see the countryside so beloved of the Romantic poets. I was staying in Borrowdale, on the edge of Derwent Water, known in my schooldays from the illustration on the box of the much-coveted Derwent pencils. I had a nasty spell on the first evening when I foolishly dashed out into a rainstorm, impatient to photograph the fabled countryside. My camera (a Sony NEX6) was soaked and appeared to die. Fortunately, after a couple of worrisome hours, I brought it back to life by blasting its innards with a hair-dryer.

Since retiring I continue to give talks and public lectures, my subjects including Abhishiktananda, Shankara, Ramakrishna, Nietzsche, Black Elk, and Mircea Eliade. A good way to keep the mental machinery functioning and to meet new people. I've also been initiated into the mysteries of podcasts. My major writing project has been the book on Black Elk, a labour of love which I relished from start to finish. It was good to immerse myself in the primordial world of the Plains Indians and to feel the presence of the Lakota visionary and holy man. I was especially gratified, after the book's publication, to receive some commendations from several Native American folk who were pleased with the book; their endorsement meant much more to me than anything my fellow-academics might have to say. As well as the Black Elk book I have knocked over a few articles, reviews and interviews, all grist for the mill. Then, too, the continuing editorial work on the new translations of the Schuon books, my brief including *In the Face of the Absolute, To Have a Center, Esoterism as Principle and as Way, Treasures of Buddhism* and *Eye of the Heart* with *The Play of Masks* still in the pipeline. Also edited, a compilation of Whitall Perry's writings, still to appear. I was particularly pleased to be given the opportunity to edit *To Have a Center* where Schuon gives his most extended reflections on "culturism", and *Esoterism*, one of his densest and most profound works. It was also a fine thing to

help bring *Treasures of Buddhism* back into circulation, this tradition being comparatively neglected in the perennialist school.

Another recent project has been assembling a compilation of my own writings on Buddhism for a new publishing venture in Melbourne, Platform Books, headed by Matt Dawson. Matt has long been associated with the E-Vam Institute in Melbourne, founded by the Venerable Traleg Kyabon Rinpoche. Matt was closely involved for many years with Shogam Publications which put out Pete's book on the Rimé movement. The new book, *Timeless Truths and Modern Delusions: Buddhism, Perennialism and Modernity*, includes the transcripts of four hours of talks given at the E-Vam Institute back in 2003. Another more modest but satisfying enterprise was putting together *Wellsprings*, an anthology of epigrams, aphorisms and quotes concerning philosophy, religion and spirituality. It sums up, in other people's words, my own outlook and philosophy. A former student, Tess Milroy, and my friend Brian Coman enthusiastically took up the task of turning my manuscript into a beautiful hand-crafted book. Only 20 copies made; I think we can call it a limited edition.

There is also a steady trickle of correspondence from people from all parts of the globe, wanting to discuss some aspect of my work, or more alarmingly, wanting spiritual advice in which cases I always respond by saying that I am in no position to offer such advice being no more than an obscure scholar and by no means a spiritual guide. However, I am sometimes able to point people in the right direction. It is good to hear from these folk as it reassures me that there are actually people out there reading my books and articles, and that many of them have found my work helpful and illuminating. It is also satisfying to be able to assist other people, one way or another, in their work.

In *The Play of Masks* Schuon remarks that if his work had no other result than "the restitution, for some, of the saving barque that is prayer" he would "owe it to God" to consider himself "profoundly satisfied". What more noble work could there be? If in some small way my own work has helped people to recover anything of the "wisdom of ages" and has helped to revive their spiritual life, then I too must be "profoundly satisfied". My work

has been primarily scholarly but I hope that its most durable contribution has been spiritual, if one may put it that way.

Home & Family

Retirement offers a fine vantage point from which to reflect on family life, to enjoy the achievements of two fine young men who not so long ago were young rascals bashing a cricket ball around the backyard, to see them making their own way through life while also bringing Aliya, Holly and Stacey into our family. Rose and I also count ourselves blessed to have our grand-daughter, little Maya, now six, living close by and very much a part of our daily life. Last night, when asked what she wants for Christmas: "an Indonesian dictionary"! Wendell Berry entitled one of his books, *Life is a Miracle,* an axiom of which we are constantly reminded as we watch Maya grow and learn. People talk about the "acquisition of language". Watching Maya's development I'm inclined to think this is not a felicitous formulation; rather we should perhaps refer to the "unfolding" of language, somewhat like the opening of a flower bud. By way of a small digression I must observe that, in this context, the fallacies of evolutionism are particularly striking in the hocus-pocus that is spoken about the "missing link" and about "the human primate" in its "transitional phase" and the "evolution of language". There is no missing link, there is no transition, there is no such thing as a half-human. And part of the human birthright is language, not as some sort of evolute of primordial grunts and garbled gropings to facilitate the "survival of the fittest", but as a God-given gift, part of life's mysterious plenitude. The diversity of languages is there to prove it, a diversity which demands our respect and protection just as much as ecological diversity. But I must by-pass the soap-box.

Sharing retirement with Rose has been a source of quiet joy and contentment. We have always maintained a fair degree of independence, each pursuing our own interests and impulses. And this is still the case. But our bond strengthens as we grow old together. She will no doubt protest that she is not "old", as indeed she is not except in a technical sense. How providential that we should be able to share the last forty years. In my more egocentric moments I congratulate myself on my wise choice of a wife but the

whole matter is much more mysterious than that! Somehow the stars aligned, very much to my benefit, not only with respect to my marriage but my life as a whole. In a world where so many lives have been damaged or destroyed by war, poverty, violence, hatred and political barbarism, from childhood on I have had so much for which to be thankful, so many blessings. Against the backdrop of our dark times – the late Kali Yuga – my own small sorrows and disappointments seem of very little account.

Retirement also provides more time and space for activities which previously were done in haste or not done at all; home maintenance, gardening, cooking and such. There is a good deal to be said for the old Zen adage, "Chop wood, carry water", the carrying out of small tasks in a state of mindfulness and without attachment to "results". Being of an impatient disposition, restless, over-efficient, preoccupied with "results" and always anxious to move onto the next thing, this is not something that comes easily. But some improvement I think. Domestic chores, the care of pets and tending the garden all repay mindful attention.

Recreation

As will already be evident, reading, film-watching and photography are the principal recreational activities. Since the age of about fourteen I have been a relentless reader – the adjectives for which people usually reach are "avid" and "voracious", both apposite here. Short of being transported into a non-literate culture where things would be altogether different I can't imagine a life without books. Most days I spend at least two hours reading, an inexhaustible source of discovery and enjoyment. I have often adduced Logan Pearsall Smith's observation: "People say life is the thing; I prefer reading." One sees the point. But in some ways it's a silly remark: life *is* reading and reading *is* life! Or more precisely, in the words of Julian Barnes, "reading and life are not separate but symbiotic". If I go more than a couple of days without reading I become fretful. I guess it's an addiction. I enjoy books of many different kinds but the favoured genres are realist fiction, biographies and memoirs, books about philosophy and religion, exploration, mountaineering, espionage, natural history, the

American West. In recent times I have compiled a little booklet, *Bibliomania*, in which I have catalogued my favourites.

Film-viewing has also become part of the daily routine. Over the last ten years I've watched about 300 films a year. Some say this is far too many, and it probably is. But remember, I don't watch TV at all, except for footy and a little cricket. After watching a film I jot down some fragmentary and impressionistic notes, hasty "reviews" you could say. I now have a data base of about 2500 reviews, mostly done for my own amusement and to keep the brain ticking over. For about ten years I have been meeting weekly with my fellow cinephiles, Paul Weeks and Steve Maber, for a group viewing at Paul's home. We watch a lot of Westerns. They pretend to be interested in my film reviews. In the last few years Paul's wife Jacinta and Steve's partner Gayle have often been there as well. What fun it is! Watching Paul and Jacinta's three (soon to be four) young children grow and experiencing the pandemonium of their family life reminds me of O'Connor days.

I've been pretty hard at it with the photography since I purchased an Olympus OM2 back in the mid-70s. Digital opened up new possibilities. For me photography is one way of getting out into the natural world, usually alone. It would be pretentious and over-stating the case to say that photography is a form of meditation, even prayer – but there is something of this kind involved, and certainly what people used to call "communing with nature". Anyway, if there is any shooting to be done better it be of this kind than the other! A friend recently sent me these lines which were engraved on an old tombstone in northern England:

The wonder of the world,
The beauty and the power,
The shapes of things
Their colours, lights and shades,
These I saw.
Look ye also while life lasts.

These words capture better than any of mine what I have tried to communicate in my photography.

In recent years social life has become even quieter. Family life is augmented by a few regular get-togethers: with our little film

group; a fortnightly visit with Maurie and Marcia; a monthly lunch with Brian and other former colleagues; a weekly neighbourhood coffee group with a bunch of old geezers like myself. It is a pleasant surprise, in old age, to make new friends. Here I mention three. About fifteen years ago I wrote to James Cowan, an Australian author, to ask him if I might include some of his writing about Aboriginal culture in the anthology *The Betrayal of Tradition*. He was a hard man to track down. I eventually contacted him in Argentina. We had no further exchanges over the next ten years or so though I kept up with his writings. In 2017 James, now back in Australia, contacted me about giving a talk for PhiloCafe, a group he had organized in Byron Bay, on the far north coast of NSW. Meal, talk, discussion. At that point I had recently finished work on *Black Elk, Lakota Visionary* and spoke about the holy man and his legacy. Given James' immersion in Aboriginal tradition this was a subject in which he was keenly interested. I stayed with James and his wife Wendy for a few days. We became firm friends with many mutual interests. My friendship with James was to be sadly short-lived. During a visit to Bendigo he became seriously ill from complications arising from an operation for cancer, and some months later he died. Soon after this I was asked by the PhiloCafe group to give a talk on James' work, particularly his writings about nomadic peoples, most notably but by no means exclusively the Australian Aborigines. So, my talk was a posthumous tribute. James had an extraordinarily adventurous life and wrote many fine books covering Australian history, philosophy, literature and religion, including works on St. Francis and St. Anthony. He achieved some fame and fortune with his novel about a Renaissance cartographer, *The Mapmaker's Dream*, which brought the alarming threat of financial security. However, to my mind, his writings on Aboriginal spirituality comprised his finest work and are the most illuminating of any I have read in this field. The two books which left an indelible impression were *Mysteries of the Dream Time* and the autobiographical *Two Men Dreaming.* James was erudite, deeply cultured and extremely affable. He retained a boyish enthusiasm for whatever he was involved in and had apparently inexhaustible energy and initiative. He was a friend with whom one could have

deep conversations about matters philosophical and religious without any sense of self-consciousness or reticence. I think this was because we were very much on the same wavelength. In his later years James had committed to the Orthodox tradition.

I remember after he was taken ill in the middle of the night and rushed by ambulance to the Bendigo hospital. Wendy called me on the phone from their hotel and I was soon by his bedside. He had almost died and was still in a very precarious condition. Despite all this he was very keen, at 3am, to discuss some obscure letters of Michelangelo which he had uncovered during some recent research. He was much more interested in Michelangelo than in the medical melodrama in which he was the central but reluctant protagonist. Later that year, when it was clear that James was not much longer for this world, I made a trip to Byron to see him and to say farewell. We spent many hours on his shady verandah. Knowing that death was nigh he spoke to me frankly about his own life, his relationships and his spiritual journey. I am very grateful to have become his friend but sad that I only spent a few days with him.

My three visits to Byron Bay had another outcome, an altogether happy one. I met Peter Thompson, one-time TV film critic and close friend of James, and his wife Victoria, the author of the memoir *Losing Alexandra*. On my second and third visits to Byron Bay Peter and Victoria graciously put me up in their lovely home, high on the bluff near the light-house, overlooking the ocean on one side, and the township with the mountains behind on the other. Here again I found a confluence of interests – cinema, literature, philosophy, art, congenial conversational. Over the last couple of years Peter and I have carried out a long, lively and fruitful correspondence. He tells me that we have now exchanged over two hundred emails. Yikes! Good to find that one can still make close friends comparatively late in the piece.

At this stage of life it is inevitable that one should suffer the loss of family and friends. Mum and Dad both passed on in 2012 and since then several friends and colleagues have gone to the Other Side Camp, as the Lakota refer to our post-mortem state. Apart from the loss of Mum and Dad, the heaviest blow came with the sudden and unexpected death of Roger Sworder, all the more

shocking because he had always seemed so youthful, so insouciant, so vital. Since coming to Bendigo thirty years ago I have only made a small handful of close friends. Roger was certainly one of these. I spoke at Roger's funeral, focusing on his spiritual life. I reproduce that eulogy in an Appendix. Other friends and colleagues lost in recent years include John Penwill, Bob Tucker, Algis Uzdavinys, and our neighbour and friend in Mandurang, Lizzie Winter. One's own turn is surely coming. As Mark Twain advised old folks, "Cheer up. It's only going to get worse!" Not much comfort really.

Retirement has also provided us with opportunities for more travel, sometimes as a whole family. After never having the slightest interest in cruises – which seemed sybaritic, as indeed they are – Rose and I have been on no less than five: Vanuatu and the South Pacific, twice around New Zealand, once around Tasmania, and a river cruise on the Mekong in Cambodia and Vietnam. On the two NZ cruises I actually did a massive amount of writing, and on all of them I used the opportunity to do some long-distance reading. Conrad's *Victory* seemed an appropriate choice in the south Pacific. On all of these voyages bar that on the Mekong we have been accompanied by Misha and Maya, twice by Holly and once by Misha's friend Tarren. The Mekong River cruise was disappointing: on the stretch we covered it is a dull and dirty river on which overloaded industrial barges ply their trade. The exquisite cuisine on board our little steamer was some compensation.

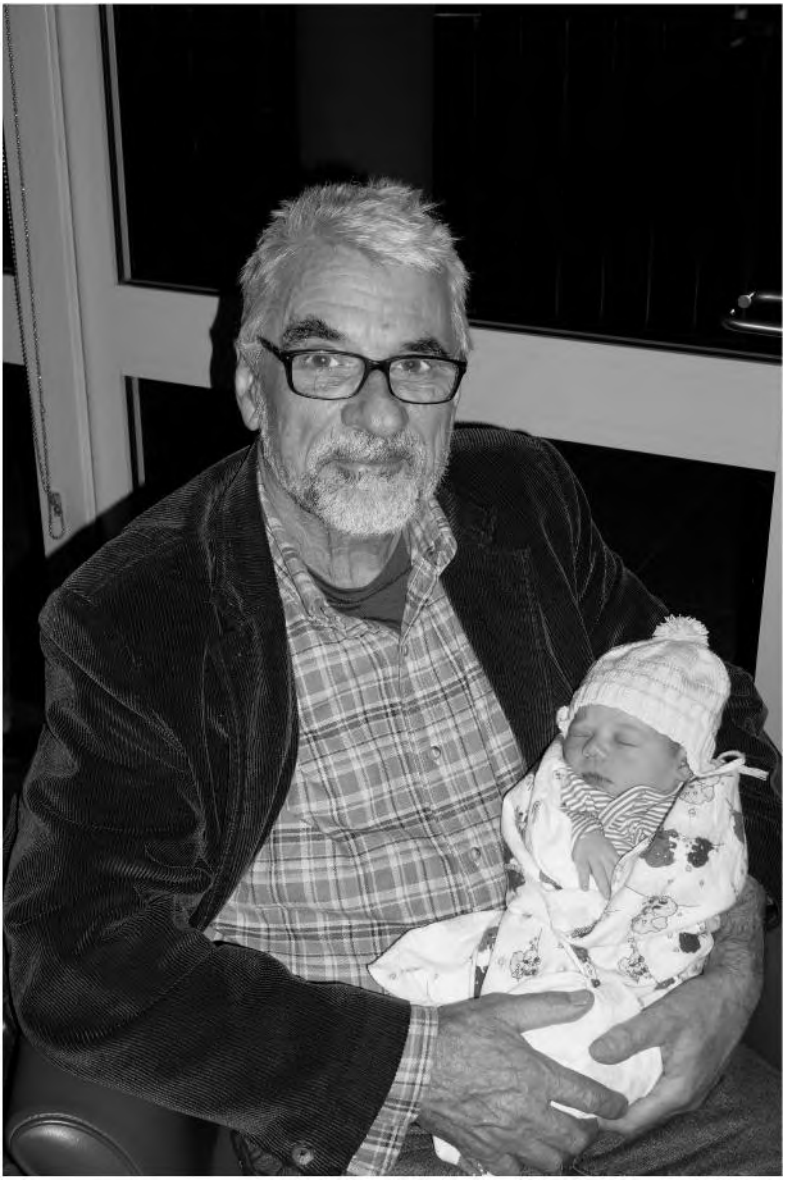
Rose and I also enjoyed another trip to the American West, this time in New Mexico and Colorado where we spent a fortnight after attending a family wedding in Cancun, Mexico. In Cancun we were joined by Josh and Aliya and spent a good deal of time with Bob Mazza and his partner Jeanette D'Amato. Bob was Rose's nephew but not much younger. Diagnosed with cancer, he did not have long to live. Bob had many times put himself out to make us welcome in New York, always considerate and generous. He had been a cop for many years and had seen the ugly side of humanity but had retained his emotional warmth and kindness. Bob and Rose had a special bond and his death came as a bitter blow. Over the last few years Jeanette and Rose have become close friends.

I continued to enjoy some solo photographic excursions, most memorably in New Zealand and on the Three Capes walk in Tasmania. It now seems altogether absurd that I did not visit NZ until I was well into my 60s; here was a veritable paradise for landscape photographers, right on the doorstep. I also came to appreciate and respect the NZ people and their culture, more admirable in many respects than that of Australia. If I ever have to flee the country I know where I'll be heading.

Forest-Dweller

One embarked on retirement with all manner of lofty resolutions, one of which was to devote more time and energy to the spiritual journey, and to the confrontation with mortality. The traditional Indian conception of one's later life, "dwelling in the forest", somewhat withdrawn from worldly affairs, pondering the mysteries of life and death, and devoting oneself to study, meditation and prayer ("a direction of the heart", as Rilke called it), has always seemed appropriate and sane. But, as with most resolutions, aspiration surpassed attainment. Nevertheless, I have managed to focus more directly on my inner life, to journey towards an acceptance of death – the acid test is yet to come! – and to become less agitated, though not without great difficulty, by the absurdities, injustices and perplexities of "modern life", especially in the political domain. One subject which has never caused me undue concern is the question of the after-life. I am grateful to have passed the Biblical allotment of three score and ten, and hope to meet death with some equanimity. As to what lies on the other side of the Jordan, who knows? I recall Papa O's response when Dad asked him, shortly before his death, what he thought awaited him post-mortem. One might have expected a platitudinous response from this deeply devout Methodist. His answer: "No idea whatever!". In the short Epilogue to this memoir I have sketched my "philosophy of life", such as it is.

H & Pete, at Misha's wedding



with Maya, about two hours old
Shepparton, 2014

Rose
Cancun, 2015

Rose, Mike & Debbie Luciano, New Jersey, 2006

Jeanette D'Amato & Bob
Petrone Cancun, 2015

Rose, Rusty & Maya, Eppalock

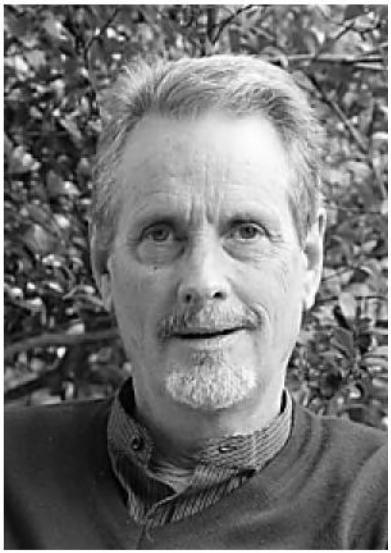
Maya, Taronga Park Zoo, Sydney

Misha

Josh
Rose
Maya

Stacey & Misha

Pete & Wendy
Melbourne, 2018



Friends old and new:
Peter Thompson
Bill Searl James Cowan

Friends and fellow-cinephiles
Jacinta and Paul Weeks, (at their wedding, 2015)

Steve Maber

Gillian & David Helfgott, Sue Murray
Scott Murray

Night Thoughts
A Philosophy

What is life? It is the flash of a firefly in the night. It is the breath of a buffalo in winter time. It is the little shadow which runs across the grass and loses itself in the sunset. (*Crowfoot Chief*)

Cicero: "brevity is the charm of eloquence". Brief, eloquent and charming! Henry James is also brief and eloquent if not so charming: "Life is a predicament which precedes death". True, but not all that helpful. What I essay here is a distillation, beyond any argumentation, of my "philosophy of life". Elsewhere I have written about philosophical, religious and metaphysical questions at great length, and in *Wellsprings* have compiled what seem to me to be the essential teachings. Here it is a matter of a severely compressed and subjective summation.

Earlier I recalled Carl Jung's words: "The decisive question for man is: Is he related to something Infinite or not? That is the telling question of his life." Blake put the matter more poetically: "Man is either the ark of God or a phantom of the earth and of the water." My own inclination has always been towards the affirmative. What one makes of life will be shaped by one's answer to "the decisive question". Unlike the great sages and mystics I cannot claim absolute certitude beyond the impregnable conviction that at the heart of being, woven into the fabric of the universe and dwelling in the *guha*, the inner chamber of the heart, lies the Great Mysterious, by whatever

name It might be known. Huston Smith described the human situation as living at the intersection of the two arms of the cross, the vertical symbolizing the Infinite and Timeless, the horizontal the world of time and space, of contingency and impermanence: “to experience their incongruity and confluence is what it means to be human.” That is well said.

As to a general philosophy of life I have found no better short formulation than that of Swami Shivananda: “Life is joy. Life is a conscious stream. Life is vibrant in every atom... Life is God in expression. Life is service and sacrifice. Life is love. Life is relationship. Life is poetry but not prose. Life is art and imagination but not science.” To slightly reorder this to foreground the connections at hand we might say this: God; consciousness; joy, love, relationship; service, sacrifice; poetry. We know too that, obversely, life entails impermanence, suffering, loss, grief, sorrow, death. And we know that evil and injustice are abroad in the world. Pondering a passage in Wordsworth, Dr. Leavis, posed this question: “If (and how shall they not) the sensitive and imaginative freely let their ‘hearts lie open’ to the suffering of the world, how are they to retain any health or faith for living?” The answer to that troubling question, I believe, lies in the great religious teachings, the wisdom of the ages. Whatever the circumstance, we always have the choice, to move towards the light rather the darkness, to be a channel of grace or to remain captive to worldly illusions, subservient to “the bureaucracy of the ego”. No matter how often we take the wrong turning, we never lose our fundamental freedom and the responsibility which it entails. Such is the dignity of the human condition.

If we see the cosmos as a created order, if we see the hand of God in all creatures, if we know that “all that lives is holy”, if we know with Hildegard that “the music of Heaven is in all things”, we have the foundation for a meaningful, ethical and creative life – so much more than what is offered by the profane and bleak ideologies of modernity where “man” is nothing more than a biological organism, or a product of material “forces”, or a puppet of the sub-conscious, that “seething cauldron of excitations”, as Freud called it. How meagre, how graceless, how squalid these modern understandings are. Much better to join the Psalmist: “I will give thanks unto thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well.”

IN MEMORIAM

Roger Sworder
1947-2016

Roger Sworder was an Australian scholar, teacher, poet and author. He was educated in England, studied at Wadham College, Oxford, and as a young man travelled widely in North Africa and the Middle East. He completed a doctorate on Plato at the Australian National University in Canberra. His special interests included Homer, the pre-Socratics, Plato, Romanticism (in both its literary and philosophical manifestations), the philosophy of work in both West and East, and more generally the traditions of India and China. For many years Roger was Head of the Department of Humanities, La Trobe University Bendigo, in southeastern Australia, and one of the principal architects of a course entitled Studies in Western Traditions. He was deeply influenced by the work of René Guénon and Ananda Coomaraswamy whilst Plato remained the Pole Star of his intellectual life. Roger's sensibility was traditional rather

than modern which is to say, amongst other things, that he believed in the Divine, in the Intellect, in Revelation; he "thought" in symbols rather than abstractions; he was immune to what Guénon called the pseudo-mythologies of modern science; he knew, in Frithjof Schuon's words, that "Man's vocation is consciousness of the Absolute" (*The Play of Masks*, 1992, 82).

Roger's published works include *Mining, Metallurgy and the Meaning of Life* (1995), *Science and Religion in Archaic Greece: Homer on Immortality and Parmenides at Delphi* (2009), *A Contrary History of the West* (2011) and *Mathematical Plato* (2013), as well as a collection of poems, *Stop, Don't Read* (2013). His most recent book is *The Romantic Attack on Modern Science in England and America* (2015), (reviewed in *Sacred Web* 36). After a short illness Roger passed to the Further Shore in October, 2016.

It was my privilege to know Roger as a colleague, mentor and friend. After a funeral service in Bendigo's Sacred Heart Cathedral his family, friends and many former students gathered for a wake where we recalled his abiding influence on our lives. On that occasion I made the following remarks about Roger.

*

There is something obscure which is complete
before heaven and earth arose;
tranquil, quiet, standing alone without change,
moving around without peril.
It could be the Mother of everything.
I don't know its name, and call it Tao.

What is this Tao? Well, as Lao Tzu also says, "he who knows does not say; he who says does not know". Of course, Lao Tzu then went on to write a book on the subject! Roger loved these paradoxes which are so abundant in the Chinese mystics; his talks and lectures were sprinkled with Taoist conundrums. In the full amplitude of the term, the Tao is an immutable and ultimate reality, both immanent and transcendent, something which, in different times and places, has been called by many names: Being, One, the Good, the Absolute, God, Brahman, to refer only to those metaphysical and religious vocabularies with which Roger was most closely familiar. For Roger, the contemplation of this Reality, and the consequent alchemical transmutation of the soul, was the highest and most noble form of the human vocation, one which has been so derided, corrupted or ignored in the modern world. The contemplation of the

Divine – whether in the natural order, in the "human form divine", in sacred art, or in wordless meditation – was a *leitmotif* of his life. A formulation from the ancients which comes to mind when thinking about Roger's life and work is the nexus of Truth, Beauty and Goodness. For the postmodern critics and anti-philosophers, these ideals are merely "cultural productions" or "discursive constructs" to be dismantled and laid bare. Roger had nothing but contempt for these impudent desecrations of the Wisdom of the Ages. He was a tireless advocate for Tradition in all its guises and an implacable critic of modernistic ideologies, especially of their baleful influence on intellectual life. As to the deconstructionists and their ilk, the masters of negation, we need only recall the adage of Roger's favourite poet, William Blake: "A fool sees not the same tree as a wise man". No, for Roger, Truth, Beauty and Goodness, manifest in variegated traditional forms, were timeless verities to which we should, each in his/her own faltering way, conform our being.

I spoke a moment ago about the contemplation of the Divine as the human vocation. But of course, as Roger believed so fervently, we each have a particular vocation, a calling, a form of work best suited to our nature. Roger understood his vocation primarily as a teacher. And what he wanted to teach was not what was fashionable, in vogue in the halls of the Academy at this or that moment, but nothing less than those immutable truths and axioms which are subject neither to the vagaries of fashion nor to the vicissitudes of time – the perennial philosophy, the spiritual patrimony of all humankind. What higher calling could there be? And, as most of you are well aware, Roger was an exceptional and inspirational teacher, whether as expositor, performer, provocateur or interlocutor. In his essay on Coleridge Roger remarks, "Like Plato, Wordsworth and Coleridge are fresh and natural, and find ways of saying the loftiest things in the simplest words". Roger too had this gift.

Roger was a man with a clear and penetrating mind, a creative Imagination, a generous heart and a beautiful soul, a man of noble character. Like all mortals he no doubt had his failings and limitations, but these were of a very minor order. On the death of Mohandas Gandhi George Orwell remarked that the Mahatma's sins and misdemeanours, gathered together, made a very paltry pile. I daresay the same might be said of Roger.

Roger enriched many lives, my own included. One of the figures who had a profound influence on him and whom he admired greatly was the art historian and scholar Ananda Coomaraswamy. Recently Roger wrote a Foreword for a new edition of Coomaraswamy's classic study, *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*. On the occasion of

Coomaraswamy's death, one of his friends wrote the following words which I want to share with you. It seems to me that they apply as well to Roger as to Coomaraswamy, and they express, albeit inadequately, something of my own love and respect for Roger:

... there was one person ... to whose influence I am deeply grateful; I mean the philosopher and theologian, Ananda Coomaraswamy. Others have written the truth about life and religion and man's work. Others have written good clear English. Others have had the gift of witty exposition. Others have understood the metaphysics of Christianity and others have understood the metaphysics of Hinduism and Buddhism. ... Others have seen the relationships of the true and the good and the beautiful. Others have had apparently unlimited learning. Others have loved; others have been kind and generous. But I know of no one else in whom all these gifts and all these powers have been combined.... I believe that no other living writer has written the truth in matters of art and life and religion and piety with such wisdom and understanding (Eric Gill, *Autobiography*, London, 1940, 174).

Roger's life, like Coomaraswamy's, was a rare and precious gift to all those interested in the life of the Spirit, those who hear, however faintly, the Call of the Infinite.

It has been said that the death of a learned and cultured man is akin to a library burning down. In Roger's case we may well say that not only has the library burnt down, but the art gallery and the music conservatorium as well. This afternoon we heard the celestial music of Johann Sebastian Bach. For those of us who quite properly feel sad and sorrowful at Roger's departure, let me conclude by recalling the words of Bach, spoken on his deathbed to his wife: "Don't cry for me, for I go where music is born."

*

(published in *Sacred Web,* 39, 2017)

Russell Henry Oldmeadow

(An obituary for *The Canberra Times*, written by P, P & H)

In June this year, in London, the Queen dedicated a memorial to the RAF Bomber Command and its role in World War II. The service was the culmination of several days of ceremonies and events attended by Bomber Command personnel from around the world. After the war there had been widespread revulsion at the human devastation caused by bombing; these ceremonies marked the first official recognition and commemoration of the skill, bravery and sacrifices of those who served in this appalling theatre of the war where casualty rates were over 50%. As with the Vietnam veterans of a later generation, such recognition was long overdue. Through a government-sponsored program and with the support of the RSL, Russell Oldmeadow, accompanied by his daughter Pamela, was one of about a hundred Australians who witnessed the unveiling of the magnificent memorial in Green Park. Like many of the other veterans Russell found the experience profoundly moving, made all the more so by the fact that one of his elder brothers, Fenton, had been killed in a Pathfinder raid over Germany in 1942. Some sixty-one years after he had volunteered to serve in the Air Force this visit to England brought Russell's adult life full circle. Within three months of his return to Australia his life was over, a quick and painless death coming six months after the death of his beloved wife and soul-mate, Diana.

Russell Oldmeadow was born in 1921 in the Melbourne suburb of Ivanhoe, the youngest of four brothers in the family. The Oldmeadows were devout Methodists and Russell had a strict but loving upbringing. There was a long-standing tradition of missionary service in the family which was had produced many clergy, doctors and nurses. Russell was educated in Ivanhoe and at Wesley College. After working for two years in a bank he offered himself for the ministry in the Methodist Church, having made a deep personal commitment to Christ at the age of sixteen. His theological training at Queen's College, Melbourne University, was interrupted when he volunteered for air-crew in 1941. After training as a pilot in Victoria and Canada Russell served in the multi-national Bomber Command, flying a Lancaster on thirty missions over Germany. The war left deep scars and for many years he was unable or unwilling to talk about his experiences.

On his return from the war Russell resumed his theological training and married Diana Green whom he had met earlier at Melbourne

University. It proved to be a long, happy and enriching marriage which produced three children: Ken (aka "Harry"), in 1947, Pamela in 1949, and Peter in 1952.

After ordination Russell did two years of parish work in Franklin, south of Hobart, before volunteering for the Indian mission field. With two small children in tow, Russell and Diana arrived in India on January 26th (Australia Day), 1950, the very day that India became a Republic. They were to spend nine years working for the Church of North India, a multi-denominational grouping whose primary tasks included training Indian clergy to take over church leadership with the departure of the Europeans from the newly-independent country. Russell was appointed to Ghazipur and later to Azamgarh, both small cities on the hot, dusty plains of the Ganges River. Not an easy life – no electricity, no phones, very few cars, not many Europeans, a long way from home in a strange land with hardly any of the amenities and services taken for granted in Australia. But life was always interesting and these years left all members of the family with an abiding love of the sub-continent.

On returning to Australia late in 1958 Russell moved to the Anglican Church, attracted by the Prayer Book, its liturgy and the emphasis on the sacraments. Impressed by the leadership of Bishop Burgmann, Russell joined the Canberra & Goulburn diocese where he served in the parishes of Queanbeyan, Wagga, Gundagai and as Archdeacon of Albury (at that time still part of the diocese). Throughout the rest of his life he found spiritual nourishment not only in the Methodist and Anglican branches of Christianity but in Catholicism, Orthodoxy and in other Protestant movements such as Quakerism. Some of the theologians and mystics by whom he was most deeply influenced included such disparate figures as St John of the Cross, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Hans Küng, Thomas Merton, Bede Griffiths and Simone Weil. His understanding of Christianity was ecumenical and dynamic, always growing and deepening. To his last day he was reading mystical and theological works. He also developed an ever-deepening respect for other religious traditions, especially those of India. On the occasion of his 90th birthday he referred to the special affinity he felt with the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and the Dalai Lama. He practiced yoga and meditation daily for the last thirty years of his life.

In 1971 Russell took up an appointment as Foundation Director of Canberra Lifeline, remaining until his retirement in 1981 after which he served for three years as the National President of Lifeline. During his time at Lifeline he was granted a Churchill Fellowship to study counselling services in Europe and America, and was awarded an MBE for community service.

Retirement on the south coast allowed time for travel, reading, fishing, gardening and golf, as well as continuing service in the church – doing *locums*, mentoring young clergy, administering the sacraments, visiting the sick. He was also did voluntary work for Amnesty International. In 2003 Russell and Diana moved into the Masonic Retirement Village in Holt where he quickly developed a new network of friends and community involvements. He continued to live a full and engaged life right up to its earthly end. Russell Oldmeadow will be remembered as a man steadfast in his vocation as a priest, devoted to his family, as a wise counsellor, a loyal and generous friend, and as a tireless advocate of peace and justice.

Russell, Anzac Day, 1998
Batehaven

Russell Oldmeadow
1921 ~ 2012

(a eulogy at Dad's funeral)

It is Christmas morning, some time around 1964 or '65, almost half a century ago. We are in St John's Church, Gundagai, and the Rector is delivering a sermon on some verses from the New Testament, the mystery-filled verses we will shortly hear read by our cousin Ross. The preacher, of course, was my father, and I was in the congregation. I heard him preach many times; he always adhered to the commendable principle that a good sermon is a short sermon – a principle that applies no less to eulogies! This particular sermon made a deep impression on me, especially Dad's exposition of Verse 14: *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as from the only begotten from the Father), full ofgrace and truth*. John 1.14. Here in this small kernel was the quintessence of the Christian message on which Dad based his life. (I might add in passing that as the procession of clergy, choir and servers came down the aisle at the end of the service that Christmas Day, Dad gave us a big smile and a wink, as he always did.) Today I want to offer a few reflections on Dad's Christian commitment and on his vocation as a priest. He grew up in a family milieu permeated by Bible stories, the teachings of John and Charles Wesley, and the Methodist Hymn book. He retained a love for this heritage throughout his life even when he moved over to the Anglican Church on returning from the Indian mission fields. In an article written a few years ago he explained that he became an Anglican because he was attracted by the liturgy and the Prayer Book, the greater emphasis on the sacraments and the pastoral care given to clergy by the bishops. My mother had been raised in the Anglican Church and this too must have played a part in this change. Throughout the rest of his life he found spiritual nourishment not only in the Methodist and Anglican branches of Christianity but in Catholicism, Orthodoxy and in other Protestant movements such as Quakerism. Some of the theologians and mystics by

whom he was most deeply influenced included such disparate figures as St John of the Cross, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Hans Kung, Thomas Merton and Simone Weil. His understanding of Christianity was not only truly ecumenical but it was organic and dynamic, always growing and deepening. Right up to his last day he was reading mystical and theological works. He also developed an ever-deepening respect for other religious traditions, especially those of India, and immersed himself in the writings of such people as Thomas Merton, Bede Griffiths, Raimon Panikkar and Henri Le Saux – Christian monks with a profound existential engagement with the spiritual heritage of the East. On the occasion of his 90th birthday he also referred to the affinity he felt with the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and the Dalai Lama. He agreed with the words of the great Lutheran theologian Rudolf Otto who nearly a century ago addressed his fellow-Christians with these words: *We in the West now realize that we have no monopoly of religious truth. We must in honesty change our attitude towards other faiths, for our watchword must be 'Loyalty to truth'. This changed attitude, however, does not weaken, but rather, instead, reinforces one's faith in God, for He is seen to be not a small or partial being but the Great God who is working throughout all times and places and faiths.* The person of Christ provided the moral compass for Dad's life, the fixed star around which all else revolved and which informed all of his work, his relationships, and his activities. He would no doubt have endorsed the words of Henri Le Saux when he wrote "Jesus is God's face turned towards man and man's face turned towards God." Pondering a passage in Wordsworth the great English critic, F.R. Leavis, posed this question: *If (and how shall they not) the sensitive and imaginative freely let their "hearts lie open" to the suffering of the world, how are they to retain any health orfaith for living?* Dad found the answer to that troubling question in the life and teachings of Christ.

We know Russell was an extraordinarily friendly and cheerful man with an infectious sense of humour; he loved a joke and light-hearted banter. As children we delighted in his pranks. But he was also a man of the utmost moral seriousness and integrity – by which, of course, I do not refer to any kind of moralism but to a deep commitment of the moral and spiritual ideals exemplified in the life of Jesus. He lived a disciplined life of spiritual practice, of prayer and meditation, as well as worship and service. Put in the simplest possible terms we can say that his life was shaped and guided by Christ's two great Commandments: to love God and to love our neighbour. His love for all the children of God, regardless of colour or creed, expressed itself in many ways – his commitment to peace, to "amity and concord" among the churches, among the religious traditions, among nations and peoples, his sense of justice, the loving

care he selflessly extended to the sick, the bereaved, the hurt, the lonely, the different. As most of you are well aware he made a significant contribution to every community in which he found himself.

For Dad, the priesthood was never a job, much less a career, but a vocation, a calling in which he could be most fully and truly himself. He continued to hold *locum* positions for many years, to take services and to administer the sacraments until he was well into his 80s. It was only under implacable pressure from the family, fearing an inevitable catastrophe because of his problem with ever more shaky hands, that he finally had to give up administering the Eucharist; it was a hard thing for him. In the article to which I referred earlier Dad wrote, *To be a priest is both a privilege and a challenge, a vocation which is never easy, but it offers unique opportunities of creative service. It takes one close to people, not least in their times ofjoy and sadness. I am profoundly grateful to God for my vocation to the ordained ministry.*

Today it has fallen to me to say something about Dad's spiritual life. But I cannot finish without saying that he was the most kind and loving father anyone could have, and that he and my mother have been an immeasurable blessing in my life. May I also say how pleased and how moved we are that you have made the effort to be here today. We thank you. And so now, at the end of a long and rich life so well lived, a life that touched so many people, a life that brought the spirit of "grace and truth" into our troubled world, we might well recall the words of Simeon in the *Nunc Dimittis: Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation...*

Diana Oldmeadow
1923 ~ 2012
(a eulogy at Mum's funeral)

When I first thought of making a few remarks today about my mother, the lines which came to mind were from Wordsworth (slightly amended): "That best portion of a good woman's life, Her little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love". Those of you who knew Diana will surely be able to recall many such acts, as I can. But she made no show or fuss about these "acts of kindness and love", observing the Biblical maxim of not letting the left hand know what the right hand is doing. Yesterday as I sat with Dad in church we heard the two great commandments of Jesus, "on which", he said, "hang all the Law and the Prophets": "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and the second is like, namely this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other greater commandment than these...". These are not two independent loves but, for Christians, inter-related and inseparable, and this was the love which Mum exemplified throughout

her life. She was indeed a deeply loving woman, as Pamela and Peter have already so beautifully said, but this love is not to be confused with sentimentality; Mum was not in the least sentimental.

As I said on the last occasion when we had gathered for a family celebration, one of the greatest gifts anyone can receive is a happy childhood and there is no surer foundation for a good life. We received unconditional love from Mum, as we did from Dad. And this extended to Diana's three grandchildren, Dan, Joshua and Misha: the fact that Dan and Joshua were inherited, so to speak, made not the slightest difference. Pamela's school-friend Vicki lost her mother at a young age. She too Diana took into the fold of the family. It is a fine thing to have Vicki here today and to hear her read that marvellous passage from *Corinthians*. No doubt one way or another, over the years, we children caused Mum many anxieties and disappointments but there was never any judgement or recrimination. No matter what, we always knew we were loved. She always took an interest in everything we were doing, and this continued right throughout her life. In the last few weeks, when she was often in pain or at least severe discomfort and when all sorts of troubles were accumulating, whenever we spoke, she always asked about my activities and about those of Rose, Joshua, and Misha. She always thought the best of us, and often had a quite exaggerated view of our various achievements. To give one small example: to hear her talk about my own photography one might easily imagine that she was referring to a photographer far better than Ansel Adams! Furthermore, she not only took a loving interest in all of our varied activities but in those of our many friends whom she so willingly and happily included in family gatherings.

I briefly mention one other aspect of Mum's life, her love of Australia. Recently I asked her what was the best trip she made in her life, expecting her to refer to one of the many countries she and Dad had visited in America, Europe and Asia. But she nominated, without hesitation, the trip they did around Australia in 1976. She loved the Australian land and was thankful she had been born here.

Pamela alluded to a remark I made at the recent birthday celebration, about Mum combining the qualities of Mary and Martha, which is to say that she lived a rich inner life of spiritual awareness, prayer and devotion, but also one full of compassionate good deeds. Love of God, love of her fellows, love of all of God's creation – a life of love indeed.

Off Cape Pillar, Tasmania

at Rishikesh

CURRICULUM VITAE & OTHER DETAILS

Name	Kenneth ("Harry") Oldmeadow
Qualifications	B.A. Hons (ANU) (First Class Honours in History) Dip. Ed. (Sydney) M.A. Hons (Sydney) (First Class Honours in Religious Studies, University of Sydney Medal) Ph. D. (La Trobe) (Cinema Studies)
1990-2012	Associate Professor Coordinator of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Arts Program, La Trobe University Bendigo
2013-2019	Honorary Associate, La Trobe University

Intellectual Interests and Research Areas

Comparative Religion and Philosophy

- The Perennial Philosophy and the Traditionalist School (René Guénon, AK Coomaraswamy, Frithjof Schuon et al.)
- Primordial Traditions, particularly Native American and Australian Aboriginal
- Critiques of Modernity
- The Spiritual Encounter of East and West
- The Philosophy of Religion
- "Environmental" Philosophy
- Mysticism and Metaphysics

Cinema Studies

- Classical Hollywood Cinema and Genre Studies
- The history of film theory and criticism
- European & Japanese Art Cinema

Literature

- Romanticism & Modern Fiction
- Literary Criticism

Scholarships & Awards

1965-68	Commonwealth Teaching Scholarship
1967	Lady Isaacs Prize for Australian History
1968	F.W. Cheshire History Prize
1971-2	Commonwealth Overseas Scholarship
1980	Commonwealth Postgraduate Research Scholarship
1981	University of Sydney Medal for Excellence in Research
2004	La Trobe University Bendigo Research Award

Publications

A few words about my books. *Traditionalism* (2000) despite my best efforts, still bears the marks of an academic dissertation. It is also perhaps a little too combative in tone. All of the best material in the book later found its way into *Frithjof Schuon and the Perennial Philosophy* (2010) a book with which I am much more satisfied. I reckon it the most important of my books. *Journeys East* (2004) is my most widely researched book and the one most likely to impress scholars. I managed to write something about nearly all of the 20thC thinkers whom I most admire. Writing *A Christian Pilgrim in India* (2008) was a moving experience, time spent with Abhishiktananda, a saintly, wise and self-effacing person who combined within himself the best of Christian and Hindu spirituality. He should be much more widely known. *Black Elk, Lakota Visionary* (2018) remains a book close to my heart; I hope it expresses some of the beauty, grandeur and profundity of the Native American heritage (and by extension all the primordial traditions) as well as depicting the exemplary life of an extraordinary but humble man with a beautiful soul. My other books are largely compilations, outliers to these more substantive works.

Books

2000 *Traditionalism: Religion in the light of Perennial Philosophy*, Colombo: Sri Lanka Institute of Traditional Studies, 225pp. (Persian translation 2010; 2nd edition, San Rafael: Sophia Perennis, 2011.)

2004 *Journeys East: 20thC Western Encounters with Eastern Religious Traditions*, Bloomington: World Wisdom Books, 508pp. (translated into French and published as *Vers l'Orient*, Hozhoni, 2018).

2008 *Abhishiktananda: A Christian Pilgrim in India*, Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2008, 316pp. (French translation , published 2010).

2008 *Mediations: Essays on Religious Pluralism and the Perennial Philosophy*, San Rafael, CA: Sophia Perennis, 158pp.

2010 *Frithjof Schuon and the Perennial Philosophy*, Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2010, 346pp.

2012 *Touchstones of the Spirit: Religion, Tradition and Modernity*, Bloomington: World Wisdom, 299pp.

2018 *Black Elk, Lakota Visionary: the Oglala Holy Man and Sioux Tradition*, Bloomington: World Wisdom, 224pp. (French edition: *Black Elk et l'héritage de la tradition lakota*, Hozhoni, 2020.)

2019 *Wellsprings: An Anthology* (privately printed).

2021 *Timeless Truths and Modern Delusions: Buddhism, the Perennial Philosophy and Modernity*, Melbourne: Platform Books.

2021 *Leaves in the Wind* (privately printed).

Monographs

1990 *The Religious Tradition of the Australian Aborigines*, Colombo: Sri Lanka Institute of Traditional Studies, 20pp.

1995 *Mircea Eliade and Carl Jung: 'Priests Without Surplices'?* , Bendigo: Department of Humanities, LTUB. (No 1. in the Studies in Western Tradition, Occasional Papers Series), 44pp. (translated into Spanish and Egyptian, published 2008; Portuguese, published 2008: *Mircea Eliade Y Carl G. Jung: Reflexiones sobre el lugar del mitro, la religion y la cincia en su obra*, Palma del Mallorca: Padma, 2008).

Books Edited

2005 *The Betrayal of Tradition: Essays on the Spiritual Crisis of Modernity*, ed. Harry Oldmeadow, Bloomington: World Wisdom (includes essays by Karen Armstrong, S.H. Nasr, Theodore Roszak, Kathleen Raine and many others), 386pp.

2007 *Light from the East: The Western Encounter with Eastern Religions*, ed. Harry Oldmeadow, Bloomington: World Wisdom, (contributors include the Dalai Lama, Gary Snyder, Huston Smith, Diana Eck, Thomas Merton, Robert Aitken, Titus Burckhardt and many others), 341pp.

2010 *Crossing Religious Frontiers*, Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2010 (contributors include Peter Kingsley, Ananda Coomaraswamy, René Guénon, Marco Pallis, Patrick Laude, and many others), 341pp.

2014 *In the Face of the Absolute*, by Frithjof Schuon, Bloomington: World Wisdom.

2015 *To Have a Center*, by Frithjof Schuon, Bloomington, World Wisdom.

2018 *Treasures of Buddhism*, by Frithjof Schuon, World Wisdom.

2019 *Esoterism as Principle and as Way*, by Frithjof Schuon, Bloomington: World Wisdom.

2021 *The Eye of the Heart* by Frithjof Schuon, Bloomington: World Wisdom.

The Essential Whitall Perry, Bloomington: World Wisdom (forthcoming).

The Play of Masks by Frithjof Schuon, Bloomington: World Wisdom(forthcoming).

Scholarly Articles (R=Refereed journal/book)

1968 "Luther's Affirmation", *St Mark's Review* (Canberra), No. 52, May, pp.18-27.

1969 "Petrarch and Dr. Leavis: A Perspective on Literature and Society", *ANU Historical Journal*, No 6, November, pp. 23-34. (R)

1971 "Literature and the Historian", *La Trobe Historical Studies*, No 2., pp.3-12.

1976 "A Reply to Ms Mildern's Case Study of the School Without Walls", *Papers in ACT Education 1975-6*, Canberra: Canberra College of Education, ed. W. Mulford, pp.144-151.

1986 "Traditional and Modern Attitudes to Religious Biography", *Religious Traditions* (Montreal), 7-10, 1984-86, pp.105-118. (R)

1992 "Disowning the Past: the Political and Postmodernist Assault on the Humanities", *Quadrant* (Melbourne), March, pp.60-65.

1992 "Computer Technology: An Academic Cargo Cult?", *Research and Development in Higher Education*, Vol 15 (Churchill: HERDSA, 1992), pp. 225-232. (Reprinted in *Teaching Review* (Centre for the Advancement of the Learning of Teaching, The University of Newcastle), No.2, December 1996, pp.33-38.

1992 "Sankara's Doctrine of *Maya*", *Asian Philosophy* (Nottingham) 2:2, 1992. (R)

1996 "Modern Science and the Destruction of Traditional Understandings", Guest Editorial, *Australian Orthodontic Journal* (Sydney) 14:3, October, pp.131-132.

1997 "Tracking *The Searchers*: A Survey of the Film's Critical Reception", *Continuum* (Perth), 11:1, pp.132-162. (R)

1997 "'Delivering the last blade of grass': Aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal in the Mahayana", *Asian Philosophy* 7:3, November 1997, pp.181-194. (R)

1998 "Metaphysics, Theology and Philosophy", *Sacred Web: A Journal of Tradition and Modernity* (Vancouver) 1, pp. 31-52.

1998 "A Sage for the Times: the Role and Oeuvre of Frithjof Schuon", *Sophia: The Journal of Traditional Studies* (Washington DC), 4:2, Winter. pp. 56-77.

1998 "'The Translucence of the Eternal': Religious Understandings of the Natural Order", *Sacred Web: A Journal of Tradition and Modernity*, 2, pp.11-32.

1999 "Why Literature (Still) Matters" (in 4 parts), *The Animist*, electronic journal at: http://theanimist.netgazer.net.au/.

1999 "To a Buddhist Beat: Allen Ginsberg on Poetics, Politics and Spirituality", *Beyond the Divide* (Bendigo) 2:1, Winter 1999, pp.56-67. (R)

2000 "Mystical Traditions in the Contemporary World", CD for the Australian Sufi Centre, Sydney.

2000 "Mystical Traditions in the Contemporary World", *The Treasure: Australia's Sufi Magazine* (Hobart), Issue 8, pp.5-17.

2000 "Formal Diversity, Essential Unity", *Sacred Web: A Journal of Tradition and Modernity*, 5, pp.95-106.

2000 "In Search of Secret Tibet", *Esoterica*, 2000 (electronic journal at esoteric.msu.edu) (State University of Michigan). (R)

2001 "'Signs of the supra-sensible': Frithjof Schuon on the Natural Order", *Sacred Web: A Journal of Tradition and Modernity*, 6.

2001 "The Not-So-Close Encounters of Western Psychology and Eastern Spirituality", *The Animist* (animist2001.netgazer.net.au/harry.htm.)

2001 "Shadows and Strife: The Confrontation of Islam and the West", *Sacred Web: A Journal of Tradition and Modernity*, 8, pp.121-138 (co-authored with Dr Rodney Blackhirst).

2004 "Jules Monchanin, Henri Le Saux/Abhishiktananda and the Hindu-Christian Encounter", *Australian Religion Studies Review*, 17:2, pp.98-113. (R)

2004 "Un sabio para los tiempos: El papel y la obra de Frithjof Schuon" in *Frithjof Schuon (1907-1998): Notas biográficas, estudios, homenajes*; Sophia Perennis: Cuadernos de estudios tradicionales 1-4, 2004. José J. de Olañeta, Editor. Palma de Mallorca, Spain.

2005 "Science, Scientism and Self-Destruction", *Sacred Web* 14, pp.87-92.

2005 "Debating Orientalism", *Australian Religion Studies Review* (Sydney), 18:2, pp.133-150. (R)

2005 "Notes on 'Spirituality'", *Vincit Omnia Veritas* 1:2 (electronic journal; France/USA), at: http://www.ruh.religioperennis.org/Issue1_2.html

2005 "The Critique of Modernism: Scientism, Evolutionism, Psychologism and Humanism", Religio Perennis website, at:

http://www.religioperennis.org/Document/Harry/Critique.html

2007 'The False Prophets of Modernism: Darwin, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud', in *Sacred Web* (Vancouver), Vol 18, pp.47-70.

2007 "The Comparative Study of Eastern and Western Metaphysics: A Perennialist Perspective", *Sophia: International Journal for Philosophy of Religion, Metaphysical Theology and Ethics*, 48:1, May 2007, 49-84. (R)

2008 "Swami Abhishikstananda, Pilgrim of the Absolute" in *Eye of the Heart*, 1.1, 2008, pp.11-45. (R)

2008 "Frithjof Schuon on the Transcendent Unity of Religions", *Theosophy in Australia*, 72:2, June 2008, pp.38-41.

2009 "Across the Great Divide: Some Christian Responses to the Modern Encounter of Religions", *Religions/Adyan* (Doha), Issue 0, pp.180-173. (R)

2010 "The Writings of Swami Abhishiktananda", *Crossing Religious Frontiers* (*Studies in Comparative Religion* Series), Bloomington: World Wisdom, pp.158-182.

2010 "Living in Truth: Virtue and Prayer – Frithjof Schuon on the Spiritual Life", *Sacred Web: A Journal of Tradition and Modernity* (Vancouver) 23, 2010, pp.129-144.

2010 "Huston Smith, Bridge-Builder Extraordinaire: A Tribute", *Sophia: the Journal of Traditional Studies* (Washington DC), 10:1, 2010, 73-80.

2011 "The Not-So-Close Encounters of Eastern Religion and Western Psychology" in *Studies in Comparative Religion: Psychology and the Perennial Philosophy.*

"*Ex Oriente Lux*: Eastern Religions, Western Writers", *Literature and Aesthetics* (Sydney) 21.1.

2011 "In Memoriam: Algis Uzdavinys and his Antipodean Sojourn", *Sacred Web*.

2012 "Thinking about 'Tradition': A Perennialist Perspective", *Connor Court Quarterly* (Melbourne), Issue 3, 2012.

2013 "'Priests without Surplices'? C.G. Jung and Mircea Eliade", *Connor Court Quarterly*, 8, Spring-Summer, 2013.

2015 "Looking Forward to Tradition: Ancient Truths and Modern Delusions", *Temenos Academy Review* (London), December, Vol 18, 168-188.

2020 "Some reflections prompted by the pandemic", *Sacred Web*, 45.

Contributions to Books, Anthologies, Reference Works

1991 "The Religious Tradition of the Australian Aborigines" in A. Sharma (ed), *Fragments of Infinity: Essays in Philosophy and Religion* (A *Festschrift* in Honour of Professor Huston Smith), Dorset: Prism Press, pp.169-197.

1995 "Biographical Sketch of René Guénon", Introductory essay to 1995 edition of René Guénon's *Reign of Quantity*, New York: Sophia Perennis et Universalis, pp.vi-xxxviii.

1999 16 entries in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Film*, Oxford University Press, ed. Brian McFarlane, Geoff Mayer & Ina Bertrand.

2001 "Globalization, the Convergence of Religions and the Perennial Philosophy" in C.M. Cusack & P.R. Oldmeadow (eds), *The End of Religion? Religion in an Age of Globalization*, Sydney University, pp.35-51. (R)

2002 "Melodies de l'au-dela: Perspective schuonienne sur la religion des aborigènes d'Australie" in P.Laude (ed), *Dossier H Frithjof Schuon, Paris: Connaissance des religions*, pp. 307-319. (English translation: http://www.religioperennis.org/Document/Harry/MelodiesE.html)

2003 "The Firmament Sheweth His Handiwork: Reawakening a Religious Sense of the Natural Order", in Barry McDonald (ed), *Seeing God Everywhere: Essays on Nature and the Sacred*, Bloomington: World Wisdom, pp.29-52. (Translation into Hungarian, for publication by Életharmónia Alapítvány in *Ars Naturae: Ökológiai társadalmi, kulturáalis floyóirat*, Szeged, Hungary.

2004 "The Heart of the *Religio Perennis*: Frithjof Schuon on Esotericism", in Edward Crangle (ed), *Esotericism and the Control of Knowledge*, Sydney University, pp. 146-179. (R)

2005 "Signs of the Times and the Light of Tradition", in Harry Oldmeadow (ed), *The Betrayal of Tradition: Essays on the Spiritual Crisis of Modernity*, Bloomington: World Wisdom, pp.xi-xvi.

2006 "Introduction" to *Light from the East: The Western Encounter with Eastern Religions*, ed. Harry Oldmeadow, Bloomington: World Wisdom, pp.vi-xiii.

2008 "Notes on Spirituality" in *Vincit Omnia Veritas: Collected Essays*, ed. R. Fabbri & T. Scott, Bendigo: La Trobe University, 2008, pp.155-160.

2010 "A Biography of René Guénon" in *The Essential René Guénon*, ed. John Herlily, Bloomington: World Wisdom, pp.275-281.

2010 "Rudolf Otto, Eastern Traditions and Religious Universalism" in Christopher Hartney & Carole Cusack (eds), *Festschrift for Professor Garry Trompf*, Leiden: Brill, 2008, pp.229-244. (R)

2011 "Robin Wood's Hitchcock" in *A Companion to Hitchcock Studies*, ed. Leland Poague & Thomas Leitch, Oxford & New York: Blackwells.

2012 "'The Frenzy on the Wall'; Two and a Half Cheers for Hollywood", in *Scintillae*, ed. Ian Irvine, Bendigo.

2013 "The Not-So-Close Encounters of Eastern Religion and Western Psychology" in *Studies in Comparative Religion, Psychology and the Perennial Philosophy*, ed. Samuel Benedeck Sotillos, Bloomington, Indiana.

2017 "The Romantic Attack on Modern Science" in *The Last Platonist*, ed. B. Coman & M. Nestor, Melbourne: Connor Court Press.

2017 "Roger Sworder, 1947-2016" (Obituary), *Sacred Web* 39, 2017.

2017 "Huston Smith: A Tribute", *Sacred Web* 39, 2017.

2019 "Gnosis: a Perennialist Perspective" in *The Gnostic World*, ed. G.W. Trompf, New York and Abingdon: Routledge, pp.537-548.

Reviews and Review Articles (R= Refereed journal)

1995 Review of J. Mohanty, *Reason and Tradition in Indian Philosophy*, in *Asian Philosophy*, 5:1, 1995. (R)

1995 Review of H.P. Sinha, *Religious Philosophy of Tagore and Radhakrishnan*, in *Asian Philosophy*, 5:1, 1995. (R)

1997 Review of Leonard Angel, *Enlightenment East and West*, in *Asian Philosophy*, 7:3, November 1997.

1999 Review of George Steiner, *Errata: An Examined Life* in *The Animist* (http://theanimist.netgazer.net.au/)

2000 Catalogue Notes for an Exhibition (Phyllis Gallery, LTUB) by Warrnambool artist Bruce Vinall.

2002 Review of Barry McDonald (ed), *Every Branch in Me*, in *Australian Religion Studies Review*, 17.1. (R) (also on-line at: www.worldwisdom.com)

2003 Review of Charles Barr, *Vertigo*, in *Metro*, Issue 136, pp.192-193. (R)

2004 Review of Gavin Flood (ed), *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, in Australian Religion Studies Review, 17.1. (R)

2005 Review of *Christianity and the Doctrine of Non-Dualism*, by "A Monk of the West", trans. Alvin Moore, Jr. & Marie M. Hansen, New York: Sophia Perennis, 2004, in *Sacred Web* 15 (Vancouver)

2005 Review of *Asian Travel in the Renaissance*, ed. Daniel Carey, Oxford: Blackwell, 2004, in *The Journal of Religious History* (Sydney). (R)

2005 Review of *Frithjof Schuon: Life and Teachings* by Jean-Baptiste Aymard & Patrick Laude, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004, in *Sophia: The Journal of Traditional Studies* (Washington DC) 11.1, Summer 2005, 197-204.

2006 Review of Joseph Epes Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indians*, in *Sophia: the Journal of Traditional Studies* (Washington DC), 12:2, Fall/Winter 2006, 189-194.

2007 Review of Peter Kelly, *Buddha in a Bookshop*, in *Sophia: International Journal for Philosophy of Religion, Metaphysical Theology and Ethics* (R)

2008 Review of Shirley du Boulay, *The Cave of the Heart* (Maryknoll; Orbis, 2005) in *Vincit Omnia Veritas: Collected Essays*, ed. R. Fabbri & T. Scott, Bendigo: La Trobe University, 2008, 161-165.

2010 Review of Michael Fitzgerald, *Frithjof Schuon, Messenger of the Perennial Philosophy* in *Crossing Religious Frontiers*, ed. H. Oldmeadow, Bloomington: World Wisdom.

2013 Review of Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now* in *Studies in Comparative Religion: Psychology and the Perennial Philosophy*, ed. Samuel Benedeck Sotillos. Bloomington, Indiana.

2013 "Father of the Bomb", Review of Ray Monk's *Inside the Center: The Life of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, London: Jonathan Cape, in *Australian Book Review*, June, No 352, pp.18-20.

2014 Review Article on David Berlinski, *The Devil's Delusion: Atheism and Its Scientific Pretensions*, New York: Basic Books, 2009 reprint, in *Connor Court Quarterly*, 9, Winter, pp. 29-44.

2015 Review of Roger Sworder, *The Romantic Attack on Science*, Kettering; Sophia Perennis & Angelico Press, 2016, *in Sacred Web*, 36, December, pp. 135-141.

Forewords/Prefaces/Introductions etc

2006 to Lewis Thompson, *Journals*, Vol 1, ed. Richard Lannoy, Virginia: Lightning Press, 2006.

2008 to Lalita Sinha, *The Garden of Love Unveiled*, Bloomington: World Wisdom, pp. xi-xv.

2008 to Marco Pallis, *The Way and the Mountain*, Bloomington: World Wisdom, pp. vii-xi.

2008 to Wolfgang Smith, *Cosmos and Transcendence*, San Raphael, CA: Sophia Perennis.

2011 to Mohd Rosmizi Bin Abd Rahman, *Introduction to Islamic and Buddhist Personal Ethics*, Islamic Science University, Malaysia.

2012 to William Stoddart, *What Does Islam Mean in Today's World?*, Bloomington: World Wisdom.

2014 to Frithjof Schuon, *In the Face of the Absolute*, Bloomington: World Wisdom.

2015 to Frithjof Schuon, *To Have a Center*, Bloomington, World Wisdom.

2018 to Frithjof Schuon, *Treasures of Buddhism*, Bloomington, World Wisdom.

2019 to Frithjof Schuon, *Esoterism as Principle and as Way*, Bloomington, World Wisdom

2021 to Frithjof Schuon, *Eye of the Heart*, Bloomington, World

Wisdom **Theses**

1968 "The Science of Man: the Impact of Evolutionary Theory on Scientific Attitudes to the Australian Aborigines", BA History Honours Thesis, ANU (First-Class Honours).

1981 "Frithjof Schuon, the Perennial Philosophy and the Meaning of Tradition", MA Religious Studies Honours Thesis, Sydney University (First Class Honours, Sydney University Medal) (accepted without revision).

1995 "Robin Wood On Film: A Critical Trajectory, 1960-1995", Cinema Studies PhD Thesis, La Trobe University, Bundoora (accepted without revision).

Website archives

Many articles, reviews and excerpts can be found at the following websites:

https://latrobe.academia.edu/HarryOldmeadow
https://www.themathesontrust.org/authors/harry-oldmeadow
http://www.worldwisdom.com/public/authors/default.aspx?Display=Authors#Anchor_47

Photography can be found at:
https://www.flickr.com/photos/harryoldmeadow/

Conference Papers, Public Talks, Interviews, Podcasts; (selection only)

1990 • *The Australian Aboriginal Religious Tradition*, Inaugural Ananda Coomaraswamy Memorial Lecture in Colombo, January, 1990, for the Sri Lanka Institute of Traditional Studies:

1990 • Talk on VCE English texts at Rochester High School

1991 • Talk on VCE English texts at Bendigo Senior Secondary College

1992 • *Mircea Eliade and Carl Jung: 'Priests without Surplices'?,* Public Lecture for the Bendigo Jung Society.

• *Computers: An Academic Cargo Cult?*, HERDSA Conference, Monash Uni, Churchill, Vic.

1993 • *The Place of the Humanities*, Bendigo Community Radio Talk.

1995 • Interview on ABC Regional Radio on *Crisis in the Humanities?*

• *A Comparison of Some Eastern and Western Religious Forms*, Talk at Catholic College Bendigo.

1996 • *Why Literature (Still) Matters*, Bendigo Shakespeare Society. (A recording of this lecture was subsequently played on Radio 3CCC-FM.)

1997 • *Religion and multiculturalism*, Training Program for Residential Heads and Assistants, La Trobe University Bendigo.

• *Mysteries of the Dreaming: Aspects of Aboriginal Religion*, St Paul's Cathedral Winter Lecture Series (June).

1998 • Interview with Frank Perversi, author of *Perceiving the Unknown God*, Radio 3CCC and other radio stations.

• *Ex Oriente Lux: Western Writers and Eastern Spirituality, from Emerson to Ginsberg*, Bendigo Shakespeare Society in conjunction with the School of Arts, LTUB.

1999 • *Issues and Problems in Student Accommodation*, Regional Housing Network, Bendigo.

• *Religion and the Formation of Social Values*, Guest Lecture (2 hours), 3rd Yr Social Work Students (Lecturer: Garth Phillips).

• *Religious Understandings of Nature*, Guest lecture (2 hours), 2nd Yr Outdoor Ed students (Lecturer: Almut Berringer).

• *'Grass on the Hills': Against Auto/biography*, Bendigo Shakespeare Society.

• *Western Writers, Eastern Religion: from the Romantics to the Beats*, Public Lecture, St Paul's Cathedral (Bendigo), Winter Lecture Series.

• *Globalisation, the Convergence of Religions and the Perennial Philosophy*, Australian Association for the Study of Religion Conference, Sydney University.

• *The Encounter of Western Psychology and Eastern Spirituality*, Lecture for Australian Psychological Society, Bendigo Chapter.

• *'Signposts of the Suprasensible': Frithjof Schuon on the Natural Order*, LTUB Postgraduate Philosophy Seminar.

2000 • *Eastern Symbolism and Mythology*, BRIT, Bendigo.

• *The Role of Mystical Traditions in the Contemporary World*, Australian Sufi Centre, Sydney.

2001 Three public lectures for the "Spirit 2001" Summer School on:

- *Thomas Merton and The Encounter with The East*
- *Black Elk and the Spiritual Heritage of the American Indians*
- *The Western Search for "Secret Tibet "*

• *Philosophy and Religion at LTUB*, Catholic College, Bendigo.

• *Studying Humanities at LTUB*, Bendigo Senior Secondary College.

• Welcoming address for University Experience Day, LTUB.

• *Publishing your Research* for LTUB Postgraduate Conference, Ironbark Centre.

• *'Madame Bovary': For and Against*, Bendigo Shakespeare Society.

• *Islam and the West: the Context of Recent Events*, Inter-faith gathering organised by the Sufi Centre of Australia, Balmain Town Hall, Nov 4th.

2002 • "Saving Sex", Interview for ABC television, *Compass* program, screened Sept.

• Opening of Bruce Vinall's exhibition, "The Merrivale Suite and Other Paintings", Mira Gallery, Melbourne, August.

• *Studying Arts at LTUB*, BRIT, Bendigo.

• *Modes of Knowledge*, Sufi Symposium, Australian Centre for Sufism, North Sydney.

• *Eastern Influences on Western Writers*, BRIT, Bendigo.

2003 • *The Buddhist Doctrine of Anatta*, LTUB Philosophy Postgraduate Seminar (public session).

• *Tradition and the Perennial Philosophy*, 2 hour lecture, E-Vam Buddhist Institute, Carlton.

• *Buddhism in the West* 2 hour lecture, E-Vam Buddhist Institute, Carlton.

2004 • *Sufism and Mystical Experience*, first two-hour public lecture in a series on Mystical Traditions, sponsored by the Department of Philosophy, University of Tasmania; Hobart, March 2004.

• *Religious Forms and Mystical Experience*, lecture delivered at a International Symposium organized by the Australian Centre for Sufism, Sydney, October, 2004.

2005 • *God, Evil, and Natural Disaster*, Interview with SBS Radio Sydney, (following Asian tsunami disaster), January.

• *The University Experience*, O-Week address to all new Arts students.

• *Studying Arts at La Trobe*, Bendigo Talk to Bendigo Senior Secondary Yr 11 & 12 Students, "", LTUB, March.

• *Existentialism and Sergio Leone's 'A Fistful of Dollars'*, VCE Philosophy students, Bendigo Senior Secondary College.

2008 • Opening of Bruce Vinall's Exhibition of Paintings, Mildura Arts Centre, January 2008.

• *Buddhism and Existentialism*, Yr 12 students, Girton College, Bendigo, April.

• *Eastern Influences on Western Writers*, BRIT, Bendigo, November.

• *Studying Arts at La Trobe Bendigo*, BRIT, Bendigo, November.

• *The False Prophets of Modernism: Darwin, Marx, Nietzsche & Freud*, Plenary Speaker at the *Sacred Web* Conference, University of Alberta, Edmonton (available on U-tube).

2007 • *Animals in the Spiritual Economy of the American Plains Indians*, Public Lecture Series, Animals in Myth and Religion, Arts LTUB, Visual Arts Centre, Bendigo, Jan.

• *Gandhi, Animals and the Ideal of Ahimsa*, Public Lecture Series, Animals in Myth and Religion, Arts LTUB, Visual Arts Centre, Bendigo, Feb.

• *The False Prophets of Modernism: Darwin, Marx, Nietzsche & Freud*, Philosophy Postgraduate Symposium, April.

• *Swami Abhishiktananda and Sannyasa*, Satyananda Yoga Ashram, Rocklyn, Victoria, May.

• *The Desecration of the Natural Order in A Religious Perspective*, Staff Seminar, Philosophy Department, University of Tasmania, Hobart, August.

• *'A Pasture for Gazelles': The Modern Encounter of Religions in the Light o f Rumi's Teachings*, Rumi Symposium, Australian Centre of Sufism and Irfanic Studies, Sydney, December.

2008 Two public lectures at The National convention of the Theosophical Society of Australia, St Marks college, Adelaide, January 2008.

- *The Spiritual Dimensions of the Environmental Crisis*
- *Frithjof Schuon and the Perennial Philosophy*

• Welcoming address at the public launching of the journal *Eye of the Heart*, View St Gallery, June.

• *The Meaning of Myth*, Girton College, Bendigo, August.

• *Spiritual Dimensions of the Environmental Crisis*, Outdoor Education Guest Lecture, LTUB.

• *Mahatma Gandhi's Message for Today*, Rocklyn Ashram, Victoria, August, 2008.

2009 • Approx. four hours of filmed interviews on "The Life and Teachings of Frithjof Schuon", for Frithjof Schuon: Messenger of the Perennial Philosophy, DVD, produced by Deborah Casey for World Wisdom Publications, Bloomington, Indiana.

2010 • *"And Never the Twain Shall Meet"?: the Spiritual Encounter of East and West*, April 2010, Staff/Postgraduate Public Seminar Series, LTU View St Theatre.

• ABC Regional Radio Interview on *East-West Religious Encounters*, April.

• Guest lecture to Bendigo Outdoor Ed Students: *The Spiritual Dimensions of the Environmental Crisis*, Ironbark Centre, LTUB, August.

• *The Life and Spirituality of Abhishiktananda*, Keynote Address, Abhishiktananda Centenary Celebration, Janssen Spirituality & Inter-Faith Centre, Boronia, August.

– and for Philosophy in the Library Series, Bendigo Public Library, September.

2011 • *Religion in the Contemporary World*, Shiva Yoga Ashram, Mt Eliza, March.

• *The Sun Dance of the American Plains Indians: Cosmology, Symbolism and Spiritual Practice*, Satyananda Yoga Ashram, Rocklyn, Victoria, November.

2012 • *The Life and Work of Abhishiktananda*, Monash University STaR Seminar Series, April.

2013 • *Ramakrishna and Religious Pluralism*, Satyananda Yoga Ashram, Rocklyn (Central Victoria), February.

• Speech at dinner for the launching of Roger's Sworder's poetry collection *Stop ! Don't Read!*, Foundry Hotel, Bendigo, April.

• *The Inner Teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism*, Australian Centre for Sufism and Irfanic Studies Symposium, Sydney, December.

2014 • *Tradition, Modernity and The Myth of Progress*, Philosophy in the Library Series, Bendigo Public Library, August.

• *Looking Forward to Tradition: Ancient Truths and Modern Illusions*, for the Temenos Academy, Lincoln Centre, London, December.

• *Puzzles and Conundrums in the Teaching of Religion*, Chester College, Cambridge, December.

• *The Contemporary World in the Light of the Perennial Philosophy*, Birbeck College, London, December (four hours of lectures and seminars)

2015 • *The Perennial Philosophy, Tradition and Modernity*, one-day lecture and seminar for Daybreak Spirituality Group, Bendigo, March.

• *What's Bothering Dr Nietzsche?*, Philosophy in the Library Public Lecture series, Bendigo Public Library, July.

• *Tradition and Modernity in Religious Context*, Rocklyn Yoga Ashram, September.

2016 • *Religion in the Modern World*, Daybreak Spirituality Group, Bendigo, February.

• *Black Elk, Lakota Visionary*, Philosophy in the Library Series, Bendigo Public Library, June.

2017 • *The Spirituality of the American Plains Indians*, Daybreak Spirituality Group, Bendigo, Oct.

• *Black Elk and the Fate of the Nomadic Peoples*, PhiloCafe, Byron Bay, October.

2018 • *Disentangling the Skein: The Problematic Relations of Psychology, Religion and Spirituality*, Daybreak Spiritualty group, February.

• *Shankara and the Doctrine of Maya in the Light of Frithjof Schuon's Exposition of Vedanta*, Melbourne School of Philosophy, Daylesford Retreat Centre, February.

2019 • *James Cowan and the Lessons of the Nomads*, PhiloCafe, Byron Bay, February.

• *Mircea Eliade*, Bendigo Philosophical Society, February.

2020 • Two Podcast interviews with Alex. *Ship of Fools* series.

• Podcast interview with Samuel Benedeck Sotillos.