MEMORIES MIGRATING

JOHN BURROW

An
Autobiography

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Foreword

This book is essentially that of a spectator and recorder. Whether it is worth reading depends on the quality of its observation rather than the intrinsic interest of the ostensible subject, myself. My profession has been that of a historian, that is of a spectator, not of a shaper of events, but I shall not be saying much about that. It is true that my life has been lived among books, and books will accordingly figure here, but any thoughts I have had about writing history and the ways it fits into our culture I have put down elsewhere (in a work called *A History of Histories*) and do not want to repeat here. Also, any academic, which I was for forty years, necessarily plays some part in institutions, as academic politician and administrator, enthusiastically or reluctantly. However, I do not want to use this book to re-fight minor battles long ago or to reflect on different possible outcomes of local events I participated in. I have I admit sometimes transgressed these self-imposed restrictions to some extent, especially in Chapter 9, but in general I have tried to observe them.

What kind of a book then is it? Pressed for a single phrase I would be inclined to settle for 'a comedy of manners', though with the passage of time as an important element in it. For seventy years, from successive vantage points, mainly in the south of England and in educational institutions, I have been an observer of contemporary life and responded to it, as we all are and do; an observer not, except rather distantly, of great events, but of interesting times, for all times are interesting if seen in ways which try to bring out their peculiarities. I begin with early childhood, and if there is a story in those years, before I went to university, I would be inclined to call it if not, rather grandly, the making of a historian, certainly 'the discovery of the past'. The world children have to try to make sense of is - for some more than others - one layered not only by class but by time, by the sediment of the past, in the generations of parents and grandparents, in their memories, their furniture, their habits, and their recollections of generations earlier still. I realise too now, as I did not then, that in different schools I was exposed to residues of the mores and assumptions of late-Victorian and Edwardian England which I now find interesting.

The next story is of my attempts to make sense of the rather wider world of Cambridge in the decade 1954-65 and to establish myself in it which ended in failure. To have made the latter the overriding interest, however, would have made this account more personal and self-referential than I wanted it to be. It is the interest of that world and of those who dwelt in it which is the point, though the stages of my personal journey, as undergraduate, research student and Fellow necessarily provide the vantage points from which I witnessed and experienced it. The latter part of the book in a shorter space, has, I realise, something of the character of an epilogue. As a historian, I admit that the past holds more interest for me than the present, and my own remoter past than the more recent one. Unless life provides some startling novelties we cannot carry with us into maturity the wide-eyed wonder which sharpens and slants one's perceptions in childhood and youth. Children are natural mythologisers and caricaturists. In autobiographies wonder too often gives way to self-justifications and resentments, which are of less interest to others. I have tried to avoid these and can only hope that I have succeeded. But the limitations of the earlier visions, which are the price we pay for their freshness, should also not be forgotten. The portraits of the adults and seniors who presented themselves to mine are of course not "fair". They are not meant to be. Objectivity is an obligation on the recorder and analyst of important events, but it is a distortion in an attempted portrayal of one's own mind as observer. The accounts of my perceptions are attempts to re-create them, and I have only occasionally attempted to correct them from hindsight; they are not attempts to lay claims to an objectivity I only fleetingly possessed. The changes in the biases I brought to them, and the factors by which they were successively shaped are part of the story to be told, of which I was therefore a part, not just an unchanging recorder.

I
Landfall: Plymouth Sound

James Thurber somewhere mocks Salvador Dali for claiming to remember what it was like in the womb. Like Thurber and unlike Dali I have no ante-natal memories, but I do remember being born and am surprised that this seems unusual enough to be found implausible. Being a wordless experience, it is, of course, in some measure falsified, made falsely coherent, by being put into words, as an experience of pounding and thumping, piercing lights and sharp, arbitrary noises which I am prepared to identity as voices. It occurs to me that, in some circumstances, dying may prove rather similar, in reverse, with darkness instead of light at its end. I am also prepared to pronounce on the preferred surroundings of the newly delivered: in Victorian or Edwardian taste, richly stuffy rather than bright and clinical; an old-fashioned theatre perhaps, with red plush, dimmed lights, whispering attendants and something soft, adagio and sentimental from the orchestra pit.

After this first bustle of sensations came, of course, the Dark Ages of the first three years. Then the discovery of language, as a social phenomenon, the act of communication. I probably had already a few words myself and knew therefore that sounds could signify. My parents talked to each other, amicably, incessantly, for over sixty years; they first knew each other in their mid-teens. They did so in the bedroom I shared with them: rapidly, incomprehensibly and tantalisingly. I think I realised that sometimes these sounds bore on my immediate future: picked up, played with, stowed away in the dark. I do not, however, think that my dominant feeling was anxiety: it was frustration, even envy, at my exclusion from the festival of human communication. Freudians would, I take it, say that I was sexualising the linguistic act. It is perhaps not accidental that I was once, later, to describe my trade as an historian as eavesdropping on the conversations of the past. Richard Cobb has described beautifully in *A Sense of Place* the analogy between the

historian and the voyeur. It is odd that there is no established aural equivalent; eavesdropper hardly has the same force. I learnt to talk early. In childhood, as for everyone, words stabilised and controlled the world; in adolescence they provided a substitute for it; in adult life they have procured a living of sorts, despite extreme manual, mathematical and technical incompetence. Now they are life-rafts, setting these memories adrift from their parent consciousness: a perhaps pointless migration but their only alternative to extinction with it.

The wider context of these early memories I have to supply, of course, like the language in which they are expressed, retrospectively. It was the suburban townships scattered along the muddy estuaries and inlets lying on both sides of Plymouth Sound. I was born, as a gamble, in 1935; the desirability of my conception was apparently a matter of debate. My mother was small and supposedly frail. It was feared that a pregnancy would be dangerous. Many years later, as I walked with my father past what had been our doctor's surgery in Exeter, he pointed to a downstairs window and said "It was in that room that your existence was decided on". I find this a consoling thought. The chances of a verdict in my favour seem to have been initially no more than even, perhaps less. Not odds, anyway, that one would want from the jury room if on trial for one's life. Having won that first play, every critical moment thereafter diminishes in importance as the pile of chips I have left to stake dwindles.

I was born not in Devon or Cornwall, which were to be my homes for the first twenty years of my life, but in Southsea, where my father's job briefly took him. My parents returned to Devon shortly afterwards. My father was at that time unenthusiastically selling insurance, but by the time I knew him he was a commercial traveller in Shredded Wheat, which he remained until the nineteen-sixties: for the last ten years of his working life he was a verger in Eton College Chapel. The chief effects on me of my father's occupation were that we had a car before and after the war and that I ate a great deal of Shredded Wheat. After the war I sometimes used to travel around with him to call on small grocers' shops in the back streets of Exeter and Plymouth and in the towns of the South Devon coast, Dawlish, Paignton, Teignmouth, and the inland towns, Newton Abbott, Ashburton, Chagford, Crediton and Okehampton. But the first five years of my life were divided between the eastern, Devonian side of Plymouth Sound, where I lived with my parents at Plymstock, and the western, Cornish side, at Saltash, where my parents had been brought up and three of my grandparents were still living. The connection with Plymstock ceased at the outbreak of war, when my

father, who was already in the Auxiliary Air Force, was called up, and my mother and I moved to my grandmother's house in Saltash. Although we moved to Exeter after the air raids on Plymouth began in the summer of 1940, Saltash remained, through the grandparental connection, an intermittent part of my life throughout my childhood; it was there that I attended my first school in 1940.

The Cornish side, Torpoint, the river Tamar and the Royal Albert railway bridge, Saltash itself, and later, further down into Cornwall, St. Germans, where a great uncle by marriage kept the pub, is therefore far more vivid to me than Plymstock. Memories of the Devon side—I am tempted to speak of "the Plymstock Way" and "the Saltash Way" - are more isolated and belong mostly to my earliest years; a collage of impressions, jerkily cut, without storyline, from a ribbon of consciousness whose continuities are now lost to me or supplied only from hearsay and subsequent knowledge: finding myself amid the shrill din and packed, floppy bodies of the childrens' bathing pool at Tynside on Plymouth Hoe, which was like finding oneself a member of a colony of seals while being still unsure whether one was one; the circular inlet at Hooe, shaped like a lake but abandoned at each ebb tide to the mud and the sea-birds, where I was (I am told) taken for walks in my pram at the age of three. I must have supposed virtually the whole world to be like Plymstock, a recent suburban mushroom imposed on an undistinguished village. Smaller, older, more interesting than Plymstock along the Devon side, and, so far as I was concerned, with more interesting inhabitants, was the village of Turnchapel. This was the home of my nanny or minder, she of the pram walks to Hooe, a dark-haired girl called Bella, who took me sometimes to her parent's house. Her father was a tall, thin, jolly man with a strong Devonian accent who used to take me on his shoulder. He must have been in the naval reserve, because he died very early in the war in the sinking of the carrier Courageous. His name is on the naval war memorial on Plymouth Hoe. His wife was fat, cheerful, and raucous; it was through her that I first discovered the pleasures of imitation of accent and idiom. I loved and imitated her expletives when playing cards: Geddoom! ("away with you!") and Bugger! Bella had two younger sisters, a dark one and a fair one like the queens in Swan Lake, always known by their full names, Maureen Olive and Joy Annie. Their house, Hyde House, was, and I believe is, a substantial old stone one facing the tiny harbour, much more solid and impressive than my parent's flimsy house. The Turnchapel family would sit in a large bare white room—perhaps a whitewashed basement for I remember stone steps down to it—where cards were played; they called

knaves jacks, and so did we.

My grandmother's first house in Saltash, bombed in 1940 or 41, was also extensively whitewashed, in the scullery and on the outside walls. I have a photograph of myself, in nappies bulky enough to be fashionable at the court of James I, playing there with the outside tap against a whitewashed rough slate wall.

Turnchapel was approached from Plymouth to avoid a circuitous road, across the Cattewater by a small boat. It was not, like the Saltash and Torpoint ferries, a ponderous, car-carrying affair of clanking chains and sedate motion, but a real little steamer. On at least one occasion, which caused me pure delight and which still recurs to me pleasantly in dreams, the Sound was rough and we sat pitching in the small stuffy cabin while the green water rose alternately above the portholes on each side. Climbing up to the lantern of the old Smeaton lighthouse on Plymouth Hoe, on the other hand, caused me only an acute vertigo which also continues to haunt me and which, in similar situations, has only grown worse with the years, reaching its appalling climax on a road in the Sierra Nevada in 1989 when I had to give up the car wheel to my wife and lie in the passenger seat with my head below the level of the window and my eyes closed. The greatest delight of Plymouth Hoe, however, was looking down at the Sunderland Flying Boats from the Mountbatten Flying Boat Station as they landed and took off on the water, each with its expanding wake from fuselage and floats. They were so toylike that I felt I could have reached down and plucked them from the water and brought them down again. On one occasion, I remember, there was a particularly exhilarating profusion of flying boats, flags, marine bands and people. and on my asking the reason I was told that it was 'Empire Day'. It must have been 1939. I had no idea what "Empire" meant apart from this manifestation, but if this was it I was for it. I had earlier been ambivalent about bands. The Saltash Working Men's Club Band (described to me, for some reason, as "Mr Mayor's Band") had reduced me to a panic comparable only to the similar effects of a steamroller and the company of my great uncle Trethowen, of whom more later. Either by 1939 I was more mature or the open spaces of the Hoe were more suitable to silver bands than the narrow streets of Saltash.

Virtually my only other memory of the Plymstock years is of the outbreak of war itself; not of Mr Chamberlain's "No such undertaking has been received", but of two domestic episodes, I do not know whether on the same day or not. The first is of a hot day, a picnic and the sound of a wood-pigeon among the trees, and my mother's distress on our return

home because my father had received his call-up papers. The second is of my father standing by my bed for the first time in RAF uniform, having left earlier in the day to join up and having been returned home immediately in an anti-climax typical I suppose of the Phoney War, because no one knew what to do with him.

My only other Plymstock memories—I am sure they date from Plymstock—are of books. I was already a snobbish bibliophile before I could read. Colouring books I had, and a book of nursery rhymes, but I was fully aware, and proud, of the fact that I had one real book, with hard covers and no pictures. I remember it fairly well. Its cover was an undistinguished reddish brown and its austerity was the source of my snobbish pride, because I recognised in it the glamorous dullness of adult reading—though I could not yet read it. It was a book of poems for children: *How They Brought the Good News*, *The Pied Piper* and Thomas Hood's *I remember*, *I remember*, which my father read to me. The book of nursery rhymes had illustrations, which I coloured with fat, waxy, strong-smelling crayons and with a box of paints. I was an incompetent colourist whose cakes of paint turned almost immediately into khaki wells. Of the nursery rhymes and their illustrations I remember chiefly, for some reason, the heavily political ones: *The Lion and the Unicorn*, *Taffy was a Welshman*, *Taffy was a thief* (picture of a furtive and shabby-looking Welshman in a tall hat sneaking away with a leg of beef) and *Hark*, *hark*, *the dogs do bark*, *the beggars are coming to town*. The last I found delightfully thrilling and ominous. I imbibed no anti-Welsh prejudices, but I did I think at that point identify with the citizenry rather than the beggars, bourgeoisie rather than jacquerie. It was a reasonable preference in a son of Plymstock, though I was also excitedly pleased that the beggars were coming, so perhaps I felt that Plymstock really deserved its doom. The dogs were soon to be replaced by air-raid sirens.

2
A Partly Cornish Childhood

Hitler's invasion of Poland drove my parents and me a few miles in the opposite direction, westwards across Plymouth Sound and the river Tamar into Cornwall. My father was sent to raise and lower barrage balloons on a promontory at Antony Passage, outside Torpoint; my mother, impoverished by my father's call-up, returned by day to her old job as a typist at the Sun Insurance Office in Plymouth; where my paternal grandfather was branch manager, and she and I went to live in Saltash with my maternal, Vosper, grandmother. I went once or twice to the dark office where my mother and grandfather worked in George Street, Plymouth, with its frosted glass doors with names over them, its clanging iron lift and the massive black typewriters on which my mother's colleagues taught me to make rows of soldiers, with large and small "O's for heads and bodies and double quotation marks for legs and hats. The office was destroyed by bombing, along with most of George Street, in I think 1941.

The move from Plymstock to Saltash, as I came consciously to see much later but in some sense to register at the time, was a move in time as well as in space. Plymstock was I think as utterly of its time as any Corbusier city, at least in the part of it that I knew. The spirit of the age, more or less unhampered by the past, had made its abode there in bungalows and homes for heroes, in pebble-dash and light, noisy-handled interior doors, which closed with a flimsy thud; in art deco tea services and chromium clocks, cigarette lighters and standard lamps. I also remember curious leather straps, with metal ashtrays in the middle like rosettes and weights to hold the straps down at each end, laid across the bulky arms of easy chairs. My parents, it must be remembered, were still fairly newly married, clients of the big Plymouth department stores, Dingles and John Yeos, for their furnishings; later my mother became a frequenter of antique and junk shops and all became changed. One thing

which clearly did not change greatly was the contents of the bookshelves, much as I came to know them later: Hugh Walpole, J. B. Priestley, *The Forsyte Saga* and *Plays for Today*. There must also have been at one time, though I never saw it, the work or works of the distant mentor of my early existence, the authority on modern baby care, Dr Truby King. One was fed at set hours, timed to the minute, and never picked up or fed on demand. I have no conscious recollection of this regime, but I think I see its effects in a sense, which has remained with me, of the futility of protest, which sets me apart from my younger colleagues and pupils, the importunate children of Dr Benjamin Spock.

Saltash was not merely the home of an older generation of my family; it was itself linked then to Plymouth only by Brunel's great Royal Albert railway bridge (it was separated rather than linked by the laborious chunkings of the Saltash car-ferry); and despite the narrowness of the dividing stretch of water, remained intensely Victorian and Cornish. The sight of Brunel's bridge dominated the town, like the Bay Bridge in San Francisco on a smaller scale. Much still revolved around the Wesleyan Chapel. Even the Salvation Army was oddly woven into the history of our family. In the terraced houses occupied by my grandmother and her sister, my aunt Edith, there were dark passages leading to crowded kitchens with ranges and coppers and whitewashed sculleries beyond. Stained glass panels in inner front doors gleamed bloodily in sunlight and front doors themselves were guarded by striped blinds. In empty, immaculate, musty front rooms upright pianos twanged hollowly when the yellow keys were touched. Highland cattle on the walls peered apprehensively among deep purple hills, and red cardinals and huntsmen, their backs to roaring fires, held up glasses of wine; later I developed the theory that the pictures were employed to drink wine, vicariously for the inhabitants, since the only wine actually drunk was ginger wine at Christmas. Chinacats and seaside souvenirs belonged on kitchen mantelpieces, while in silent dining rooms their grander relations, rearing bronze horses, were held with difficulty by straining naked grooms. Dining room tables were covered with tasselled plush, kitchen ones with oilskin. On the latter, stained steel knives required cleaning with knife powder, a surprisingly enjoyable activity in moderation. Baths were taken in the kitchen, in a portable aluminium tub; lavatories were external and—a far greater horror—unlit. There was no running water, much less hot water, upstairs, so the jugs and bowls which stood on marble-topped washstands in the bedrooms were still essential items. Milk was delivered in churns, left in the hedges by farmers, collected by the milkman with horse and cart, and ladled into

jugs on doorsteps; the milk itself was unpasteurised; my grandmother would simmer it for hours in a huge saucepan, until, when it was cool, a thick layer of crusty cream could be skimmed off. I did not care for the skimmed milk itself, with its globules of yellow fat floating on the surface, but the cream was a golden bonus of Saltash. Even some years after the war, my grandmother's house had no electric light and oil lamps were lit and carried up at bedtime with hot-water bottles and chamber pots. Bookshelves carried unread sets of Dickens and records of late-Victorian philanthropy: General Booth and Lax of Poplar.

Sounds and smells seemed more vivid in Saltash: dry rot; the paraffin and hot metal of oil lamps; urine; saffron and seed cake. Cornish pasties and large fruit pies were cooked, filling the house with smells of warm cake and pastry. As one lay in bed at night the medley of sounds became symphonic; the habitual whoop, whoop and occasional foghorns from the warships in Plymouth Sound mingled with the mooing of cows from the nearby fields, the squeaking and jingling of carriages coupling in Saltash station, the sharp bellowings and hissings of the engines and the distant whistle along the coast as they approached the first tunnel on their way down into Cornwall. Drunken singing in the streets around my grandmother's house when the pubs turned out added the vocal part to the music of the Saltash night; I wish I could remember what they sang.

Saltash is now, since the building of the road bridge, merely a suburb of Plymouth. Then the river Tamar drew a line between Victorian England, created by the railway, and post-First World War England, created by the internal combustion engine. The ferry which laboriously carried the cars across the Tamar could add three-quarters of an hour to a journey. Painted orange, with its black funnel and rusty iron chain, it looked as though it as well as the bridge could have been the work of Brunel; actually the prototype was built in 1891. For some reason its Torpoint cousin kept its battleship-grey paint even after the war. Like some colonial hill station, Saltash was stratified socially as well as topographically by height above sea level. Its divisions were upper, middle and low, and like all topographies of social class the division was also historical. There was the Saltash of the river, of the railway, and of the open road. The later nineteenth-century, middle-level, lower middle-class Saltash—ours—clustered in terraced streets behind the Fore Street and above the station. Bourgeois Saltash—my Burrow grandparents—ran in a thin ribbon, along the ridge from the top of the Fore Street with views of the upper Tamar at the back. There were also a few streets lower down of substantial stucco houses of professional men, in one of

which lurked our dentist, who worked his drill with a pedal. Below the station and the parish church, cut off from the rest by the steepness of the hill, was the old riparian Saltash, known as the Waterside and spoken of by my grandmother with a mixture of pity and horror, as a place of poverty, drunken brawling, diphtheria, scarlet fever and sin. Civilization ended where the gradient of the hill sharpened; below was the Weald to the Downland folk, the Wild Wood to the River Bankers. I have been to it only two or three times; the chief street, Tamar Street, is approached, like a ghetto, through an arch. There is a picture of it in Pevsners' Cornwall. It became infested later with boutiques and restaurants. In my childhood its archway, its ragged children, and my grandmother's words, gave it an air of inscrutability and even menace, the latter enhanced by the immense pier of Brunel's bridge rising immediately above it.

From the end of the bridge itself the railway line curved gracefully into Saltash station, from which one could watch the trains emerging and disappearing under the great steel arch of the superstructure with its golden inscription 'I. K. Brunel 1851'. It is no exaggeration to say that the most prominent public object in Saltash is a date. People, including my parents before their marriage, commuted across it to the offices of Plymouth and to Devonport dockyard. My parents had both worked in the Sun Insurance office in Plymouth. Almost incredibly they walked to Millbay station each lunch-time, took the train back to Saltash, ate a hurried cooked lunch at home, and then returned to work again.

The station was both historically and in my own mind the centre of my Saltash, as the parish church or cathedral might have been in another town. The parallel is exact, for I gave it an attention not far short of worship and it had its own mysterious rites and liturgy. To cross the bridge the engine driver, or perhaps the fireman, swung himself out over the footplate to take from a porter on the platform a metal hoop, which was returned in due course by the next train to come across from Devon. Whether the porter was a specially designated and ritually qualified official in his own right (the Hoopmaster) or whether any porter would do I never discovered. The whole process seemed comradely, graciously formal and somehow reassuring in its symmetry. Better still. however, were the occasions when the engine was watered. A metal arm carried a dangling leather hose from a water tank to the engine, where it was inserted into the hole on top of the boiler by the fireman. The hissing and steam when the inevitable spillage hit the hot metal, and the incontinent splashing of the surplus on to the platform as the drooping hose was withdrawn, its mission accomplished, were both deeply

satisfying. These rituals inoculated me forever against the inanity of mere train-spotting. It was gratifying too, to see how the engine after its servicing seemed invigorated, lurching off with hoarse, vigorous bellowings on its way to the first of the Cornish tunnels.

My grandmother had in succession two houses in Saltash—three if one counts after the war. She left the first on the outbreak of war, fortunately as it proved, for it was destroyed by a bomb. The second, which I chiefly remember, number 2 Park Terrace, was also bombed, just after we left it, in 1941 but only by a firebomb, and she was able to get out. It was a typical late-Victorian terraced house of a kind I have always felt at home in. I do have faint memories of the earlier house, which was older, built of stone and standing actually on the Fore Street, at the top on the right. It was from there that I experienced Mr Mayor's band and the steamroller. My recollections concern the street outside, or, more accurately, the pavement, rather than the house itself. It stood next to a butcher's shop belonging to Mr Eggins, ("Eggins, Butcher") which was a forbidding cavern of hanging corpses, brownish red and purple, with yellow fat, peopled by jolly men in blood-spattered white aprons with bandaged fingers, who noisily sharpened knives, brought choppers down on blocks and occasionally sang. I never went in but remained, fascinated, outside this house of cheerful death, which spread itself on to the pavement in the form of blood-speckled sawdust which was periodically sloshed into the gutter with bucket and broom. I shared the pavement with Mr Eggins' dog, a white spaniel with brown spots (everything about the place was speckled or dappled) which lay with its chin on its paws, its muzzle and floppy ears lightly dusted with sawdust, rolling its red-rimmed eyes with an expression of the most utter despair I have ever seen in any living creature.

I took walks out of Saltash, chiefly, I think, with my Burrow (and only) grandfather, of whom I shall say more later. We went more than once to the mysteriously silent inlet and hamlet of Forder, with its mudflat and great railway viaduct. Though people lived there it always seemed utterly deserted, the inhabitants proclaiming themselves only by smoke from chimneys, and one felt an intruder. I remember once the extraordinary effect of someone hammering, on a boat presumably, as the noise echoed around the coombe. We climbed the hill, too, to the Norman keep of Trematon Castle, where my great-great aunt Bessie (aunt only by marriage; her name was Ough) had been in service, working her way up to housekeeper, though she had retired by this time. She came to live with us for a while in Exeter, in the early 'forties.

On my walks, often up what seemed daunting hills, with my grand-

father, I remained relatively indifferent to wild flowers, butterflies and the life of the hedgerows, though I remember them as plentiful. What really attracted me was horse troughs: things like ancient sarcophagi, gouged, heaven knows how, out of massive stone slabs, with a motto and sometimes the name of a donor incised in lead on the side. Unlike the watering of steam engines, it was the objects themselves, not their function that fascinated me; I only once saw a horse drink from one. I have often thought that I should like to be commemorated by a horse trough, but unfortunately technology has made them redundant; one can hardly endow a petrol pump.

At the top of Saltash Fore Street there is a fork, known as the Double Lamps; my father and I saw the actual double lamps destroyed, by a fire engine which accidentally collided with them and fell on its side with a great flash. The upper road leads to the Recreation Ground and to the house of my Burrow grandparents. The lower one dips down into the hollow of Cowdray hill, not built up but then a hiatus of market gardens and open country, before climbing again to the hamlet of Cross Park and the house occupied by my maternal grandmother's sister, my great aunt Edith. Cross Park has a narrow main street of two identical nineteenth-century terraces of small houses, some two dozen in all. Why it is there I have never understood because when built it must have stood in open country, as it still virtually did in my childhood, like a tiny fragment broken off from a mining village in South Wales or the Mendips. It is called Valletort Terrace and my great aunt lived at number six (Patreida), with two daughters and my great uncle Trethowen,- always known as "Tre" (to which, through ignorance, I always mentally added a second "e") . He had worked his way up in the navy through Petty Officer to second lieutenant, and had retired after the First World War, in which he had served on the battleship Iron Duke at the battle of Jutland. He had done, it appeared, nothing since except sit at the kitchen table accompanied by a parrot, a souvenir of some foreign station, and a bulldog, Ben. They formed in my mind a terrible and at times almost indistinguishable trio, particularly my uncle and Ben. Uncle Tree was very fat and moved slowly and wheezingly. He had a heavy-jowled face with protruding, bloodshot eyes with heavy pouches under them. Mostly he was silent, but occasionally he growled, with startling suddenness, usually, though not invariably, at the dog. He also belched. Ben, with much the same habits and physical attributes, copied him in all these things except the last, which he did not do. Most of the time they sat together, he at my uncle's feet under the kitchen table, wheezing antiphonally, though in Ben's case with the complication

of a snuffle. Occasionally Ben, who was the more active of the two, would get to his feet and pad heavily across the kitchen. This seemed to irritate my uncle, rather, I suppose, as I am now irritated by joggers, because he would growl at him with startling vehemence to lie down. The parrot was grey, shabby, morose and linguistically retarded. I suppose no parrot owned by uncle Tree could be expected to be a graceful conversationalist but I always wondered why it had not learned at least to say "lie down!". Of the three I am now sure that it was the only one who was actually malevolent, my uncle and Ben being fundamentally goodhearted specimens of their kind, but it was hard for me, at approximately five years old, to appreciate this. I loved my delightful, nervously chattering, distracted aunt Edie, but when my aunt twittered and fluttered about, Ben panted and rumbled, my uncle growled at him and the parrot shifted menacingly from one foot to the other on the clothes line stretched across the kitchen and squawked, it was difficult, as American war-novelists used to say, to keep a tight asshole.

Setting aside for the moment the other fork at the Double Lamps crossroads, which led to my Burrow grandparents and through them to Birmingham and the West Midlands from which they and their ancestors had come, by turning left at Cross Park on leaving my aunt Edie's and walking down the narrow, high-hedged lane, one came to Weard camp, overlooking Plymouth Sound from the western end, and looking across Antony Passage towards Torpoint, where my father was stationed at the beginning of the war. In the foreground, particularly immediately after the war, there was often the great bulk of a battleship, or even two side by side, with tiny figures on the decks, with washing hung out to dry, and sometimes hammering and thumping resounding eerily across the water. In 1944, and for long after, the river was covered with long lines of khaki invasion barges, four or more abreast. Weard (which I thought of for years, not inappropriately, as Weird) was known as a camp because it had been a convalescent camp for wounded soldiers after the First World War. My grandfather had been there for a while in his blue convalescent's uniform and my father remembered visiting him there. In 1940, as one approached through a gate and past a large burnt-out farmhouse, there were, sloping down the hill towards the water (which it was impossible to reach) the overgrown roofless lower walls and concrete foundations of the soldiers' huts. Why they had decayed so quickly—whether they had been deliberately half-demolished—I do not know. As it was, they were as much a ruin as a Roman fort. We played with a tennis ball on the flat, concrete foundations and retrieved it from among the profuse brambles overhung with buddleia. The site is now a

housing estate and the lane to Weard from Cross Park, then sprouting dock leaves and milk churns and butterflies, is now a busy road.

3
A Sense of the Past

Saltash brought me two things from which my life in Plymstock had been almost wholly exempt even had I been old enough to notice them. The first was a sense of the past (though the statue of Sir Francis Drake on Plymouth Hoe, oddly dressed and sword-begirt, also contributed something; we did not dress like that in Plymstock). The second was religion. I could not, of course, have said that my grandmother's house was late-Victorian while my parents was contemporary, but in the historically-layered world of Saltash, and through my acquaintance with an older generation, born around 1880, with full adult memories of Queen Victoria's reign, and for whom the First War only two decades before was still the dominant memory of their lives, I began to develop a sense of social time. There was family folklore - my great-great grandfather was alleged to have driven a horse and cart across the Royal Albert Bridge when it was completed in 1851. The people among whom I was now living had memories which stretched back sixty years, and they used them freely and with mythic force. Behind my visible grandparents lay their own parents and grandparents, of whom they would sometimes talk as of giants who had walked the earth: my grandmother's father, for example, whose name was Vosper: a butcher and grazier, eventually bankrupt, who begot thirteen children on my greatgrandmother which infant mortality weeded out, by adulthood to four daughters and one son, whom he horsewhipped in moments of annoyance, a feat my grandmother and aunt spoke of with much hilarity, perhaps because he had paid them the compliment of treating them like sons. He had grown so enormously fat that a semi-circular piece had had to be cut from the dining table. He had been dropped out of his coffin over the banuisters by the undertakers on his final journey downstairs. There were photographs too; great-grandfather, bearded and stern; great-grandmother, hard of eye and pursed of lips, in a blackcap. Wistful-

looking, sepia-coloured aunts and cousins had died of something called TB. And then the Great War: the little satin cards woven with the flags of the allied nations by soldiers in hospital; the standard issue medals given to my grandmother's dead husband whom I was taught to speak of as Grandad though he was not; the photographs of young men in puttees, with brass-buttoned tunics; one in particular, of a milling crowd of such young men, thin or chubby-faced, all smiling under flat peaked caps with the horn badge of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, marching with shouldered rifles down the hill to Saltash station, off to 'the Front'. My grandmother was in the picture too, wearing a large straw hat and a grim expression. 'France' was where one went to get wounds, trench feet, duodenal ulcers, or not to return from.

Developing a sense of the past was like putting on a pair of spectacles by virtue of which things around me acquired gradually a sharper definition and a relation to each other, and to myself; they began imperceptibly to stand out, as it were, in three dimensions, and in doing so to make clearer my own place in the world. The other educative experience to which Saltash exposed me for the first time, religion, remained, on the contrary, entirely two-dimensional, unconnected with myself, and completely baffling. It was mysterious not in the sense of awesome but in the sense of simply inexplicably puzzling.

Religion was represented by the Saltash Wesley Chapel, destroyed by enemy action, to my grim pleasure, in 1942. It was an oddity of my family that although all my grandparents were Wesleyans my parents had become Anglicans. They had made no attempt that I know of to take me to Plymstock or Saltash parish churches. My introduction to Christianity was therefore Saltash Wesley Chapel, and I was taken there, a cheerful heathen, I suppose in the summer of I 940, by my Burrow grandfather, who was a Chapel elder or trustee or whatever notable Methodists are. Nothing had prepared me for the experience. Saltash Chapel was large and well-filled. Methodists make a lot of noise. It was by far the largest indoor gathering I had ever been in. We sat in the gallery; I am frightened of heights. Incomprehensibly, as a large red-faced, bald man came in below, we all stood; as incomprehensibly we sat down. Most amazingly of all, the several hundred apparently orderly human beings around me suddenly stood up again and began to sing loudly in unison. Then they sat down again, the red-faced man disappeared into the bottom of a small wooden tower, reappeared on a shelf at the top and became volubly angry with us. I could not see what we had done amiss apart from the singing, in which he had joined. Eventually he allowed us to stand up and sing again and we were free to go. I

came to realise that the behaviour of adults, which hitherto I had found generally stable, sensible and even useful, contained bizarre possibilities beyond my imagination.

The only comparable, earlier experience had occurred in Plymstock. when my mother took me (Bella being presumably unavailable), she has since told me, to a meeting of the Plymstock cell or chapter of the Townswomen's Guild. We sat in a room in rows, I and an assortment of Plymstock Townswomen. A woman stood up and addressed us, while I no doubt swung my legs, studied my sandal straps and wished myself somewhere else. Then they all stood. Then they sang. Golly they sang! Soprano, mezzo, alto and contralto, they called, these Townswomen, for their bow of burning gold and their arrows of desire.

To these two episodes I trace the beginnings of a critical sense despite my generally acquiescent and fatalistic, and towards my parents affectionate and trusting, disposition. Such things clearly should not be, and adults, equally clearly, despite their generally smooth manners, were actually capable of anything. It was like Freud discovering the Unconscious or Nietzsche uncovering the Dionysiac roots of our collective life. Mv own ritual tastes were Apollonian, or possibly Anglican, entirely satisfied by the rites of passage and the lustrations so gracefully conducted by the Great Western Railway on Saltash station. The orgiastic revels of Townswomen and Wesleyans seemed by comparison raucous, barbaric and meaningless.

Having made my discovery of my liturgical fastidiousness I went on, possibly the same afternoon, to discover my theological agnosticism, when my grandfather, not yet appeased, took me to Sunday School. Children sat around in a circle while a young woman in a feathered hat read us the story of Abraham and Isaac. It was new to me. Insofar as it meant anything it strongly reinforced my newly acquired sense of the unpredictability of adult behaviour. No one seemed to come out of it well. I think I felt about Abraham much as the resentful male members of his household must have done when he invented mass circumcision: a considerable concern about what God might instruct him to do next. I did not, of course, know the latter story, so I was spared the extra spasm of Oedipal alarm it would undoubtedly have caused me.

The woman then distributed paper and pencils and told us to draw a picture of the story. I had some notion of what Abraham and Isaac might look like. A ram was wholly unknown to me. Likewise a thicket; likewise God. This seemed to be an insuperable obstacle to the progress of my religious education. I cannot draw in any case; drawing rams in thickets was as much beyond me as drawing the Albert Memorial. My fellow

catechumens turned in, in due course, variously competent renderings of fierce old men, anxious small boys, God and a diversity of animals. I returned a blank sheet of paper. Instead of praising my mystical insight - dessication of the world of sense, evacuation of the world of fancy and commendable freedom from anthropomorphism - the woman got annoyed with me and said I had not tried. I decided I did not like religion, and have remained of the same mind since.

The following Sunday, like Lucifer, I rebelled seriously for the first time and refused to go to Chapel or Sunday School, and by kicking, screaming and shutting myself in the lavatory, prevailed. My religious education was suspended. I was told that Grandad was disappointed. I was grieved, for I loved him, but obdurate. At five I seem now to have been a kind of untutored Voltairean. Later, under the influence of my mother and two Catholic schoolfriends, though I never took to collective worship, I established for a while a cult of a handful of private fetishes, including, I remember, a pleasantly highly-coloured statue of my patron, Saint John - a dressy apostle, according to the manufacturers - and a gilt crucifix of my mother's which I took with me into the air-raid shelter. Eventually and perhaps ungratefully, since they seem to have been efficacious in diverting sticks of bombs to other, unprovided houses, I put them away with other toys of which I had become ashamed and forgot about them.

It is unfair that my Burrow grandfather should have entered my story as a kind of Charlemagne or F erdinand of Aragon, an iron-handed converter of the heathen, for there was much in him that was estimable and though I was never as close to my Burrow grandparents as to my Vosper grandma Amy, with whom we lived. I was fond of him and he was otherwise a benign influence in my life. The fork at the Double Lamps led, as I have explained, respectively to my Vosper aunt Edie's house of bizarre horrors and to the ugly, pebble-dashed detached house with decoratively applied half-timbering over the facade, which my Burrow grandparents had had built for themselves. It was called 'The Tors', though 'Tor View' would have been more appropriate. To get from the former to the latter it was not necessary to retrace one's steps to Double Lamps. One could cut across the cricket field, at the edge of which stood the camouflaged concrete tower, demolished after the war, at the top of which my uncle Tree, doing something for the first time for twenty years - these were stirring times - sat in a perspex dome spotting for the Observer Corps. Inside my grandparents house were two splendid rooms, one at each end of the house, respectively the dining room and drawing room. Each was elaborately furnished, according to its

kind, in opulent Edwardian fashion (my father subsequently found the bills from the Birmingham furniture stores, dating from their marriage, which my grandfather had kept). Each had a fine window at the back with a superb view of the upper Tamar - one of the best views in that part of the world. These rooms were used, and fires lit in them, on Christmas Day and Boxing Day. The rest of the year the family lived in a poky breakfast room at the front of the house with a smouldering fire in a small ugly grate and a view through the window of a tall hedge eight feet or so away; during the war part of the space was filled by the air-raid shelter.

My grandfather was a successful clerk, an industrious apprentice, who had risen from high stools and ledgers (described in his own manuscript autobiography) in Birmingham in the late eighteen nineties, selling insurance policies around the lanes of East Cornwall from a bicycle, to the manager's chair at the Sun Office in Plymouth. Exams had been passed, duties assiduously attended to, superiors favourably impressed. He had not kept a diary, though he wrote a short autobiography, but he kept account books, all of which my father inherited, in which, every day of his adult life, he entered his small expenditures: 'Birdseed 2d', 'Lavatory 1d' . It is sometimes possible to track him across Plymouth, from shop to shop and sometimes, presumably at lunchtime, to the Hoe (Pier 6d). The entry for the day of my father's birth in I908 reads 'Stout for nurse, 2S' One story, told by him to my father in complete seriousness, illustrates his character. As a Methodist he was a lifelong teetotaller; he had signed the pledge when young, and kept it. But there was an exception. In the trenches in France he had been tempted, on account of the cold of the morning stand-to, he explained, by the morning rum ration. He had fallen, and began to take it. In due course his conscience began to trouble him. Hot because of the breach of his pledge; he recognised that the circumstances were unusual and there were extenuating circumstances. He was troubled as a Life Insurance man. He held a life policy at a special rate, granted by the company because he was a teetotaller. He was no longer, at least temporarily, a teetotaller, and was no longer entitled to the special rate. Some time, it seems, during the second battle of Ypres, he sat in his dugout in the salient, or perhaps in a rest camp when temporarily out of the line, and wrote a confession to the Insurance Company explaining that he was reducing his life-expectancy by drinking rum and should be charged the drinkers full rate. In due course he received their reply (which unfortunately and uncharacteristically he failed to keep) thanking him for his honesty and informing him that the policy had been amended

accordingly. Mr Pooter, dug in on the plain of Armageddon, had remained true to himself.

His autobiography bears out his unfailing cheerfulness and perhaps his poverty of expectation. Everyone, it seems, was nice to him, or else he failed to notice that they were not: office managers, head clerks, officers' NCOs, comrades - all were kind, honourable men. I am sorry he seems not to have met any German soldiers socially during the war; they would undoubtedly have been very nice to him too. His harshest comment on life in the trenches was that it was often cold; blankets were inadequate and one's feet became numb. He was, it seems, a good soldier, according to a man my father met who had served with him. "Your father loved the Lewis gun" was his surprising comment on the gentlest of men, who was invariably acquiescent, at least overtly, to my grandmother, though capable of dumb disobedience. It was bad luck that when eventually, after two years in the trenches, he received the serious wound which put him in hospital for a further two years in England, it should have been from shrapnel in the buttocks; he had, apparently, been carrying munitions boxes up to the line and was returning for more.

My own recollection of him is above all of a man contented with little (my mother found him a trying boss in the Sun Office because he apparently expected everyone else to be the same). He lived, it seemed contentedly, on Woodbine cigarettes and the curled, stale slices of bread and glasses of cold milk which, after my grandmother resigned from housekeeping in the year Hitler invaded Russia, was all the household afforded. His enthusiasm when once we found that the bread and butter left for him contained ham was immoderate. He lived much out of the house, at Toe H, at cricket or bowls, and walked indefatigably the roads around Saltash. About the house he sang hymns in a good baritone. After his retirement, which he survived by twenty years, he bought no more clothes; he wore his last business suit, growing rustier with the years, a greasy old flat cap and equally greasy mackintosh. On one occasion, after fetching from a music shop in Plymouth the violin he played atrociously, which he had taken in to be re-strung, he was sheltering from the rain, with the violin case, in a doorway, when a passerby gave him a shilling. He was neither amused nor annoyed; merely baffled. My mother, who was very fond of him, developed in his later life a reluctance to be seen in public with him. He was best dressed, I think, in the uniform of the Home Guard, in which he was a sergeant (he had remained a private in the Great War). He loved books and I have some of his; the date and price of their purchase is often recorded

in his account books. My copy of Adam Bede has a plate recording the regular attendance of George Burrow at the Small Heath Men's Bible Class in 1871, but this must have been his father. The last years of my grandfather's life, in their undemanding, uncomplaining simplicity are now very attractive to me, an admiration my wife regards with alarm and disapproval. He was a small, rosy-faced, bent-shouldered, bucolic looking old man with a manner of slightly puzzled cheeriness. I resemble him greatly in appearance and inherited his lawn mower (its handle was tied on with rope).

My grandfather and grandmother came originally from Birmingham and retained their Midland accents through more than half a lifetime in Devon and Cornwall. My grandfather's family, the Burrows, had moved gradually, through the course of the nineteenth century, from Herefordshire through Worcestershire to end, late in the century, in my great-grandfather's corner grocer's shop at Deritend in Birmingham. The first member of the family of whom I know the name, was John Burrow, a farm bailiff in Herefordshire at the end of the eighteenth century. His name appears on the apprenticeship indentures of his son, my grandfather's great-grandfather, also John Burrow, who was apprenticed carpenter and wheelwright in I815. I have seen the document; it is chiefly a list of the things he must not do - more or less any leisure activity- during his seven years apprenticeship. This John Burrow was born in the parish of Saint John's, just across the Herefordshire border from Worcester, in 1799 and died in 1890. I have seen his gravestone and that of my great-great-great grandmother Ann, in the churchyard at Leigh Sinton, outside Worcester. The Wesleyan Chapel he himself had built around the middle of the century, and in which he preached as a lay preacher, is at Smith End Green. about a mile from Leigh Church. It is a handsome, squared mellow red-brick building, Georgian rather than Victorian. It was derelict when I saw it in 1978 but is now I believe refurbished as a dwelling. I have a photographic copy of the portrait of him which used to hang in the Chapel. He looks rather like Herbert Spencer: thin-lipped, sharp-eyed, and with a fringe of white beard. I can detect no resemblances.

John Burrow in the early nineteenth century made the obvious transition for the time and place, from wood to iron, and became a successful small manufacturer of agricultural implements. His prominence as lay preacher and manufacturer ensured a substantial obituary, inspired it seems by his sister, when he died in 1890, which is informative about his early life. After a neglected education and ungodly youth he was reclaimed, according to the sister, by her awful warning, rebuking his

passion for dancing: 'You are dancing your way to hell, John' . He experienced conversion as a Methodist, and became a self-taught Bible reader and lay preacher as well as a successful businessman. I have seen a photograph of him apparently around the eighteen-sixties, a patriarchal figure with a bigger beard than in the portrait, with his son, also John, a stocky, self-confident looking figure in gaiters and a cap. They are standing in front of a row of steam engines, one of which has inscribed clearly on the side 'John Burrow and Son'. Neither the engineering nor the entrepreneurial abilities, nor any money from the business, have descended from them.

The last has an explanation. Both John Burrow's wife Ann and the son predeceased him, the latter as a result of an accident with a circular saw, luridly described in the local newspaper. The old man married again; the occupation of his second wife is given as 'servant'. One sees it all clearly: the lonely widower, the coquettish servant, the last flare of the old Methodist's libido ... Damn! The son of the second marriage was sent to a public school. My own great grandfather, his grandson George, was merely set up in the grocer's shop in Deritend. I have one of his trade advertising bills, with a picture of a chinaman holding up a kind of shield saying 'Teas Genuine as Imported' and the name and address: *George Burrow, Tea and Coffee Merchant, 165 Deritend*. I think 'tea merchant' chiefly meant that he blended his own teas. There was a view in the family that he died of tannin poisoning.

Grocer George - he looks rather handsome, though very short, in my grandparent's wedding photograph - married Alice Wyon, my great grandmother, a daughter of the royal Mint (literally, for she was born there) where several generations of her family had been employed. The Wyons were a family of engravers and medallers, Huguenots by origin probably (the name sounds like a Germanisation of Guyon,) who had immigrated from the Rhineland in the reign of George II and established themselves in the service of the Mint. Alice Wyon's great-uncle, William Wyon, engraved for the Mint several of the profiles of Queen Victoria for the coinage. There were eight Wyons in the *Dictionary of National Biography* by 1900, all related and all engravers. Again it is a talent which has wholly missed my grandfather, my father, and myself. Alice Wyon, a very pretty woman in the photograph, was eccentric in later years; I never, unfortunately, knew her. She refused to admit her son, my grandfather, to her house for many years on the grounds that he was boring, though she would speak to him from an upstairs window. She collected her beer regularly in a jug from the jug and bottle entrance of the local pub and died alone, wrapped in newspaper.

My grandmother Blanche, known as Blan or Blannie, was a Miss Evans, daughter of a small Birmingham businessman. She bore a remarkable resemblance to that other Midland Miss Evans, George Eliot, though she had no particular quality of intellect or talent to back up a claim of kinship. Her father was my father's favourite grandfather, chiefly it seems because he was an habitual practical joker in the Edwardian vein. I think of him as something like Gowing in *The Diary of a Nobody*. My father describes one remarkable occasion on which he gave a spirited rendering of *Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road* in the bandstand in Northernhay Gardens, Exeter. He was also a considerable craftsman who made an ornate china cabinet which I now possess.

My grandmother did not inherit his jollity; perhaps she reacted against it. Like my grandfather, she can have bought no clothes in the latter part of her life because she was still appearing in the late nineteen-fifties in the flowered tea gowns fashionable in the 'twenties. Her clothes were less shabby than her husband's because she had given them a long rest. Some time around 1941, for no reason ever given, she failed to rise in the morning and as time passed it became understood that this state of affairs was to be permanent. She remained in her nightclothes and mostly lying in bed. My prevailing childhood memories of her, therefore, are chiefly of a face, in gold-rimmed spectacles, on a pillow, with a white sheet pulled up to the chin and framed by a brass bedstead. She too lived on curled bread and butter, strategically disposed on plates around the bedroom, and glasses of milk, which was obviously why she thought it the correct diet for my grandfather. Then, around 1946, as suddenly as she had withdrawn from the world and equally without explanation, she re-emerged into it, getting up one day and remaining dressed thereafter until bedtime.

Apart from her Oblomov complex, my grandmother's chief foible was religion. Brought up a Methodist, she had by the time of my birth become a Christian Scientist. During this phase of refusing to recognise the existence of physical illness she would become reasonably annoyed if her health were inquired after and less reasonably annoyed when it was not. She later moved on to an advanced form of Christian Science which seemed to function by correspondence only called Higher Thought. In the pre-Christian Science days she had apparently on one occasion, convinced that the end of the world was at hand, spent the night in the cupboard under the stairs. There, within her wooden walls she apparently felt better situated to endure the great day of His wrath while waiting to be cast up, a remnant, on some fiery shore. It was a useful preparation for the air-raids to come, when resort to the cupboard

became a normal and recommended precaution. She also caused some family alarm by inviting two nuns from the Catholic convent at the end of the lane (subsequently the old peoples home in which my other grandma, Amy, died) to tea. This was thought particularly eccentric. Tea at my grandmother's was still an occasion of ceremony. The daily maid (later substituted by a rednosed, live-in 'housekeeper' appropriately called Mrs Dewar) in black dress with white cap and apron would wheel a trolley into the dismal, threadbare little breakfast room. There was a silver tea service. complete with sugar tongs, bone china and paper doilies. Had I known them I would have murmured Roy Campbell's lines about the snaffle and the bridle, But where's the bloody horse?' for one could not help contrasting the tea itself with my grandma Amy's, where, with no more ceremony than a white cloth, there were the home-made saffron cake, fruit pies warm from the oven, and home-made clotted Cornish cream.

I was always glad when I was released from tea at my grandma Blannie's and was taken to see the sights by my grandfather. There were three. There was the miniature billiard table, on which we were all too seldom allowed to have a game. There was the cabinet of Chinese coins bequeathed by a great-uncle who, trained at the Mint, had entered the service of the Manchu and had lost his life, legend asserted, in the Boxer rising. I later inherited them and converted them into tins of Heinz baby food, for which at the time, our son Laurence had an insatiable need, by selling them for £25 at a dealers in Robert Adam Street.

The last treat was my grandfather's faithful violin; faithful because when willed to my cousin Hilary after his death it immediately disintegrated. I later learnt that my grandparents had been brought together by it, he having made regular calls at her father's house to give her violin lessons. Remembering my grandfather's playing, I can only put this down, admittedly with some difficulty, to an amorous subterfuge, like the music lesson in the *Barber of Seville*. Difficult though it is to think of my grandparents as Rosina and Almaviva, it is even more difficult to believe that any sane person could in full seriousness have engaged my grandfather to give anyone violin lessons. Certainly my grandmother, a good pianist herself, had no liking, musical or sentimental, for my grandfather's playing.

My father had two younger sisters, Marjorie and Mary. The former, whom I loved for her high spirits and sense of fun, had left home, but Mary, and later in the forties her husband Maurice, lived with my grandparents. After bearing my cousin Rosemary, when I was about seven, Mary developed an enlarged thymus gland which killed her at twenty-

six. Pale, languid and beautiful, softly spoken and almost entirely silent, her chief occupation, which she pursued compulsively, was combing her fine, pale blonde hair, which accentuated her resemblance to a mermaid. Her other occupation was twiddling the knobs of the wireless set, which, barred like a car radiator, stood on the floor to the height of a three year old child. I find that I still make an association, opaque to everyone else, between mermaids and nineteen- thirties wireless sets.

I always returned from visiting my other grandmother's to my grandma Amy's house with a sharp sense of difference. My mother's family was at least a rung down the class scale, but my impression of it was more favourable, being cosier, with better things to eat. I liked the narrow-terraced streets with walls on which one could stand or sit, grocers smelling of cheese, steps, and the clop of the milkman's horse. I liked the tiny front gardens and back doors into a lane; corner pubs smelling of beer; corner shops smelling of paraffin and cheese;.gossiping women on pavements. My grandma Amy was a widow. Her deceased husband was not my grandfather. No one except possibly my grandmother knew who my mother's father was. My grandmother was apparently the most wilful, the most energetically sought with a horsewhip, of the four surviving daughters of my Vosper grandfather, he of the heroic obesity and the posthumous cropper over the banisters. Finding herself pregnant she had disappeared. My mother was born in the Salvation Army hostel in Devonport; I have given to Salvationists in pubs ever since I have known this. My grandmother later returned with her child, who was not expected to live, to the parental home and went out to work in a laundry to support herself and my mother; given the low level of technology presumably involved it is I suppose correct to describe her as a washerwoman. The husband she acquired later, a carpenter, died shortly after I was born, of an ulcer always attributed to a late effect of life in the trenches in the Great War. My grandmother was Cornish on both sides, Vosper and Chubb, and had many relatives in Saltash and some further down in Cornwall; aunty Polly at Bollingey was a mythical figure in my childhood; cousin Ada at Goonhavern was visited, as I shall describe later - Goonhavern was the furthest west the Germans succeeded in driving my mother and myself during the war. All except my mother spoke in Cornish accents of greater or less intensity; my grandmother and aunt Edie spoke otherwise fairly standard English with an accent, but the others employed the local varieties of diction, notably 'be' for 'am' or 'are'. As I grew older I noticed in my grandmother occasional dialect words; I was particularly struck by 'cropy' (to squat), surely a version of the French 's'accroupir'. What

struck me, I think, even at the time, was the loudness of their voices; greetings, in particular, even indoors, were bellowed as though from a top-mast. My grandmother's speech still carried traces of the terrors of her youth; threats and warnings issued to her, I guess, as a fractious girl, re-surfaced as admonitions to herself. After small extravagances she would predict that she would die in the workhouse; absentmindedness or emotional stress brought warnings to herself of Bodmin Asylum. I grew up thinking of Bodmin as a place of grim incarceration. When I drove through it later in life there seemed no reason to revise this view. My grandmother was a passionate woman, generous, hospitable and vital, but also given to resentments, grim silences, possessiveness and rages. I saw little of these. I was her only grandchild as my mother was her only child. and she spoilt me. I am afraid I did not always reciprocate. I loved her but was often irritated by her inability, not shared by my mother, to adjust to my growing up. She is the only member of my family to whom I would wish, if it were possible, to make amends. I suspect she had a considerable fear of hell.

Two of my grandmother's relations stand out in my memory. One, of whom I have already spoken, Aunt Bessie Chubb, was not typical; she was quietly spoken and elegant, as befitted a housekeeper and associate of gentry. She was the oldest person I knew apart from her brother, Dick Chubb, who shook with Parkinson's disease. He drank tea out of a saucer. This was quite common, but no one else induced in onlookers the same acute anxiety as U nde Dick's shaking hand. He was, however, only a mute, trembling presence, while aunt Bess was a vivid one. She was I now realize older than any of the main belligerents in the war just begun: older than the French Republic, a united Germany or Italy or the Soviet Union. The Chubb family Bible gives her date of birth as r856. As a child she must have known old people who when young themselves, had heard the news of the execution of the king of France and feared invasion by Boney. When she was a girl the battleships in Plymouth Sound had begun to pour black smoke through their rigging but still carried lines of gun ports along their sides as their predecessors had done for centuries. The electors of Salt ash , the ten pound electors created by the r832 Reform Act, cast their votes openly on the hustings, presumably in the Fore Street in front of the hotel. Men and women dangled on the gallows outside Bodmin gaol. Then, of course, I knew only that Aunt Bess was impressively distinguished and dignified looking, dressed always in a long black or mauve satin dress to her ankles with lace and a cameo at the neck and a mass of silver hair piled on her head. She was, however a kind as well as spirited old lady whom I

remember playing blow-football with me on our dining-room table in Exeter with alacrity and the will to win. I have played blow football with someone alive before Palmerston was Prime Minister or Lincoln President.

Not a relative but another family member was an heirloom of my great-grandmothers. Flo or Flossie Couch, known to me as a child as auntie Torrie, an orphan, had been neglected as a child and developed rickets. She never grew beyond four foot. She had been rescued by the Salvation Army and acquired from them as a companion help for my great-grandmother. She never married but spoke to me once, holding back tears, of a fiance killed in the war, and showed me a photograph of a peakey-faced young man in uniform. She was childlike in her simplcity, easily alarmed and as easily amused, and devoted to children; she lived to see both mine. I was very fond of her. She was a member of the intimate family circle for over fifty years and died in the same old-people's home as my grandmother.

In saying that no one knew who my grandfather was I was slightly oversimplifying. No one knew, but my aunt Edie. who apart from my grandmother was perhaps best placed to guess, offered two candidates, both unnamed: an officer (I am suspicious of the officer - sergeant perhaps?) stationed at Crown Hill barracks in Plymouth or a Methodist minister who was subsequently, in her phrase, 'obliged to leave the ministry'. Since his identity is now beyond recall I am pleased to find him such a recognisable archetype, at least, as the faithless soldier or the disreputable preacher: Sergeant Troy or Angel Clare; a loss-adjuster or a panel-beater would have been harder to identify with. But which? Where should one put the chip: on the red or the black? Considering myself! am inclined to bet on the more histrionic and garrulous trade (the inscription under my Burrow great-great-great-grandfather's portrait, of which I have a rubbing, begins 'Local preacher and class leader' ... 'plus ca change') On the other hand thinking of my mother, of her sense of order, her intense Englishness, her acquired but one would have said inbred Anglicanism, which asserted itself against all odds. I am not so sure.

My mother was an oddity, either of nature or upbringing. Brought up in working-class Methodism, and with a schooling which ended (to her great sorrow) at thirteen, she gave the impression of the better (i.e. more humane and less bossy) kind of Anglican vicar's wife. In her, as in a Henry James character, good taste and the moral sense are closely (James would have shown dangerously) allied. She is not puritanical but she is fastidious. Brought up among narrow-minded, often raucous.

goodhearted people, she had a large indulgence for sinners but only a limited patience in her earlier years with what Yeats calls 'ignorant goodwill'. She must often in her youth have suffered from inept, presumptuous kindliness. The character which emerged was not hard; she was loving, soft-hearted and sociable, but also thin-skinned, not to snubs, of which I suspect she has suffered few and which merely amused her, but to over-familiarity. It is hard to think of a more un-Methodistical combination of qualities. Moreover, brought up among Cornish accents she grew up accentless. Its absence in her case must, it seems, have been her protest at the question mark where her father should have been, marking her sense of only partial belonging. She has told me that she modelled herself on a much-loved school mistress (she wanted to be a school teacher). If, as seems likely, some of my intonations and speech-patterns resemble my mother's I am probably echoing some long-dead Cornish Elementary School Headmistress, one of those late- Victorian and Edwardian single women who found, like Sue Bridehead, a vocation, independence and an income of sorts, through the Teacher's Training Colleges.

Whatever my mother's origins, the seed-bed of my own future existence was undoubtedly the Saltash Wesley Chapel to which I took such an early and implacable dislike. It was participation in its, by their accounts extraordinarily copious, devotional and social activities, choir, Sunday School outings, lantern lectures, missionary tableaux, that brought my parents together when my father was sixteen, my mother fifteen; they were married some seven years later. I am, in a sense, a late product of the immense efforts made by nineteenth-century Methodism to create not merely a congregation but a cultural community, not through segregation or exclusivity, but through endless and varied communal activities, as well as the ritual gregariousness which I had found so antipathetic. After they married, left Saltash and set up house on their own, my parents were received into the Anglican Church; it was not, I think, primarily a matter of theology - how many Anglican converts are converts by theology? - but the expression of a kind of distancing, a desire for a more anonymous, restrained and private kind of life together, free of relatives and the encumbrances of the past, a declaration of cultural independence. Their Anglicanism has always been deeper in my mother than in my father; my mother was fairly High, my father resolutely low, - indeed, a crypto-Methodist. During the war my father briefly reconverted to Methodism, when stationed in the Shetland Islands; the Methodists, he explained, on Sunday afternoons had tea and buns and classical gramophone records. In his initial apostasy from

Methodism, apart from my mother's influence, pique and theological dissidence may have played a part. He had been accepted, provisionally, as a Methodist lay preacher, continuing a long-standing family tradition, haranguing rustic congregations up and down the Tamar valley. When the time came to present himself before a board for confirmation in this role, he was asked when he had been re-born in Jesus Christ. He replied that he was not aware that this event had ever taken place. He was pressed. When had he experienced the redeeming power of Jesus's love upon his reprobate nature? He replied that he was not sure that he had. A serious view was taken and his appointment was not confirmed. Any evangelical impulse he may have possessed was sublimated into a proselytising zeal, private as well as professional, for the health-giving properties of whole wheat germ breakfast cereals. His religion, I believe, dwindled to a fixed belief that Christianity is a necessary condition of morality.

My mother, on the other hand, claimed that even as a child the dim mystery of Saint Nicholas parish church, Saltash, appealed more to her than the well-lit auditorium of the Wesleyan Chapel. She would, as I have said, have made an admirable vicar's wife. Her tastes were purely English: Galsworthy, Gilbert and Sullivan, Elgar, antiques and English country houses.

My father's tastes were more eclectic. I think his chief sense of deprivation lay in his limited opportunities for travel: he knew only Paris, Belgium and Holland, apart from the Shetland islands: he deserved, and would have appreciated, more. Music meant much to him, though he played nothing; in architecture his knowledge is more restricted to England than mine, but far deeper. He was a connoisseur of parish churches, and an enthusiast for almost all games: he was a good cricketer in his youth. His cultural interests were balanced by an odd taste for the macabre: as an amateur of the twentieth-century English murder and his volumes of *The Famous British Trials Series* formed part of the reading of my youth; we could grow animated and speculative about William Herbert Wallace, insurance salesman, chess-player and wife murderer, or was he? The contrast of the grisly forensic evidence and the suavity of the barristers, recorded verbatim, in these volumes fascinated me.

Most of my parent's interests were passed to me in some form or another; the one which has not is a passion for the theatre (combined with a contempt for film as a vulgar American import). My mother, I have said, left school with tears at thirteen; my father left Plymouth College, apparently with relief or at least easy acquiescence, at fifteen. The scholarly nature of many of his interests only really became inte-

grated with his working life in his very last years, when, as verger at Eton, he became deeply immersed in the history of the fifteenth-century wall-paintings in College Chapel, and indeed in medieval English wall-painting generally. His own version of his leaving school is that he was at that point no more than a games-playing lout and that my grandfather was correctly advised that any further money spent on his education would be wasted. He entered the haberdashery trade (Buck, Vosper and Knight) in Plymouth, where he swept the shop and measured lengths of cloth for customers. If my grandfather was Mr Pooter, my father at this point was Kipps. There was apparently a general idea that he was being prepared to enter the tailor's shop which my uncle Fred (my grandmother's brother) ran successfully in Leicester, where he made britches for the Quorn. Uncle Fred, whom I remember vaguely as a frail little old man who took me for a walk in Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham (the site, my father assured me, of a noteworthy murder), appears in my grandparents' wedding photograph as an elegant young man who could easily have been a diplomatic attaché. Indeed, it strikes me how difficult, above the minimum level of respectability, it is to determine class in old photographs, at least on special occasions. Cabinet ministers wear drainpipe trousers without creases and look as though they had slept in their clothes. Conversely, my grandparents' wedding group looks like a gathering at Cliveden or Hatfield: the give-away is the venue, which, despite a carpet spread on the ground, is clearly the back-yard of a terraced house with a view, I take it, of the window of the outdoor lavatory.

My father did not go into the tailoring business because my grandfather found him, much, my father says, to his own reluctance, a more genteel berth in the insurance business as a clerk. This would, I suppose, have been aptly described by that generation's phrase 'counter-jumping'. My mother, meanwhile, had worked as a shop assistant in John Yeo's in Plymouth. When her health broke down, my grandmother scraped together the money to send her on a six-month's secretarial course. With this behind her she too went into the Sun Insurance Office, as a typist. My father moved on to other offices, and was at one in Exeter when they married in 1932. The marriage was clandestine, in Exeter Registry Office: if it had become known my mother would, as a married woman, have lost her job under the company rules. A famous telegram to my grandmother read 'Married. If forgiven, home to lunch.'

I have been, I think, extraordinarily lucky in my parents. I was an only child, much desired and loved, and have never lacked attention, but I have also never felt the pressure of expectation. I have owed much to

family, nothing to connection. I have seen, even in a sense been a vestigial part of, a close-knit family and community, but the effort of emancipation I have never had to make because my parents had made it before me. They were, in their early married life, I suppose out of their class; that was part of the point. My grandmother Amy and her sister had entertained friends and family, and lived, in the kitchen; my parents and their contemporaries did so in their newer houses in 'the lounge'. But it was perhaps clearer what they had left than what they had entered, if anything. If the effect, on them and even, when I was growing up, on myself, was a certain isolation, I cannot now bring myself to regret it.

4
In Uniform - and a View of Hills

In 1940, like many other people, I went into uniform: a brownish-maroon blazer and cap, each with a badge, and maroon and white bands at the tops of grey socks. The design of the badge, apart from the fact that it was some sort of bird, I do not remember and cannot make out from a photograph taken of me at the time, but the motto underneath was explained to me by my father (now with his own badges) AA for Auxiliary Air Force under propellers on the shoulders. My motto, Facta non Verba, was neither accurate then nor prophetic. For the school to have had a uniform at all now strikes me as going it a bit. It was housed in temporary accommodation in the YMCA in Fore Street and though I cannot estimate our total number I do have the impression we were mostly taught, as in fifteenth-century Eton or Winchester, in a single room, ranged, in our case, in rows according to seniority and with a teacher for each cohort. I, as a novice, sat at the front. It was essentially what would earlier have been called a dame's school. Its official name was St Hilary's School, but it was universally known as 'Miss Ivory's', after the proprietress and headmistress. My own teacher, Miss Quick, was the daughter of the proprietor of the local cinema, where she moonlighted in the evenings as usherette and where, in addition to her torch duties, she would, according to my parents, walk along the gangway spraying the customers with some kind of disinfectant from a bucket. I was removed from the cinema, screaming, in 1940, on the appearance of the witch in Snow White.

I do not remember much about lessons. I remember better our morning assembly, at which we sang *To be a Pilgrim*, *All things Bright and Beautiful* and, as an expression of pessimism about our immediate prospects, based anachronistically on Victorian infant-mortality rates, *There's a Home for Little Children Above the Bright Blue Sky*. I liked the last best: it had the most rollicking tune. I seem to have overcome my objec-

tions to community singing. I have two main other recollections. One is of a picture book about Norman and Anglo Saxon England, in a series which still exists or at least did until recently, published by the Brockhampton Press. It was purely a picture book, with captions, but the illustrations were all black and white drawings of actual medieval places and objects, not imaginative reconstructions. I think I may have been given it as a prize. I liked the Normans because they wore armour and built castles, both of which seemed sensible precautions in an uncertain world. Whence I derived the sense of vulnerability which made these things seem desirable assets I do not know. I do not think I at that point associated them with the possibility of a German invasion, or thought of their possible efficacy against Blitzkrieg.

The other memory is painful. At the outset of my school career I became a victim of sexual discrimination. I have first to explain that I was frightened of the school's lavatories. They were out of doors, under a sloping glass roof, cracked and dirty, with missing panes; there was a constant and sinister hissing from the rusty pipes and cistern, which dripped redly down furred, slimy, green and black walls. I was terrified of them and still more of the slow, green, ancephalous slithering things with moist shining skins which were the only creatures which could comfortably inhabit such a place, and which therefore presumably did. These were the boys' lavatories. The girls enjoyed indoor accommodation of an altogether superior sort: I knew this because I had been taken there by a conductrix on my first morning: dark, and certainly no powder room, but not disagreeable. I began, when released on petition during class, to use it. I was detected, rebuked and told that as a boy I must use the Gothic horror outside. I tried to avoid going at all, with the predictable catastrophic and embarrassing consequences. I was disgraced: Norman picture-book prize winner publicly convicted of incontinence. My school day became a battle between terror and dishonour. Barred from feminine comforts, a more enterprising child might have sown there the seeds of a future transvestism, but disguise never occurred to me: fatalistically shivering and in frenzied haste I accepted the burden of my masculinity. I do not remember learning to read. This needs qualifying. I remember our school reading books (*The Beacon Reader*) very well. and our class exercises with them. I just do not remember ever not being able to read them, or even having any difficulty in doing so. There was a sequence of books, supposedly of ascending difficulty, from one to six. I was impatient with our slow progress and wanted to get to Book Six, at which I had already looked. This was a matter of literary taste. Our reading books recapitulated the earlier

history of English literature in reverse: phylogeny did not recapitulate ontogeny, it turned it back to front. The early books were heavily modernist in manner, written apparently by disciples of Ernest Hemingway and Gertrude Stein. Simple propositions, monosyllabic in form, were juxtaposed without apparent logical connection or psychological plausibility. Narrative expectations were constantly defeated, as John, Jane, Rover, a cat, a ball, an apple were linked with many repetitions and variations in a play of signifiers whose object was clearly nothing but itself. I could make nothing of it. I was a passive reader, with too little of the adventurous spirit of the avant garde; they might as well have set me to read Mallarme. It was only when we reached book six that I found myself immediately at home in the narrative conventions of nineteenth-century bourgeois realism, with its fictive constructions of character, motive, linear narrative, and plot. The literary preferences I had then I still have now. In a sense I have made no progress in reading; I have never really learnt how to read my first *How to Read* book.

My only other memory connected with Miss Ivory's school is a purely social one. My fifth birthday occurred in the middle of - I think it must have been - my first term. I was told that I could invite four friends to tea. I did not have four friends. I did not have any friends. I had established no relations with my schoolmates and can remember nothing about them. I solved the dilemma, without consulting anyone, in what still seems to me in the circumstances a highly rational manner: aesthetically, I nominated the four prettiest girls of my age in the school, none of whom I knew at all. I was told that I must have a fifth guest because she was the Station Master's granddaughter. The reasoning here eluded me, as it still does, but I had no objection. One might have thought that given my current interests the idea of forming a connection with a station, perhaps even marrying into it and becoming a porter, would have appealed to me, but my attitude to the station and its rituals, like my attitude to my nominees, was purely appreciative and without desire. I am also afraid I had no wish to relate meaningfully to the latter as people; I just liked looking at them. I do not think I felt even any sense of social obligation. I do not remember that I addressed a word to them; I hope someone did. I merely sat at the table in the midst of my untouched harem. I do not remember any attempt to make us play games. I hope that my guests were not disappointed and that the tolerant disposition of infancy to find nothing much odder than anything else carried them through as it did me.

Apart from school, my other memories of Saltash at this period are all connected with the war, in the summer of Dunkirk, and I will come

back to them later. In any case, my period as a full-time Saltash resident and my career as a Saint Hilarian were about to close almost as soon as they had begun. When the bombing began my mother decided I would be safer elsewhere: she particularly disliked being at the office in Plymouth while I was in Saltash during daylight air raids. In the event we got away none too soon: number two, Park Terrace was incendiary - bombed one night shortly after we left - about the same time as the Wesley Chapel immediately across the road was destroyed by high explosives - and my grandmother had to take refuge at my aunt Edie's, which thus became our pied-a-terre in Saltash for the remainder of the war. Fortunately Ben and the parrot had died. and been replaced by a red setter called Sandy, with whom I enjoyed an ecstatic friendship, and Uncle Tree, more mobile now on account of his Observer Corps duties, seemed less alarming. My mother decided to take me to Exeter, which was to become my home for the next fifteen years. and which we arrived at in good time for the heavy raids of 1942 which destroyed much of the centre of the city. My father's and mother's married life had been peripatetic. It had begun in Exeter and included spells in Wembley and in Southsea where I was born. My father was fortunate in being never actually unemployed during the early and mid-nineteen thirties. Instead he was the beneficiary/victim of the employment policy of life assurance companies, which insisted on hiring for six months three or more men for every vacancy and keeping, at the end of that period, the one who had obtained most business. My father was never the winner, but there seemed to be always another overcrowded vacancy to fill for the probationary period (for one of these jobs he remembers well being interviewed by Maynard Keynes, and the latter's easy-going manner). Exeter, where she still had friends with whom initially we stayed, was for my mother associated with the happiness of early married life, which in turn represented an emancipation from the closed, family dominated world of Saltash. Our return to Saltash from Plymstock at the outbreak of war, and her resumption of the job in the office in Plymstock she had held before marriage, must have been, especially with my father away, an unwilling regression, of which my introduction to Chapel was a symptom. I may well have sensed that I would ultimately have support in my rebellion.

Our escape to Exeter was therefore, for my mother, a second flight of emancipation, this time taken solo, with me as baggage. In attempting to catch my own first impressions of it, I find them, of course, since we were to live there so long, overlain by later ones from which I cannot disentangle them. I did develop, however, during the war years and after,

an acute sense of the contrast, often dwelt on by my parents, between Exeter and Saltash, which of course we continued often to visit. I took on, more emphatically I think than I might now do, my parents' view, wholly adverse to Saltash, fed by the atmosphere of small town gossip which my grandmother hastened to re-introduce us to on every visit; her finest hour, was saying impressively while we were still taking off our coats, "There are three people lying dead in this town today". Front rooms in Saltash always stood silent and vacant, as though awaiting the coffin that would give them their raison d'etre. Inevitably, being of an older generation. and increasingly as time passed, my grandmother's news dwelt on sickness and death, until Saltash came to seem a kind of a temporary necropolis, rising on its hill above the Tamar. a transit camp where people waited for a while to be collected for the last ride to the cemetery at Saint Stephen's Church, a mile inland from the town, where all my dead Vosper relatives were buried: the object of occasional pilgrimages with cut flowers, and where my three grandparents, my aunt Mary, Flo, uncle Tree and aunt Edie were in due course to follow them, a prospect much alluded to by my grandmother. The activities of Mr Alford the undertaker featured largely in her news of the town and in her anticipations.

Exeter, by contrast, seemed a place of life and light. People no doubt had died in Exeter and still did but we did not know them; its extensive cemeteries contained none of the Vospers, Chubbs, Oughs and Richards who together cut such an impressive figure in St Stephen's churchyard. In nothing did Saltash seem more Victorian than in the frank cult of death. Our lives in Exeter embraced the modern reticence on the subject. If members of the family did continue the Victorian practice of dying they did it appropriately, in Saltash - even my aunt Mary, who died at twenty-six. We were fortunate to know no one in Exeter killed in the bombing.

But if Exeter was the reverse of a necropolis, it was, as even I came to see, a mellow place, at least in Heavitree, the area in which my mother took the flat we lived in until I went to Cambridge; it was infused with a genial sense of the past, to which my mother was acutely sensitive, certainly compared with the raw suburbs of Plymouth or even with the intense, narrow Victorianism of Saltash: Vesper blood and Brunel's iron. Our flat in Exeter was the first floor of a large Victorian professional man's house, but the area itself was in part Georgian. The expansive hills to which it looked across seemed symptomatic too, compared with the deep, narrow coombes and tiny fields around Saltash. Exeter came to provide for me, until overcome with impatience to be off in my later

'teens, as it had for my mother, a new and wider mental topography, corresponding to the wider world of successively bigger schools. If Saltash stood for family history. Exeter provided larger more public versions of the past: in its pink sandstone Rougemont Castle, built by the Romans if rather disappointingly fragmentary, and within its grounds the two iron cannon taken from a ship of the Spanish Armada (an echo of Drake in his bronze ruff and puffy pants on Plymouth Hoe); in its cathedral, with its reclining medieval bishops, the tattered flag of the Devon regiment in a side chapel, its plaques to Bengal Lancers and Richard Blackmore the author of *Lorna Doone*, in its eighteenth-century red-brick terraces and crescents; in stucco nineteenth-century villas with their Italianate detail of pediment and cornice, console and pilaster, which I passed on my way to school. Among the public pasts to which I was now introduced were the peculiarities of an English preparatory school, carrying with it into the mid-twentieth century much of the mores of the pre-1914 England in which it had been founded.

The journey to school, however, must begin at home, for although the school had a number of boarders I was a day boy and my journey on foot took only about ten minutes. The house dated, I guess, from around the eighteen seventies; that is certainly the date of the red-sandstone alms houses opposite, which derived from the will of a fifteenth-century merchant, Simon Grendon, from whom the whole road of four large houses on one side, three almshouses on the other, took its name of Grendon Road. The house of which we rented the first floor and later the attic for ten shillings a week, was detached, in soft red brick, much obscured at the front with ivy, with gables and a porch with clumsy wooden pillars, a conservatory at the back and a large square garden with handsome well-grown trees and a stone memorial to a dog 'Towzer', without dates. Most of the garden, except for a small patch at the side, was officially inaccessible to me because the ground floor was inhabited by the wife and two - later three - daughters of a career RAF officer (ground staff) and by agreement they monopolised the garden; I became, however, friendly with the two girls, both slightly older than I; and therefore often played in it. Our own entrance was through a side door and up a narrow, steep flight of stairs, up which, as soon as I was able, it became my job to drag coal in a zinc bucket. Being on the upper floors had, however, ample compensations. We looked across at the front at the wide lawns in front of the almshouses, on which at dead of night we used later to exercise my mother's Pekinese. At the back the splendid copper beech, near the house, though its roots stood in the alien soil below, spread its dark red leaves. sometimes glowing in the sunshine,

almost to our dining room windows. The kitchen and what later became my own attic bedroom on the floor above looked westwards to the distant, wooded line of the Haldon ridge, with its Georgian folly of the Haldon Belvedere, which intervenes between Exeter and Dartmoor; from high up one can see the tops of the tors on the moor rising cloudily above it. In the opposite direction we looked, by an odd coincidence, into the garden where my father and my aunt Marjorie had played during the First World War; they had known the family in our own, then undivided, house and played in its garden too. My grandfather had been at the Exeter branch of the Sun Life office before the Great War; their move to Saltash came later, when my father was about fourteen. Accordingly I was to follow my father to Bramdean, the preparatory school he had attended as one of its earliest pupils, in Exeter, and later to Exeter School.

Our flat, which my mother loved and I too enjoyed, was cold and draughty; fires smouldered reluctantly and smoked; the bathroom and kitchen geysers roared and smelt. Our carpets, too small for the house, covered only a central area in each room; the rest was bare boards which we stained almost black. On winter mornings, buried beneath blankets, one awoke to plantations of frosted ferns coating the window-panes, extraordinarily beautiful in pale winter sunlight as an effect of condensation. Coal stood in the open downstairs, and my memories of the bitter winters, as they seemed, of the early forties, include digging the coal out from under the snow before taking it upstairs. The attic floor was let at this time to a small dame's school, Miss Johnson's Mixed Infants, and twice daily the infants and their parents would trudge through our landing on their way in and out. The attics, like the rest of the flat, were also infested with a still more numerous colony of mice. The mice emerged chiefly morning and evening. After experimenting hopelessly with mousetraps my mother bought a cat. During one epic weekend which I mentally associated with the Battle of Britain, whose alleged bag of German bombers was announced daily in the papers and on the wireless that September, the cat laid out its kills in rows on the carpet and hearthrug for our applause in the morning. The mice were kept under control. The school also fairly soon departed, to be replaced by a lodger, a young woman called Daphne, who interested me by having one eye which was half blue and half brown; if she had any other points of interest I never discovered them.

The wide staircase to the attic rooms was more interesting than its inhabitants. There was a large cupboard, virtually an unlit playroom, at the top, while half way up, at a turn in the staircase, there was a fine

stained glass window and beside it a door. Opened, it disclosed a wide sheet of water in a lead tank; dark, still and sinister. I suppose I could have sailed things on it, though it would have been difficult to retrieve them when they floated across to the far side, but I found the thing much too forbidding for that and willingly obeyed instructions to keep the door closed. The bathroom, which the tank fed; was down some more stairs off the landing, and stood immediately above the kitchen of the downstairs flat (which in turn had a staircase leading nowhere, because it led in fact to the flimsy partition on our landing). Smells of frying bacon, shrill conversation, and the eight o'clock news on the wireless rose to accompany one's morning ablutions and the scrape of the toothbrush across the cake of pink toothpaste in a tin and then across one s teeth. I do not care to think what may have been suffered in the kitchen below from our own sanitary activities above. For myself, my memories of Stuart Hibbert or Alvar Lidell reporting advances to (and retreats from) Marsa Matrou and Sidi Barrani, thousand bomber raids on Cologne and Hamburg, and heavy fighting around Stalingrad, Monte Cassino, Caen and Arnhem come to me mainly muffled through a thin partition and accompanied by the smell of other people's bacon frying.

Our flat, with its many stairs, banisters, and large cupboards, made an excellent indoor playground even before I got the run of the attic floor. One particular pleasure was to set up my puffing-billy steam engine in one of the cupboards. It looked like Stephenson's Rocket, though it was brass, with a small boiler and a safety valve and a can with a wick at the top which one filled with methylated spirit and lit under the boiler which, when hot enough, would drive a flywheel at the side. The whole thing must have been a considerable fire hazard, but then so was every other source of power in the house, including the electricity, most of whose fittings were warm to the touch and which fused at regular intervals. Mechanically-minded children were supposed to construct things with meccano for the engine to drive. I never succeeded in making anything with it more impressive than a very primitive kind of cart. I never made anything for the engine to drive; it offered a purely aesthetic rather than engineering experience, as one almost closed the cupboard door and sat at the back in near darkness listening to the safety-valve hissing, watching the glow of the pilot light shining on the brass, and the first tentative twitchings of the wheel increasing to become the blur of rapid revolution above the flickering wick. Electronics has no such pleasures to offer.

More interesting than any toy, however, was some of the debris we inherited with the flat, traces of its former history and former occupants.

One of the latter, an amateur chemist, had left in the garage (formerly stable, my father said, and now disused; no one had a car) a considerable collection of glass bottles containing attractively coloured liquids and crystals. I and the girls downstairs (whom I should name Ann and Jennifer) had sense enough not to taste them, but we did experiment by mixing them randomly. All too prophetically of my later brief and reluctant career as a schoolboy chemist, no consequences of any interest ensued. What did produce some, however, was to sprinkle them on a bonfire; which sometimes brought about varied and beautiful changes of colour in the flames, green and purple predominating. In defiance of all natural justice we neither blew ourselves up, burnt ourselves, or even showered ourselves with glass fragments.

More interesting still was a relic, not of an occupant but of the flat itself. When we moved in, the light-flexes could be raised and lowered on pulleys, presumably a relic of the days when gas mantles had to be lit by hand, which had been pointlessly retained after the conversion to electricity. The weights were large, egg-shaped china containers. When unscrewed they miraculously hatched, in almost spermatozoic quantities, countless very small shiny ball-bearings. They were too small to play with individually, so I marshalled them into armies and by sweeps of the hand set them charging at each other, each force scattering convincingly as the speed of its charge increased. So long as they were on the carpet they were safe, but the tendency to scatter was eventually to be the literal downfall of them all. Once on the bare surrounding boards they fell helplessly into the cracks, like William's knights into the Malfosse at Hastings. and were lost forever. After a few weeks, or perhaps months, attrition of this kind had reduced the once immense hosts to a literal handful of veterans, and eventually they too disappeared, re-emerging briefly from oblivion. I suppose, when the house was demolished in the nineteen sixties, I had lead soldiers too, mostly red-coated with black, policeman-like helmets as worn in the first and second Zulu wars, but I liked them less than the ball-bearings because one could move them by hand only one at a time. The floorboard cracks were not all malign, however, because the narrowest were tight enough to hold upright cigarette cards of cricketers, footballers and battleships, producing a whole forward line, or fleet in line astern, two dimensional but ready for action: Nelson, Hood, Warspite, Alex James, Joe Hulme, Cliff Bastin. I must have had an Arsenal team, though I was not aware of it. I knew about football because I played it now at school, but I knew nothing of professional teams because the professional game had been suspended for the duration of the war. It was not until 1945 or 1946 that I began to

understand the significance of the shirts worn by my cigarette-card players, and by then most of the players had retired and most of the cards been lost or swopped.

In introducing school through football I have followed an order of priorities which would have struck me then as the natural and proper one, for I was a passionate if never particularly skilful player. As soon as, around the age of ten at the end of the war, I knew that there were professional footballers, I wanted to be one, and retained the ambition until, at around puberty, it was replaced by one to be a stand-up comedian like those who ended the bill on *Variety Bandbox*: Reg Dixon, Derek Roy and - already - Frankie Howerd. The later ambition was created by the wireless; the first comedian I actually saw was Frankie Howerd in the Winter Gardens, Blackpool in 1949, when I became almost ill with laughter. I once told my ambition to be a professional footballer to my headmaster, Mr Alexander. He responded frostily. It was obviously not his notion of a career for his alumni; I did not understand why.

The school was, and is, housed in a large Victorian house with annexes, and with a largish playing field on the other side of the road, in Homefield Road, Heavitree. The front of the house belonged to the Alexanders and their two sons, one, my contemporary, Andrew, later political correspondent of the *Daily Mail*. Behind were four classrooms, one doubling as the school dining room where mid-morning milk was dispensed from a table which stood below the School War Memorial, a plaque with three names, two of them brothers, of old boys killed in the Great War. The school had been founded in the nineteen-hundreds by Mr Alexander's predecessor and at the time my father was there during the first war there were only about twenty boys, all taught by the headmaster himself. The main classroom, used for morning assembly, had a big bow window and a large but feeble radiator, which we embraced on arrival on winter's mornings as the only way of obtaining any warmth from it, until by the time the bell rang it was completely covered by small bodies while others hung around the edges like predatory animals around a kill, hoping for an eventual share. Chilblains were endemic among us. In this room, with the desks cleared, we had end-of-term concerts at which Mr Alexander sang Gilbert and Sullivan, especially convincingly as the Mikado. There were also film shows at which a local projectionist would set up his flickering equipment and impressively hollow sound-recorder and show us *Nanook of the North*, *Man of Aran*, *Night Mail* and, a red letter day, Olivier's *Henry V*. This part of the school smelt of disinfectant and food. Beyond were the smaller classrooms, the changing rooms and the asphalt playground. There was

a dormitory above. The basement at the front was a kitchen, whence food arrived at the dining room via a pulley and a hatch. One of the kitchen staff obtained celebrity with us by having a tattoo on his forearm of a nude girl whom he could make wriggle seductively as he tensed the muscle; I believe he used to charge for the performance.

The three main classrooms had sloping desks, for two or more; very old, shiny, incised and scribbled on. with ragged edges as though they had been gnawed by mice. The sunken china inkwells, mostly blocked at the bottom by an antique sediment of ink dregs and blotting paper, were replenished weekly by a class monitor from a huge jar of ink, brown rather than blue or black. Sometimes it was so thin that our writing became almost invisible. A pen nib with a gap in the middle, inadvertently enlarged by pressing, meant that our already faint calligraphy was accompanied by an even fainter ghostly echo. The classrooms opened from a back hall in which were our rows of pegs, and a staircase leading down to the back basement, the home of the useful arts in the form of Mr Maw's carpentry class, which was an optional extra and functioned only one day a week.

The school was so near my home that - a great blessing - I even came home to lunch. The only drawback to my commuting was the blackout. It was dark by the time I had changed after football on winter's afternoons. There were, of course, no street lights, and there was a part of the route, along a large green with great trees which sometimes swayed disconcertingly in the wind against the night sky, past which I always ran, listening for other footfalls as well as I could for a pounding heart and a thumping satchel. I had a new blazer and cap: black with silver piping. There was no badge or motto (there is now a large and vulgar 'B' which I deplore) but in compensation there were two silver bars across the top of the pocket. There was no assembly hall, so in the mornings we gathered for prayers in the main classroom, used by the fifth and sixth forms (the sixth was usually two or three boys preparing for scholarships to public schools; an honours board recorded their predecessors' achievements). At prayers the junior classes were ranged around the walls while the senior boys stood at their desks; the one in front of me tried with sometimes agonising success to put his heels on my toes and I dared not retaliate with a pin in the buttocks, though in my own class this form of assault was well recognised and prepared for. Later I came to take an interest in the prayers *For Use in Schools* with which we were all issued. This was not due to anything which could properly be called religious feeling, though it was prompted by two of the main recognised sources of religion: hope and fear. To me the

Preparatory Schools Prayer Book contained a test of the divine power. Daily our headmaster, whose class, at eight or so, I had now entered for some lessons, prayed, as the book required, that the grace of God might be given him, and make him 'quick to praise and slow to criticise'. Daily I too prayed, much more fervently, that this grace might be shown to him and his prayer be answered. Daily, half an hour or so later, it became miserably apparent yet again that the miracle was unperformed. that God had withheld his countenance and that we were in the place of weeping (ours) and gnashing of teeth (his). I think I gave God credit for trying, but I became only the more aware of the limitations of his power; our headmaster had simply proved too hard a nut to crack; had I known the word 'obdurate' it would have fitted nicely.

Morning assembly was also the occasion for announcements, chiefly of punishments administered, like the announcements of public executions on the gates of prisons; there was the offender's name, the charge sheet and sentence, usually 'six', though the tariff also allowed a more merciful 'three'. Lines-worthy offences were not thought worth public announcement: misdemeanours rather than crimes. Two types of crime (scoring six I think on the Alexander scale) I remember particularly. Both were offences against good public relations. One was 'eating in the street'. I still eat sandwiches or packets of crisps in the street with a pleasant sense of defiance and immunity. The other, I think graver, charge was 'fighting with a street boy'. I am pretty sure that fighting with a street boy was also an indictable offence. Street boys were boys at State elementary schools, boys not in uniform. It was my introduction to the Class War. I did not understand why it was an offence; on the other hand it was one I had no inclination to commit and I felt no surprise or indignation. I knew that street boys were a different species from ourselves. Street boys wore no uniforms, except that some wore mittens and curious leather helmets, a bit like flying caps or the leather scrum caps worn by old-fashioned rugby forwards. To a time-traveller from the present we would seem all in the uniform of our period; long thick woollen socks, long shorts and sleeveless pullovers. I saw them sometimes, usually in groups, unmistakably of another tribe. My feelings were mixed. I had a sense, I do not know how acquired, unless from the headmaster, that they were inferior or at least less fortunate, and many of them seemed pale-faced and spindly legged. But my predominant feeling was of fear. I saw them as figures of menace, power, and violence, and dreaded being captured by a group of them on my way home. I and a companion once were, and I behaved ignominiously, pleading for release, which we obtained after no more than jeering. My

fear may have been partly guilt, because I had known the situation reversed. The bottom of our playing field ran along a road that was clearly street-boys' territory. Sometimes, daring, they would infiltrate the field. On one occasion we captured one, a small one. I still remember his expression of terror. Had it been a novel we would have inflicted appalling tortures on him. As it was, I think we all had a sense of let-down and bafflement. He seemed so small and unimpressive. There seemed nothing to be done with him but to throw him back, which we did, with terrible threats to be carried to his associates.

On one occasion the headmaster's war on fraternisation with the enemy resulted in a scandal. A boy was caned for playing with a street boy and his parents protested on the not unreasonable grounds that the street-boy in question was his cousin who was attending the local elementary school. Apologies, we heard, had been made. Later I became friends with a street boy myself, the son of a friend of my mother. He was called Keith. I liked him and he interested me by his tribal customs; he knew rituals which were new to me. especially one for oath-taking which involved a complicated liturgical performance of crossing one's arms in front of one and spitting vigorously into the triangular gap between arms and body. I do not know how local or even purely idiosyncratic this practice was. He also aroused my uneasy envy by a promptitude in flight and in lyingwhich I did not possess. My own inclination was to hesitate fatally between escape, falsehood, and reasoned excuse. Keith never attempted the third and seemed able to decide between the first and second in an instant, with perfect tactical judgement. I think I attributed my own inferiority not just to myself but to our different tribal attributes, and perhaps I was right.

Generally speaking Bramdean was free of scandal. As a day boy I led a sheltered life in any case, but I am fairly sure that the very rapid turnover of assistant masters was due to the war or to inadequate pay rather than 'the usual reasons'. There were no more than two assistant masters at any one time. I was at the school for eight years and can name eight masters, apart from one or two more dimly remembered. The war, I think, was the chief culprit. Years later when I came across a description of the composition of the so-called Volkssturm units formed by Hitler in 1945 for the final defence of the Reich, out of the very young, the very old and the medically unfit (grouped by malady as the stomach battalion, the foot battalion, and so on). I recognised the composition instantly: they were the German equivalent of the assistant masters who taught me at Bramdean between 1943 and 1945. I dare say had matters turned out that way they would have died bravely manning a

road-block across Heavitree Fore Street. What they could not do was to teach anyone anything. An Austrian refugee, a retired colonial judge from East Africa called (really) Jeffries, an impoverished local clergyman (he must have been impoverished to endure what we inflicted on him) named Williams, a North Sea fisherman awaiting call-up, various young men with an assortment of unmilitary ailments, were brought up in waves by the headmaster and hurled with complete lack of effect against the enthusiastically defended bastions of our ignorance, retiring in hapless confusion to take cover in sullen apathy or twitching agitation behind the master's big desk.

There was a female staff too, usually one plus a matron, with I think an equally rapid turnover, though I cannot think why. Only the matron seemed a permanency because she wore a uniform, though the body inside it was replaced at intervals. Only two of the female staff were memorable. One was an elderly sharp-faced woman with grey hair swept back in a bun, who looked like the archetypal schoolmarm of the American West. She taught us Scripture. A woman of austere principles, she insisted, I remember, that although Jesus turned water into wine - a miracle she clearly felt had been better omitted - he didn't drink any of it himself; I do not remember any of us being disturbed by his apparent hypocrisy. She also, on one occasion, hearing me say 'damn' gave me a ferocious dressing down, threatening at first to send me to the headmaster but eventually settling for giving me a graphic description of the pains and horrors of damnation as a demonstration why the word should never be used lightly.

The other female teacher, whom I remember with affection. though she left when I was very young, was Miss Price. Miss Price was a plump young woman, I suppose in her early twenties; she filled stockings and her blue or brown jumpers with the same generosity as she showed to headaches and minor losses of school equipment; it was worth having a headache to have it clasped, however temporarily, in comfort to Miss Price's bosom. Her hours of greatest glory, however, were the bi-weekly PT lessons. Under her instruction we ran on the spot, flung our skinny arms and legs in and out, and did knee-bends and press-ups. Miss Price believed in leading from the front, literally. We watched fascinated, latency period temporarily forgotten, as Miss Price demonstrated knee--bends, ran on the spot or jerkily flung wide her arms. Miss Price's knee-bends were a study in wartime utility underwear and suspenders; her running on the spot and flinging arms created seismic disturbances under the blue jumper. At this point I enjoyed PT. Later, at my grammar school, in the fetid, sweaty and purely masculine atmosphere of

the echoing gymnasium, with its inadequate mats and posterity-threatening vaulting-horses, and its sergeant major, diminutive but trim, with a tattoo and false teeth, whose almost whispered words of command were followed by bellowed rebukes for slowness or incomprehension. In this minor hell of adolescent masculinity I used sometimes to think wistfully of the sweet-smelling field at Bramdean, of Miss Price's suspenders and those blue remembered hills. Here, incidentally, ends the only erotic passage this memoir will contain; I would not win even base-minded readers by false pretences.

If his assistant staff was generally feeble, the headmaster emphatically was not. Mr Alexander both owned and ran the school and taught the upper forms, notably Latin. He was a product of Lancing, where he had also taught, and Cambridge. Fifty years later, paying a visit to Lancing Chapel with my friend Patrick Mullin, a fellow old Bramdeanean (the only one with whom I am in touch) I noticed the school flag flying over the cricket field, a diagonal stripe on a blue ground, and felt an unaccountable qualm of unease and guilt. Then I placed it. In the company of a fellow old-boy I was seeing for the first time for nearly half a century, the pattern of Mr Alexander's tie. If Mr Alexander's assistant masters were a Volkssturm battalion, he himself was a crack Panzer Division at the peak of its form, expert in the crucial weapons of Blitzkrieg, speed, surprise, and terror. There were no modulations. Calm, incisive exposition would give place in an instant to a bellow of rage, missiles, sometimes chalk. Sometimes a book, flung through the air, or a sudden, unexpected attack from the rear with a ruler across the knuckles, a North and Hillard to the side of the head, or a twist of the ear or side hair grasped between powerful fingers. He was the best teacher I have ever known. He was not, I think, a sadist; he beat, but not ferociously. As with Evelyn Waugh's Ritchie Hook, surprise was everything to him. During the two years he taught me Latin I rose to or near the top of the class. Then for some reason he abandoned us. My Latin education was handed over in succession to the secular and the ecclesiastical arms, to Judge Jeffries, with his red nose and its dewdrop, competent enough no doubt in telling his fezzed policemen to take the prisoner away to a place of execution but helpless as a baby before a class of eleven-year olds, and to the threadbare Welsh clergyman, who would frequently call on God to tell him what he could do with us but who never received any satisfactory answer. Under them I plummetted to the bottom of the Latin class and remained there.

I have sometimes wondered what would have happened if Alexander had kept us. Should I have become a classicist or ancient historian, either

with éclat or, more likely, as a schoolmaster. Re-deployed later in life in obedience to the spirit of the times to teach something like 0- Level Geography. As it is, though I learnt Latin for an hour every school day from the ages of eight to sixteen, I failed the 0- Level at my first attempt and can now read only the simplest of dog-Latin. Still, I am grateful, above all to Mr Alexander, that some vestiges of Latin grammar and vocabulary remain with me, to give me some sense of what an English education once consisted of and to give some etymological depth to my understanding of English. Even in my blankest period, under the man of law and the poor parson, I enjoyed the illustrations to my Latin translation book, not North and Hillard or Kennedy, which were enlivened only by the contemptuous marginalia of previous owners) which contained black and white illustrations, mostly of episodes from Livy. Occasional reproductions of nineteenth-century history paintings - Haydon's Metillus Curtius leaping into the gulf - which I think was then displayed in Exeter art gallery; certainly it had two Haydons of which one was Richard and Bolingbroke Entering London and chaste, Flaxmanesque line drawings. It was my introduction to the idea of a world prior to the N ormans, who had hitherto been my Ur-folk. I much preferred the Romans to the Greeks, whom we read about later in Willem van Loon's Story of Mankind. He made much of the slogan 'nothing in excess' and made the Greeks sound like athletic prigs. which began a prejudice in me, reinforced by the gloomy sepia photographs of the Parthenon and the Erechtheum in the classics masters' room at my grammar school, of which I still feel occasional twinges.

History proper, which meant English medieval history, was taught by the headmaster's wife, almost as formidable and feared as he: a Girtonian I suspect, tall, thin, and daunting, but also a romantic. I remember her reading us Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather*, by which I was enthralled: I longed to go to Northumberland. But she also insisted on our memorising the names and dates of the Kings and Queens of England. I have now lost all dates but those of the first three Normans and those from George III onwards, but the sequence will remain with me, indelibly, this side of Alzheimer's disease, for life. Again I am grateful that my education began with, as Gibbon says, 'attention to the order of time and place' rather than with disconnected projects. I should also explain what I mean by calling Mrs Alexander a Romantic and want to try to gauge the effects of this on me and my contemporaries. Through her generation's exposure to nineteenth-century poetry, mainly, and my generation's to her, I gained a sense of, though not a belief in, an enchanted world with a magical connection between the physical world

and human lots, the pathetic fallacy, so called. It is something now only fashionable through the pages of]. R. R. Tolkein. For example Omar Khayyam, "Methinks that never a rose blows so red as where some buried Caesar lies". There is of course, no prosaic connection between the nutritive qualities of soils and the status of those mingled with it. Science and democracy both reject the connection but I, who am sold the influence of neither, continue to be grateful to Mrs Alexander and her like for giving me some introduction to older ways of thinking in which neither yet predominated.

The Empire was not merely taken for granted at Bramdean but consciously celebrated, and Empire meant, above all, India: it seems to me now not inappropriate that I left Bramdean in the year the British left India. British India could still be, in the 'forties, a presence in a way difficult now to appreciate. One of our neighbour's sons at eighteen, a product of Exeter School, took a regular commission in the Indian army in, I think, 1946 - a career move almost as ill-judged as joining the SS in April 1944. Mrs Alexander read us, I am not sure under what rubric, The *Jungle Book*, with much panache and confidence in the pronunciation of the names. There was a family connection with India: her sister or sister-in-law, Mrs Holland, who also taught us from time to time and was much loved, brought us on one occasion her husband, who was a retired colonel of an Indian native regiment. He had, as I would now expect him to have, a gingery moustache. He told us that the peoples of India were divided into warrior castes and non-warrior castes. For the latter he seemed to have little use. The former, however, were splendid chaps, especially Sikhs, who were tall and brave, Rajputs who were also brave, but I cannot remember if they were tall- perhaps they were middle-sized - and Gurkhas, who were very brave though very small. I was myself of less than average height, so I felt grateful to the Gurkhas for their diminutive gallantry, despite the fact that they, like the Sikhs, posed certain problems in the placing of the letter 'h'. Colonel Holland also showed us pictures of the characteristic costumes of his turbanned and pillbox-hatted warriors. Empire also made a more long-lasting pictorial impression in the sudden appearance at the beginning of one term of posters on the classroom walls, not this time of India but of, I think, Malaya, Ceylon and East Africa, because the pictures showed the harvesting of rubber, tea and coffee. Harvesting these commodities was clearly highly enjoyable, because everyone engaged in them had expressions of beatific cheerfulness. I was reminded of them years later by an exhibition of Maoist posters at the time of the Chinese cultural revolution; the same blissful expressions as peasants garlanded tractors and

industrial workers poured molten steel into moulds.

I wonder if the imperial influence at school was becoming out of date even in other prep schools at the time and if ours was unusual. My friend the historian Dick Shannon told me once that, at his prep school in New Zealand at the same period, every day was begun by saluting the flag and singing Kipling's *Recessional*. We never did that, though we had a flagpole on the playing field donated by the parents of a boy who had died at the school in my father's time, of pneumonia my father said. At Bramdean there were reminders of Kipling filtered through the medium of Baden Powell's nomenclature for the Wolf Cub movement. Cubs took place once a week, the only non-football day, and one went to school in the morning resplendent in green jersey and football shorts, a fascinating green cap with gold piping and still more fascinating and mysterious green tabs held on hidden garters, suspended below one's stocking tops. What vestigial article of dress this embellishment records I have no idea. I had one grief about the uniform: the essential leather woggle for holding the scarf at the throat. The manufacture of woggles had been suspended for the duration of the war, the relevant factories having presumably turned the skills formed in making woggles to the more urgent task of making Spitfires; everything requisitioned during the war tended to be assigned in the civilian imagination to the production of Spitfires, because Lord Beaverbrook had given the impression that among the wonders of the Spitfire was that it could be made out of almost anything. I was all in favour of Spitfires and prepared to make sacrifices to the war effort, but there were two sources of bitterness. One was that, contrary to post-war myths, the burden of scarcity was unequally shared; some boys had older brothers and had inherited woggles (the same was true of Christmas tree lights, of which again, as an only child, I suffered unequal deprivation). The second was that even after the war, with my cub career at its height, the shortage continued. It took years for woggle production to be resumed on a full peacetime basis.

My cub uniform, proud though I was of it, was the source of one of the two greatest traumas of my childhood. On one occasion I arrived at school on a cub day, suitably clad, to discover that everyone but myself had been given in time the news that cubs had been cancelled. I sat all day, a green-jerseyed exotic bedizened with gilt piping among a uniformly grey-clad horde; a mandarin in full costume in Mao's China could hardly have felt more conspicuous. The other day of shame was rather similar. Scrubbed, brilliantined, and clutching a present, I made my way to a birthday party in a remote part of town, only to be informed

by my host's concerned mother on the doorstep that the party was the following week. I disliked birthday parties anyway and to have to return the following week, preceded by the tale of my mistake, was an almost unbearable ordeal

My cub career was otherwise, however, quite distinguished. I rose to be an NCO, a sixer. Mrs Holland was our Akela. We learnt the law of the jungle; we also squatted in a circle, fingers on the ground in the cub salute (two fingers together; I never quite managed the Boy Scout's three) and chanted 'Tib, Dib, Dib, we'll Dob, Dob, Dob, Akela we'll do our B- E-S- T' in springing to our feet and to the salute on the last word. Unfortunately at twelve one was supposed to go on to become a Scout. There was no proper school Scout troop; Mrs Holland took no interest in it and it existed nominally rather than in fact. I was, in any case rather doubtful about Scouts; I was of course by now older and more self-conscious. The doubts were unintentionally sown by an uncle, my aunt Marjorie's husband, who gave me his copy of Baden Powell's *Scouting for Boys*, I think the 1911 edition. The text contained slightly menacing injunctions about keeping one's bowels open and, I seem to remember, avoiding unspecified but clearly disastrous habits. I studied the pictures. There were, I remember, contrasting illustrations, like Pugin's or Hogarth's apprentices, depicting 'the healthy boy' and 'the unhealthy boy'. The former looked like a member in good standing of the Hitler Jugend. The latter, clearly a victim of unspecified habits, and probably of constipation as well, stood hunch - backed, smoking a cigarette. I had at that point no habit worse than nose-picking and I certainly did not smoke, but I think I had a distinct suspicion that I might belong in the second category. I was not sure I wanted to be a Scout.

These doubts the school Scout troop's one flicker of misguided activity amply confirmed; we went to camp for a fortnight. We were taken, scout-masterless, without even an acknowledged Patrol Leader, and deposited in a field near Collumpton. In an adjacent field was encamped a local scout troop under a scoutmaster, an agitated little man known as 'Skipper' or 'Skip', who carried a pole as though needing support, who had said he would keep an eye on us; he interpreted this commitment very loosely indeed. We were unprepared, leaderless and ill-equipped (I still did not have a woggle, making do with an elastic band); some of us did not have khaki shirts, which I think depressed morale. There were two bell tents and with the other scout troop we erected them. Then they left us to our own devices. We dug an incompetently shallow latrine, for which, as the days passed. I developed an increasing and justified dislike. When we had done that there seemed nothing else to

do. We could make fires but we could not cook. Our only notion of cooking was to pierce tins and put them in the fire (sometimes we forgot the preliminary piercing, with explosive results) extracting and opening them with some difficulty. We messed by tents. It was the other tent which got food poisoning, quite mildly, though all of us I think conformed to Baden Powell's ideal at least in the respect that we had no difficulty in keeping our bowels open. We slept like the spokes of a wheel, feet inwards to the pole. I did not dislike the nights in the tent; it was the days that seemed interminable. We deplorably lacked initiative. Our sole resource was to go to the end of the field and sit on the gate, and look wistfully at the main London- Exeter railway line. At least none of us lay across it. We sat and looked at the fortunate people in trains, people leading full and active lives, with proper meals (I think we forgot or did not know the culinary limitations of post-war railway cuisine), and comfortable seats; people not camping. It could not have seemed remoter from our own miserable lives had we been Bulgarian peasants looking up at the Orient Express, but semi-civilised as we were, we knew enough to be envious. Sometimes people would wave to the boy-scouts enjoying their holiday. I have occasionally passed the spot in the train since and usually tried to do so in the buffet, glass in hand. If all this seems spiritless I can only say in our defence that we never crucified or even badly tortured any of our number, as boys on a desert island are supposed to do. Our sufferings were those of ineptitude, not malice, and if we lacked imagination it was perhaps as well; we might have turned at least to rick-burning. We might as well have been on a desert island, except that one evening, by common consent, we walked in a body some miles up the dark lane to Collumpton. bought fish and chips and went to the pictures; it was an eighteenth-century sword-and-stage-coach drama called *The Fighting Guardsman* and I thought it was the best film I had ever seen until I saw Raymond Massey and Leslie Howard in *The Scarlet Pimpernel*.

The other tent had been the one with food-poisoning. Mine got chicken pox; on the last day one boy woke up covered in spots. I got it a week or two later. It was the end of my scouting career. I never got a woggle, or a badge of any kind, even for helping to dig the latrine, so I do not know what badge it would have procured. I was 'the unhealthy boy' and beginning to be proud of it. By the time I was fourteen you might as soon have attempted to make a Scout out of Dorian Gray.

I have spoken of our extra-curricular activities and neglected the rest of the school curriculum. I do not remember who taught French; I remember only that it was taught progressively, unlike the Latin lessons

I have described by Mr Alexander, through the muscles of whose right arm there pulsed, as I now know, the last spasm of a cultural energy going back to the sixteenth-century revival of learning, a tradition in which, as Lytton Strachey said, a false quantity must be expiated in 'tears and blood'. French, however, was taught non-violently and in the modern manner, orally, as a living language. I learnt nothing. In my French Common Entrance Exam I proved capable of adding the appropriate definite article to La France and Le General Giraud, and of reproducing the names of the commoner farmyard animals in *La Basse Cour* which have occasionally been useful when studying menus. This seemed to be as much as the examiners expected, unlike the History paper, which I dealt with easily, which contained the splendid injunction, which I have often been tempted to reproduce when setting university examinations, 'Write as much as you know about the following'.

The fine arts played little part, to my relief, in the Bramdean curriculum. There was no drawing class, no repetition of the Abraham and Isaac fiasco. Music was represented by an itinerant, Mr Gandy Bradford. He may well have been an excellent musician, and was I believe a sympathetic piano teacher. In front of a class he was out of his depth. My memories of him are confused, because I met him again at my grammar school. There was an open stove into which we would put anything which might burn or smell, and certain musical phrases are still associated in my mind with the smell of burning rubber. We memorised F A C E and 'Every Good Boy Deserves Figs' (why Figs?); ribald substitutes marked the transition to grammar school. I duly memorised them, but how they were related to the world of sound or why the corresponding note of a different octave was the same note I never learnt. At Bramdean we mostly just sang: *Strawberry Fair*, *On Yonder Hill*, *A Health unto his Majesty*, *Trelawney*, *Bill Benbow*, *Oh No! John* and, a particular favourite, a bucolic song called *Turmut* (turnip?) *Hoeing*, one of the self-congratulatory class of vocational songs in which the singer rejoices that, of all the professions he might have entered, providence has marked him out for a jolly waggoner, soldier boy, sailor lad, tax consultant, systems analyst or whatever it may be.

The useful arts were represented, as I have said, by another itinerant, Mr Maw, whose fretwork class took place once a week below stairs. Mr Maw worked on a fee per pupil basis, and no doubt paid Mr Alexander for the franchise. Considerable pressure was put on boys to take fretwork and on parents to pay for it. I resisted, partly on the 'never volunteer' principle I had already embraced, partly because I had peered down the stairs into the basement in which Mr Maw's class sawed, hammered,

and moved around in a cloud of sawdust by the light of an un-shaded bulb. I knew my limitations. As a non-paying fellow-traveller of Miss Johnson's Mixed Infants I had made my mother a cheese-board (an oblong piece of wood) and a book-end (two oblong pieces of wood joined at right angles). I suspected I had reached my ceiling as a craftsman and nothing I had heard or seen of Mr Maw's softwood Nibelheim encouraged me to want to continue.

Mathematics was another subject in which I reached my ceiling early. At Miss Ivory's I had been good. My adding up and taking away were masterly and won warm praise. In the first form at Bramdean I had an abacus. I manipulated coloured beads on a frame with the sense of logical power and aesthetic satisfaction that I believe all good mathematicians know. Later, without too much difficulty, even without beads, I mastered multiplication and short division. Unfortunately, with one late supplement, this proved to be my full repertoire. Some mathematicians reach their ceiling at nineteen, others at twenty-two. I reached mine at around six and a half. I remember vividly the day on which my career of hitherto uninterrupted mathematical achievement came to an abrupt halt. "Today children", the female teacher (females taught the first two forms) said brightly, "we are going to learn to do long dividing". Approximately ten years later I did learn to do long dividing- indeed I can still do it- but in the meanwhile my contemporaries had gone on to other things. I have reconciled myself to knowing how to add, take away, multiply (assisted by tables, which we learnt by heart, chanting in unison, and which I hence still remember and often find useful) and divide (both kinds), and nothing else. Geometry, when I took it up later, I enjoyed. I passed O-Level maths, the minimum entrance qualification for Cambridge, simply by getting all the geometry right (you know when you have got geometry right) none of the algebra and about half the arithmetic. Algebra I found wholly incomprehensible. When my children were at school and there was again an algebra book in the house, I tried again. I understood by now how algebra was used. I saw the point, after all, of symbolic logic even if I invariably had to translate it back into examples to see the logical connections. Surely with maturity, relieved from panic and with understanding of the nature of the intellectual task, I could do it. I could not. I did not mind so much that I could not memorise the process by which one did equations. I did mind that I could not first find the appropriate equations for a problem posed in words. It is not, I suppose, surprising that on the one occasion at school when, I do not know why, we were given an intelligence test, I emerged classified as semi-moronic. I was at the time top of the class in

History and English, middling in other subjects and bottom - absolutely bottom - in maths. It was a consistent pattern. If the proposals sometimes mooted for a combined higher certificate with passes in maths and science made essential had ever been adopted my education would have come to a halt at eighteen or earlier. It is not, as my mathematically-minded friends are fond of saying, a matter of teaching. I had poor maths teachers, adequate ones, and for two or three years at least a very good one indeed. It made virtually no difference.

The Alexanders taught us two other subjects. Mrs Alexander gave the older boys a weekly class on what was called Current Events. I remember in particular her account of the situation in Palestine under the British mandate, and of the activities of the Stern Gang and the Irgun Zvai Leumi, the latter an organisation which made any orthographic difficulties constituted by native units of the Indian army seem insignificant by comparison. She did it, I think, very fairly, explaining the refugee pressures behind Jewish immigration as well as the resentment of the Arabs at the Balfour of Declaration, and the Jewish terrorist attacks on British troops; it must have been about the time of the King David Hotel massacre. I was already interested in Palestine because my aunt Marjorie had had a boyfriend in the Palestine police; who sent me an Arab headdress with which I played. Mr Alexander taught us English. of which I remember surprisingly little, though I enjoyed it, but I remember he taught us to scan poetry and that we read Shakespeare in class. I remember *Julius Caesar*, *As You Llike It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The only part I recall being given was Metellus Cimber, which does not suggest any particular promise.

Sports I was no good at apart from football, and even there, though I made the school team, and went away with them to play at other prep schools along the South Devon coast. I had to play inside left, though right-footed, because there was another inside forward (I use the old designations) who was better than I and was also right-footed. The oddest game we played was against a reformatory, I think at Newton Abbott, whose team, crew-cutted, which was very rare then, behaved to us with an uncanny politeness, placing the ball for us and helping us to our feet after a tackle. I was hopeless at cricket, a painful inadequacy because my father was an excellent cricketer and was the star batsman, one year, of the Old Boys' Eleven. Some of his own scores at school are recorded in early school magazines which I still possess. My own innings were brief and I fielded chiefly at long-stop, which meant spending much of one's time looking for balls lost in the hedge. I liked the smell of cricket gear, the whitened pads and linseed oil-soaked bats, and I also enjoyed the

leisurely conversations made possible by the long periods waiting to bat.

The same pleasure in incidentals marked my attitude to athletics. I was a very moderate runner and jumper, but I loved the pomp of the annual Sports Day: the freshly whitened lines on the newly cut grass, across which the headmaster strode with megaphone and starting pistol, followed by deferential assistant masters with tape measures; the parents in funny hats; the batons and javelins, the rope for the tug of war and the little triangular flags in the house colours fluttering across the field. We had four houses, Angles (blue), Jutes (red), Saxons (yellow) and Vikings (green). Whether this reference to the Dark Ages was the headmaster's ironical comment on the level of our scholarly achievements I do not know, but it may have been. I was a Saxon, with a yellow satin stripe down my white shorts and a yellow band, removable, across the shoulder. Both Mr and Mrs Alexander were obsessively preoccupied with the pronunciation of Viking. It had to be pronounced with a short 'i'. because, it was explained, it came from the Norse word 'vic', meaning fiord; they were similarly obsessive, though without explanation, about the pronunciation of General Montgomery's name 'Muntgummery' and about often 'awfun'. I never employed any of these voluntarily. At my grammar school the houses were named after Devon worthies; Drake, Raleigh and - a touch of desperation, or perhaps just an indication of the period of its institution - Buller. One year during the war, probably 1942, the school sports had to be transferred to Norwood, the other Exeter prep school and our deadliest rivals, because an unexploded bomb was embedded in our playing field, curtailing the cross-field eighty-yard track and interrupting the two hundred and twenty yards circuit (though I have always suspected these measurements). We were proud that our sports day had been made a target by the Luftwaffe; if we were rather misguided about what constituted a useful military objective our vagueness was shared, after all, by Field Marshal Goering and Sir Arthur Harris. But it is time to speak more directly of the war.

5
War: Somewhere on the South Coast of England

My first memory of public events derives from Picture Post, that oily--smelling photographic magazine which must figure in many people's memories of the 'thirties and 'forties. I can date the occasion with considerable accuracy, and identify the place. We were in Falmouth, staying with friends of my parents; of Falmouth otherwise I remember nothing. The absence from home meant, I suppose, a dearth of familiar reading material at bedtime, because I remember sitting up in bed looking with my mother at a photograph. The photograph, I seem to recall, was of two men in helmets and boots with a motorbike and sidecar on a cobbled street. My mother, who took a passionate and anguished interest in Czechoslovakia and the betrayal of Munich, told me that they were German soldiers in a place called Prague. We were not at war: I would have known that I was told that the soldiers were wrong to have invaded Czechoslovakia, nor that they were our enemies. Motorcyclists in helmets and boots must at that point have defined the category of German for me. I have long overcome any resultant prejudice against Germans; not, I am glad to say, that against motorcyclists. The photograph was that grey-brown colour in which events in the nineteen-thirties took place. While speaking of pictures I may mention a memory of one dating perhaps to a year or so later: a coloured picture in *A Boy's Annual*, (which often featured marvels of modern engineering like the Sydney Harbour Bridge or the liner *Queen Mary*). clearly done in peacetime—wartime shots were sterner of a line of battleships at speed, line astern, each throwing up a thrilling white bow-wave. The contrast of the two pictures, it now occurs to me, of the occupying foreign soldiers and the majesty of the British Fleet on watch, was entirely Victorian. It may be that my generation is the last, or almost the last, to

have its early political attitudes shaped by those particular images.

Another pre-war memory of 1939 is of being introduced to two dark-eyed small girls called Flora and Mathilde (pronounced in Plymstock as 'Mateelday') and being told that they were refugees from Spain. We went to a Garden Fete organised for the benefit of the refugee Spanish children, at which I remember that they danced, and sang *La Cucuracha* and I got lost and had to be retrieved, tearful, by my mother after a loudspeaker announcement.

I have already spoken of the outbreak of war itself, and of my father's call-up. Apart from that the first public event which at all impressed itself on me was Dunkirk, which had several local symptoms. One was the sudden flooding of the Saltash streets by numerous French sailors with red pom-poms on their blue berets; one of them bent down to me, shook me by the hand and said "Bonjour". They seemed in high spirits; they were after all, most of them, soon to go home. Another, which impressed me still more was the requisitioning by the army of the Saltash Wesley Chapel, soon, though I did not know it, to be destroyed. It was immediately opposite my grandmother's house and I had plenty of opportunity to study the sentry who stood at ease with rifle and tin hat outside the Chapel door. I admired his equipment and felt we were in a good position to defend ourselves should the Germans invade with their motorcycles. I quickly took up the concept of being a sentry; he stood on guard with his tin hat and rifle on one side of the road, outside the Chapel; I stood on guard with mine on the other, outside my grandmother's house. I do not remember that discipline ever allowed us to acknowledge each other; he, a credit to his position, stared straight ahead, and I, taking the cue, did likewise.

Another visible preparation for the Germans, even more impressive to me and in which, on account of my father, I took a special interest, was the silvery barrage balloons, handsome and bovine, which grazed the sky at the ends of their long cables. My own preparations for invasion were to wear my toy tin hat, Sam Browne belt and revolver more or less continuously; I have a photograph of myself so equipped. It was, I suppose, only marginally less useful than some of the other preparations being made at the time. My father, when he came on leave in the blue uniform whose brass buttons and cap badge I enthusiastically cleaned, brought not only a gas mask with a curious elephant's trunk and goggling eyes - perhaps this was later - but also his own tin hat, with a rough sandpapery surface and his number painted on it which I can still remember: 864800. I painted a white 'W' (for Air Raid Warden) on the front of my own khaki tin hat. I suppose in recognition of my civilian

status. Air-raid sirens became frequent, though no bombs had yet dropped on Saltash. During alerts we went out to the washhouse, which was thought safer, I cannot imagine why. My grandmother laid in, as one was supposed to, a store of articles, sticking plaster, vaseline, torch and candle, to prepare for the worst. I remember no civilian gas masks at this stage.

Oddly enough, although we moved to Exeter to escape the bombing virtually my only recollection of actual bombs, as opposed to air raid alerts, is of bombs on Exeter, especially the very heavy raids of May 1942. Not, of course, that we would have escaped them had we remained in Saltash, as my grandmother did not. I did once, not from Saltash but from Torpoint, actually see, as opposed to hearing and feeling, a big air raid, on Plymouth and Devonport. We had gone to lodgings in Torpoint for Christmas, to be near my father. The back of the house faced across to Devonport. Our landlady's husband had been in the navy and owned a very old, large, leather-bound telescope. No German spy could have behaved more suspiciously than I as I sat in the window for hours, propping up the telescope and looking at the ships, great and small, some in the dark grey of the North Atlantic, some in the pale blue of the Mediterranean or Far East (and were there or were there not some in dappled camouflage? I think so) lying berthed in Devonport dockyard. One night there was a heavy raid. The shelter was in the garden, and on the way there one had a view across the water of Devonport under fire, one of the most beautiful sights I had ever seen (fireworks were, of course, forbidden; I remember just one pre-war November 5th, very vaguely). Against a background of dull red fires sudden flashes erupted, searchlights wandered across the sky and intersected, and tracers floated gently upwards like strings of luminous onions. I pleaded vainly to be allowed to stay and watch. I have a few other memories of Torpoint. Our landlady, Mrs Crocker, kept open house for airmen and that Christmas was the noisiest, most convivial and enjoyable I think I have ever spent, with much singing. My father was based at the Vicarage; he took me to the aircraft recognition room, where the black shapes of model German bombers and fighters hung on strings at different heights from the ceiling. They were presumably black to teach night recognition. It was all rather sinister. He abstracted a Heinkel for me to take away under my coat; I treasured it at home, where it was in due course joined by a legitimately purchased and beautifully made Spitfire, camouflaged above and a lovely duck-egg blue underneath.

I remember no lack of toys during the war, least of all of military

toys. It was of course fortunate that I was, at least in the earlier years. indifferent to obsolescence, just as I would happily put my red-coated lead guardsmen into the line with their camouflaged successors. Throughout the war I cherished what I now realise to have been a model of part of the Maginot line: a wooden landscape, irregular, painted green with a sandpaper texture and rising out of it the characteristic domed revolving gun turrets which represented the last word in military technology in 1939. I also had picture books (published by Raphael Tuck) of aeroplanes and tanks, and in these too I gloated indiscriminately over the useless *Valentine* tank, the *Fairy Battle* (that schizoid aircraft - Fairy was of course the rather unfortunate name of the Company), the twin-winged *Gloster Gladiator*, and the most useless of all, the *Bolton Paul Defiant* so-called night-fighter, with its central revolving gun turret, which could only fire at anything beneath it by hanging upside down. The more, I think I felt, the merrier, along with the *Spitfire* and *Hurricane*. I also had a lead fleet, including a battleship with moving turrets. I even had a rather implausible lead barrage balloon, a silver blob among the grey, which had to be draped over a hook fixed into the wall before it could be raised and lowered by a winch on the back of a lorry.

All this of course was the war in the imagination, the war of the news bulletins, like the lines which in 1943-4 I drew across my school atlas, first in Italy, later in Normandy, for all too long north of Caen. Italy was a country which, unlike Northern France, seemed perfectly geographically adapted to having more or less straight lines drawn across it. I remember once asking my mother what the newspapers had had in them before the war. The war at first hand, however, the war made visible and audible and occasionally even felt in the vibration of walls and the rattling of windows, was of course for me firmly located, as the phrase then had it, somewhere on the south coast of England. It was manifested in the concrete tank traps, rolls of concrete with rods to hold barbed wire stuck in them; in the blackout (we made blackout blinds with rolls of black paper), the car headlights peering through their visor slits at the white-painted curbs; the station signs painted out, not very efficiently, so that in close-up one could still make them out; the anti-invasion obstacles, like scaffolding laid diagonally along the beaches, soon turning rusty, and the gaps cut in Plymouth and Paignton piers to prevent their being used by invaders as jetties. It was after a day's outing to Teignmouth, I remember, that at the station, having been away from the wireless all day, we heard the news of the invasion of Russia. The station was almost empty and I remember three teenage girls singing

loudly, *By the Light of the Silvery Moon* and *I've got Sixpence*. I did actually hear someone say, though preceded perhaps by 'They say', "It will all be over in six weeks". (My father, incidentally, remembers seeing 'War Declared on Germany' on newspaper posters on Exmouth front in 1914, after having already noted the sudden absence of German bands). Concrete static water tanks appeared in some of the roads: I had a fight beside one of them outside the house of a friend, with the boy opposite; I was lucky and pinned him against the side of the tank, making his nose bleed. Later he grew bigger and stronger than I and I became afraid of him.

One other visual impact of the war has been the most long-lasting, though we no longer notice it; the removal of almost all railings from the front walls of houses, naturally, we understood, to make *Spitfires*. As a frequent wall-walker and wall-sitter I benefited from this, just as I enjoyed watching the flaming torches cutting the railings away at the roots, but fundamentally I disapproved. Not for aesthetic reasons, or from any well-founded doubts whether one actually could make *Spitfires* or much else out of old railings, but for military reasons. I was convinced that the spikes with which most railings were surmounted formed an effective deterrent to and ready-made defence against, enemy parachute forces, and envisaged with a mixture of sympathetic anguish and patriotic glee - it was war after all- the predicament of the parachutist who found himself about to land on one. I did not attempt to calculate the probable casualty rate from this cause.

There were, of course, shortages, but I was scarcely aware of them. We collected our ration books from the Victorian house at the bottom of Grendon Road which had been taken over by the Ministry of Food. I had been too young, my diet too limited, when the war began to have any sense of deprivation, and I was not interested in clothes, apart from woggles. At home for the main meal, usually lunch, I ate most often egg, chips and peas or baked beans. Occasionally there was thinly sliced cold meat. My mother made good chips and I was perfectly content.

My mother would sing wistful wartime songs as she did the housework: *Some Day my Prince Will Come* (from Snow White), *It's a Lovely Day Tomorrow* and the Vera Lynn song *There'll be Blue Skies Over the White Cliffs of Dover*. But I did not yearn for peace, though I looked forward to my father's leaves and understood (incorrectly, as it proved) that with peace there would be more to eat. My only resentment concerned the restrictions on butter and jam. My mother was obliged to make a rule that one could spread one or the other but not both. Later, as an undergraduate, making my own tea, I spread both with an absurd

lavishness. I remember helping my mother to make a Christmas pudding with soya flour, carrots, gravy-browning and other unlikely ingredients; I thought it excellent.

Even the wartime shortage of chocolate I minded little, since I remembered no varieties. Most of the time we could get either *Bourneville Plain* or *Mars Bars*. My grandmother feared I should be undernourished and insisted I should eat as many *Mars Bars* as possible, an edict with which I docilely complied. One of the privileges of a wartime childhood was being incited to eat as much chocolate as there actually was. The only aspect of wartime feeding I recall with horror was eating out. Occasionally, in both Exeter and Plymouth, we went to the *British Restaurants* established to provide cheap and wholesome food for the people. Cheap they may have been, wholesome they were not. There was one on Plymouth Hoe which, had it provided food for the enemy rather than the home population, would have been in breach of the Geneva convention. Its tasteless lumps of indefinable meat, falling to pieces, apart from the gristle; its chips fried in oil clearly recycled after previous use for some industrial purpose - drained, perhaps, from the sumps of written-off *Spitfires*, making the cannibalisation process reciprocal; its mashed potato so curious in taste that it must have been bought ready-mashed in sacks, like flour; its pastry, indefinably odd in both taste and texture - all these may well have been the casualties of total war, but the rest was clearly simple malevolence. It was hard to believe that incompetence alone could have accomplished so much: the vegetables, presumably healthy enough before being boiled probably for days on end and then left to grow tepid; and the gravy, black and metallic, which could easily have been omitted altogether. Restaurants apart, though, the worst gastronomic atrocities of the period were perpetrated after the war was over, notably the tinned whale meat chunks and the tinned fish balls. The former, much like ox liver flavoured with cod-liver oil (a taste I knew well), could have been relished only by an Eskimo; the latter could have been relished by no one whatever.

The war came in a sense, of course, closest of all in the actual bombing, in the nights in the shelter or under the stairs and in the ruined walls of homes which, when left alone, soon became picturesque refuges for wild flowers, though all too often an officious council levelled them to the ground, creating, by the end of the war, acres of flat, hard-packed rubble. Children collected shrapnel, of course; I had some jagged bits of metal of various sizes, which formed a currency for swapping. In this way I acquired a piece of bronze-painted metal tubing, somewhat damaged, allegedly a bit of a German bomber. Such pieces were much

prized but very rare and difficult to authenticate; later, when the Americans came and the supply of shrapnel dried up the unit of currency became American cigarette packets, *Philip Morris*, *Camel*, *Lucky Strike*.

No high explosive bombs fell very close to our house; the nearest was in the next street, but there were various incendiary bombs including one on the pavement outside, which burnt the asphalt, and two in the garden, one of which buried itself symmetrically in the centre of a circular flower bed in the front garden, and in the damp earth failed to go off, leaving its tail fin sticking up. I remember myself and the other children running excitedly towards it and my mother screaming at us to leave it alone.

Characteristically we got a shelter in the garden only after the heavy raids were over. We children were sent to loot some planks of wood from bombed buildings to line the mud floor and returned proudly with a slightly charred front door. We undoubtedly enjoyed the incongruous, surreal quality of episodes like this, like the day after a raid when we came down to find the road fulling on the breeze, which we ran after and tried to catch like snowflakes. The worst aspect of raids were the siren, which I never got used to, and being bundled, shivering and half awake, into my clothes or dressing gown by my mother, both of us still shocked by our sudden awakening. Once in the shelter and fully awake one began to enjoy it, being in a hole in the ground in the garden with a number of other people (we shared it with our downstairs neighbours) in the middle of the night.

The heaviest raids on Exeter we spent, all of us, still shelterless, in the cupboard under the stairs in the downstairs flat. It made a long, narrow room, high at one end, and had an electric light. I remember chiefly the steady drone of the bombers' engines, the whistle of bombs falling and the thump or bang, depending on distance, and the vibrations as they landed, and most disturbing somehow, oddly enough, the unexpected staccato crash of the anti-aircraft guns. I had still, fortunately for me, some of an infant's sense of invulnerability, and it is greatly to the credit of my mother's courage that I kept it; had she panicked I would no doubt have done so also. I remember her reading to me in a voice no different from usual, during a particular crescendo of noise, a story about Peter Rabbit. I was, I remember, more worried about the implications of the farmer's gun for Peter than by the efforts of the Luftwaffe, and this, clearly, was entirely due to her. We were fortunate, too, in our neighbour, the Squadron Leader's wife, a large, placid woman. The jumpiest adult was my grandmother, who was sometimes with us, but she had already been bombed out once. My mother remembered

with much amusement her saying to me once chattering amid deafening noises close-by, "Be quiet John; this is serious".

The day after the heaviest of the Exeter raids my mother decided that enough was enough; we must go to Cornwall. There was, of course, no transport across the city; much of it proved to be roped off and inaccessible, so we had to walk. We took an odd, unorthodox route, through the lower bus station and across the Cathedral close to the Central Station, where some trains proved to be running. I do not remember much of the devastation, though I remember many firemen and policemen: perhaps too much looked unfamiliar for it to register. I know from later observation that some streets were just no longer there. What I remember chiefly is the fire hoses and pools of water everywhere, the asphalt of roads and pavements warm under one's feet and the smell of brick dust and burning wood and paint.

We went to Saint Germans, about ten miles west of Saltash. I always enjoyed the railway journey past Saltash along the Saint Germans river. There were long tunnels, the river is beautiful, and during the war it was always embellished with objects of interest. In 1944 and for long after the war the long lines of invasion barges lay moored together down the centre of the river. But there was also the more picturesque addition of sunken small ships, half maintained in view by the shallowness of the river, with bows or stems rising above the surface of the water or having sunk on an even keel, with funnels still pointing vertically upwards, the ships themselves resting, invisible, on the mud below. Aunt Edie's younger daughter had married the son of the pub, the *Eliot Arms*, and it was there that we went. We were, I am sure, warmly welcomed. I liked the softness of the beds, the cheerful noise from the bar in the evenings and the sweetish smell of beer from it in the mornings. I think Saint Germans Abbey, now the large parish church, where my aunt had been married, also impressed me, standing alone in a field on the Eliot estate, with its Norman doorway and two western towers. I do not know how long we stayed there and whether it was then or later that we made our furthest move deep into Cornwall, to the house of my aunt Ada, my mother's cousin, at Goonhavern. Goonhavern I remember only as a terrace of workmen's cottages, one of which was aunt Ada's, where she lived with my uncle Reg, a shock-headed man seldom without a shotgun, which I think alarmed my mother more than the bombs. I remember that I slept on a mattress on the landing, there being presumably no bedroom to spare. For the rest there are vignettes, chiefly a pond of thick grey mud, I guess china clay, where we used to dabble, and a wood of high, closely-set trees in which the rooks cawed high above, and

dropped feathers out of which my mother made me a Red Indian headdress.

The heavy bombing of Exeter took place in May, so I must have had some time off school, though it cannot, I think, have been long. In general, the routine of life at Bramdean was affected, apart from our playing-field bomb, relatively little by the war. One took one's gas mask in its cardboard case to school together with one's satchel, and there were sometimes gas mask practices for periods of up to ten minutes when one had to wear them. I particularly hated those; the eyepiece steamed up and one felt one was suffocating. There were occasional daylight air raid warnings, though no bombs fell. When the siren went we trooped down the stairs into Mr Maw's basement. It was odd to be there with the entire school and staff, including the groundsmen and odd-job men, always known collectively as Pugsley, Layers and Thompson, as though they were a firm of solicitors. There was not much room to do anything but stand up, and it got boring after a while, though the break with routine always seemed welcome. Air raid warnings at night carried a bonus. If there were three or more alerts school the next day started an hour later. It was exciting after two, waiting to see if some straggler making his way home from Bristol or South Wales would set off another siren. Somehow we never doubted that the further disruption to our sleep was worth it; sleep could be made up, but an hour's school gone was gone forever. Morning assemblies sometimes contained the announcement of a decoration for an Old Boy, which would be celebrated with a half holiday. Two fighter pilots, Wynyard Wright and Sutton, scored so often that they must have represented something of a threat to our education. I remember only one sombre occasion, when we were told that the father of one boy had been killed in Normandy a few days after D Day, though the war memorial to old boys unveiled after the war contains about eight names.

One way in which the stages of the war were marked was by the successive waves of invaders it brought to the South West of England; I have already spoken of the Spanish refugees and of the French sailors in the streets of Saltash after Dunkirk. They were followed by many other, larger and more enduring incursions: refugees, evacuees, allies; Poles, Cockneys, Americans, even Italians and Germans in large numbers after 1943, singing tunefully and cheerfully from the backs of the lorries which carried them about. There were, of course, all sorts of British uniforms; those of the army became more varied in flashes and berets as the war continued: commandos, paratroops, tank corps. I venerated them all, but my chief admiration was for the countless sailors who packed the

trains to and from Plymouth, because of the miraculous professional skill with which they would carry mugs of tea, sometimes as many - I am anxious not to exaggerate - as four in each hand, swaying their way through the crowded, rocking corridors without spilling a drop.

But it was undoubtedly the allies who added the variety. The first were, in 1940-41 in Exeter, the Poles, a fighter squadron stationed outside the city. There was then I remember a great faith, derived inappropriately from the daylight successes in the Battle of Britain in night fighters, and no faith at all in the anti-aircraft batteries. This I believe was unjustified. At that time, through no fault of their own, night fighters were useless and anti-aircraft guns only relatively useless. And the Germans now came at night. In any case, the Poles, as both romantic exiles and gallant defenders, were much feted. They looked romantic too. My mother belonged to some association, inevitably mostly female, for promoting - it is impossible not to convey an innuendo, unjustified, I am sure at least in my mother's case - Anglo-Polish friendship. The Polish airmen came at least once to a party at our flat; their uniforms were intriguingly different: greenish, they were, with jackboots, dark red stripes and flashes. I wish I could remember if they had lancer hats but I cannot; the most exotic military headgear I remember resting on the knob on our banister during the war belonged to a Free French officer, brought to tea I think by Daphne Upstairs. I much admired its red top. At the Polish party there was much hearty and hilarious embracing; I have a sense my mother did not quite approve of the enthusiasm some of the Exeter ladies brought to promoting Anglo- Polish friendship. At least one of her friends, a divorcee and mother of a friend of mine at Bramdean, became first the mistress and eventually the wife of one of the Poles, not an airman but a soldier. Fat and no longer romantic, Uncle Josef lived on until the nineteen-seventies on his wife's money, laughed at behind his back by his stepson Jim and me for his accent and his opinions; he believed, for example, that all English football matches were fixed, and that it was virtually impossible to win the pools without inside knowledge, though he continued to fill them in as his main occupation. The Poles passed. The next wave was the evacuees. And here I must introduce a major figure in my years from five to ten: Grace. There has, indeed, been a kind of artificiality in speaking of earlier episodes without making it clear that this included Grace, but it seemed better to prepare her entrance in due form, for it was striking. One day in the winter of 1940-41, I remember it as very cold, my mother and I went to a large house, still standing, on the Heavitree Road. There, amid crowds of thin children and bustling adults, either by prior arrangement

or by spontaneous elective affinity, we acquired Grace. She was eleven, six years older than I; a pale cockney child with a medieval peasant's haircut, ankle-socks, round, steel-rimmed spectacles, a cardboard gas mask case, a very pink cardigan with a large hole in one elbow, and, as it turned out, adenoids. She lived with us for the duration of the war.

I was very fortunate in Grace. She was strong-minded, spirited and unsentimental, but though she immediately assumed the leadership her extra years entitled her to, she never used it to torment or humiliate me. She knew rhymes and songs unknown to me. She imitated Carmen Miranda 'I I I I I like you vairy much' and Greta Garbo 'I Want to be Alone'. She helped to build our air-raid shelter; she went with us to St Germans and Goonhavern. Only once did she lead me astray. At her suggestion we went up one day and vandalised Miss Johnson's school. Confronted with the evidence by my mother, Grace denied it unblinkingly, but I cracked very early in the investigation and sang like a dicky bird. I do not think I blamed Eve; I hope not. But I certainly burst into tears and grassed. We were sent over to Miss Johnson, who lived with her mother in one of the almshouses to apologise. We were received kindly; perhaps the vandalism had not really been very severe. Grace, afterwards, was only mildly scornful of me, but I had discovered that I did not have the nerve for crime.

Only once, on the other hand, did I nonplus Grace. I knew that she was a Londoner. Apart from Mr Churchill, the only Londoner I had heard of was the King. I knew who the King was because I had inherited from somewhere a book of cigarette cards commemorating his Coronation. There were cards depicting such interesting and mysterious figures as Lord Lyon King of Arms (floppy hat and a tabard), and an Elder Brother of Trinity House (feathered cocked hat and epaulettes; what, I wondered, did a Younger Brother look like?) And of course there was the King. I naturally asked if she knew her fellow Londoner. She thought for a long time, unwilling to lie but clearly feeling that her status as a Londoner was at stake. Eventually her answer, with great deliberation, was majestic: "He goes his way", she said, "we go ours". I remember no other conversations in detail, but I remember, generically, giggling competitions in which we attempted to think of ever more complicated humiliations, mostly excremental, for Hitler and his entourage; I am glad to say I have forgotten the details of these pages from de Sade. I have, however, to remember that I later found hilariously funny the invented conversations in the column of the *Daily Express* humourist, Nathaniel Gubbis, between two imaginary German generals called, I thought with exquisite felicity, von Schmellingpantz

and von Stinkentrauser.

My mother quickly got rid of Grace's cardigan and set herself to eliminate those two closely related phenomena, Grace's adenoids and her accent. The adenoids were easily disposed of; the accent was a more stubborn obstacle, but my mother, contrary to all correct modern thought, persisted. Cockney is a vigorous strain. Like a virus introduced by Europeans to the innocent natives of some tropical island, it began to spread among the natives; having lived almost all my life in Devon and Cornwall I was soon glottal stopping and dropping 'ts' and pronouncing 'th' as 'v' as though I had been born to it. My mother weighed into the phonetic battle with a bundle of sticks and a bunch of carrots. There was a system of red and black marks recorded on the wall; black ones led to deprivations, red ones to treats. Red ones could be obtained, among other things, by sounding the 'h' in 'white', 'wheel' and 'when'; 'woite' brought a black. She made war on idioms as well as vowels and dropped consonants: the cockney double preposition ('off of') was a sure loser. She cured us, if that is the word. Fortunately perhaps, Grace was an orphan, brought up by a grandmother, who died around the end of the war. She was spared the equivalent of Eliza Doolittle's re-entry, complete with aspirates, to Lisson Grove. But, I am left uneasy. She was adopted by a childless couple in Bristol, friends of friends of my mother's. After her adoption she and my mother corresponded a little, but I never saw her again. Either her adoptive parents were jealous or Grace herself felt a sense of betrayal. I am sure my mother acted for what she thought the best for her; the couple were quite well off, and offered a better future. On the other hand I am certain my parents would willingly have kept her; at sixteen she was no burden; she knew our ways and was I am sure fond of us, as we were of her. Perhaps it was not well done. At all events I missed her, and this may have been, unknown to me, one of the earliest of the miseries of peace.

After the evacuees came the Americans. I love many aspects of America, and it and Americans have been very good to me, so I should not be suspected of any present anti-American bias in saying that I found them unimpressive. To my stiff European notions they seemed sloppy. The soldiers slouched and chewed. The officers wore chocolate coloured coats of civilian cut, with light trousers, and some were decidedly tubby. Their caps rose to a peak like half-hearted versions of the German model, and they appeared to have no interesting flashes or cap badges; the officers, I seem to recall, wore brown shoes. I doubted if the Germans could be beaten by men wearing brown shoes. The only impressive things about them were their physical size and vast numbers. Their

generosity was undeniable. “Here you are, kid”, was the first thing ever said to me by an American, throwing a packet of gum from a jeep. It was a common experience. In some of these remarks there are probably echoes of the prejudices which undoubtedly existed among my elders. I do not think I have any such excuse for a reaction to which I would obviously rather not admit but which truth compels me to confess. I was frightened of black American soldiers. They were the first blacks I had ever seen, and they scared me; much more than the Germans did. I really do not think my elders can be blamed, nor my schoolfellows. Blacks were, I think, too exotic to us for prejudice. I am sure it was not the fault of my mother. I have never heard her utter a prejudiced remark, but I have heard her angry at prejudiced remarks from others. But at the time I heard, to my recollection, none at all. For all that, I had dreams of terror featuring black soldiers as I had never done about the Germans. I really think that it was just the shock effect of sheer unfamiliarity, and it seems to me interesting because of its spontaneity. I was too young, I think, for it to have been the result of reading, and I remember none relevant. It was not what would normally be thought of as prejudice. I had no myths about them; I did not think them inferior; it was simple, childish fear of the alien.

The other effect of the Americans on me was, in one way or another, a common one. They enlarged my sexual education, as they did for many of my contemporaries and elders. In my case it was not, as often I think - my wife reports this from East Anglia - the contraceptives they strewed so liberally in their wake. It was, characteristically I suppose, a purely linguistic enlightenment, and it was provided, not by an American but by a schoolfellow speaking about an American. A girl in his road had had a baby by an American. The boy said “He fucked her and she had a baby”. I had heard the word before, used as an expletive. I knew it was taboo, as a number of words seemed to be; Miss Cox, after all, had threatened me with the pains of hll for uttering the word ‘damn’. It had never occurred to me that it was a verb (I had heard it, I think, chiefly as a verbal adjective, loosely applied), much less one with a precise meaning. Grace had entertained me with hilariously improbable accounts of how babies were produced, which I had taken with an at least partial and well-merited scepticism (she made the process sound rather like an obscene burlesque of the marriage service). Now, suddenly, there was, as the boy spoke, a moment of illumination. The exact nature of the process, and its motive, were still, I think, rather obscure to me, but clearly a process it was, and one common enough to have a name as well as a local habitation. Once named it entered the public

realm, took at least the outlines of a shape, out of the mists of Grace's Rabelaisian imagination (I do not know how far she was herself their dupe); it was a recognised act; identified, and therefore possible and performable, if not at the time by me.

I have one final memory of the American presence. Daphne Upstairs had an American boyfriend; he was much in our house during the months before D Day, presumably helping to conjugate my new-found verb. All through the warm May of 1944 he spent much time sunbathing in the garden - our neighbours must have allowed it. He lay on a groundsheet which, when he got up, retained part of the outline of his upper body, etched in sweat. I found it rather disgusting. I now find it macabre and hope it was not ominous. He disappeared before the 6th of June and I never heard if he survived the campaign.

I was allowed to stay up, wrapped in an eiderdown, to listen to the wireless reports on the first evening of the invasion. I subsequently turned a page in my Atlas back from Italy to France and began to draw lines, which moved agonizingly slowly. I had first become really aware of land warfare from the bulletins of the war in the desert, in which hundreds of miles were lost and regained, and from the news from the Russian front. Like many of the troops I found it difficult to adjust to the pace of war in the Normandy bocage. My chief recollection of that summer is of the waves of planes, in close formation, which sometimes flew thunderously and low almost over our house in the direction of the coast. It was easy to recognise the new fighter-bombers, *Thunderbolts* and *Mustangs* with their snub noses, thick bodies and white rings around the fuselage behind the wings. Massed in this way they looked immensely purposeful, powerful, and indeed irresistible, but I think I found them somehow brutal and unimaginative compared with the elegant *Spitfires* and *Hurricanes* which had sometimes flown, usually high up, in small numbers, above the house.

The end of the European war came, for me, sitting alone in a swing, in the garden, impatient for the end. It was not, of course, the actual moment of surrender, but it was clear that surrender must soon come. Hitler was said to be dead, and I had a feeling of anti-climax. Was this all? There was a victory parade of sorts through Exeter, mostly the Pay Corps and the Boys Brigade. It was unimpressive. We were taken down to the main road one evening to see the street lights come on again. That was unimpressive too: a poor substitute for the searchlights and tracers exploring the night sky.

In the summer of 1945, after VE Day, we went to London. We had been, more briefly, the previous year. My father, after nearly two years

in the Shetlands, was posted for the last couple of years of the war to work as a clerk at the Air Ministry. We stopped, the first time, at the service families' charity, the SAFFA (I have forgotten what the initials mean) behind Broadcasting House. I do not remember which of the London sights, which we had virtually to ourselves, we saw then. The memories are overlaid by others later, though I do remember going to the United Services Museum which was then housed in the Inigo Jones Banqueting Hall, and looking at the window out of which Charles I stepped to the scaffold. I remember going to the National Gallery and looking particularly at the Van Eyck Arnolfini betrothal picture, of which my parents were especially fond and which I too liked for its perspective and intricacy of detail, but this must surely have been on a later visit; the pictures must have been still stored away the first time. I remember the domed concrete prophylactic under which Eros lurked like an unhatched chrysalis for the duration of the war, but my chief impression of London was of how grey it was and how the particles of grit in the air from so much pulverized stone lodged in one's eyes whenever there was a gust of wind.

The second visit, oddly enough, although we were lodged less centrally, was more memorable, partly because it was much longer, partly because we saw more of my father, who was waiting for demobilization. A friend of my mother's in Exeter had a cousin who had inherited the family home, a large Victorian house, in New Southgate. It had been for some time empty, and we were lent it for the summer of 1945. The house was musty and still had working gas-lights rather than electricity, which popped. The bookshelves were full of Victorian historical novels, which I read eagerly. The house, which was beside the main railway line and New Southgate station, looked across to the hill on which Alexandra Palace stands. One Sunday afternoon we walked across to it: a typical Victorian family outing. When I went back there around 1970 to record a broadcast for the Open University it still had the same agreeable air of dilapidation. We went into central London from Arnos Grove tube station and my father played cricket with me for hours in Arnos Park, chiefly catching practice, at which I became reasonably adept. It was in Arnos Park that I began to get some inkling of the price I had paid for the excitements of war. We also went to variety at the Wood Green Empire, where one act was Ivy Benson's (all women's) Band.

One day in central London, we emerged from the tube - Westminster, I think - to find the streets crowded with masses of people, waving flags, cheering, dancing improvised congas. We discovered that Japan had surrendered. The earlier news of the dropping of the atomic bomb

had, so far as I remember, made no great impression on us; just a very big bomb. I do not remember any great sense of elation now; my father was due for demobilization anyway. But I enjoyed the exuberance of the crowd flowing over Westminster Bridge, and was particularly struck by the sudden appearance of men everywhere selling union jacks and other patriotic objects; squeakers too, I think. I was bought a flag and waved it dutifully. The best episode, a little later, was watching an airman climbing up the portico of an hotel, I think it must have been the Savoy, to sit triumphantly astride the flagpole projecting over the entrance. That night in New Southgate there was a bonfire around which people stood and danced. Thanks to bombing there was plenty of wood lying about and plenty of open space for the bonfire and the dancing; I remember my mother saying that she would have thought people would have had enough of fires, but I thought it much better than the Exeter victory parade and the street lights dimly reawakening along the Heavitree Road.

Looking back now I think I was fortunate in the war; not just in the obvious sense that I was spared bereavement, terror, mutilation or death, or the trauma of seeing these things at first hand. The nearest they came to me was at least eight hundred yards away, which made all the difference. But I was fortunate, I now think, in the range of odd experiences it offered. I had, as Churchill might have said, felt the distant pulse of great events and seen something of their local effects. I had registered the incursions of strange incomers and strange uniforms. I had been - I have to say it - callously exhilarated by the way the war had sometimes violently ripped apart the surface of normal life: by Devonport burning, by the gutted shells of houses, and weed-grown walls still sometimes showing their wallpaper and their upstairs fireplaces set half-way up the wall. I was quite indifferent to their pathos; houses were houses. Had I had a lyre like Nero I dare say I should have played it. If asked I am sure that I should have said, unhesitatingly, that all this was well worth the extra family holiday or two at Paignton or Perranporth (actually we had one wartime holiday, on Dartmoor, where, I drank still cider for the first time, learnt to dissect, if not actually to catch, a trout, and was run away with by a donkey). I had had a good war.

6
Miseries of Peace

Every year, by convention, Bramdean, like other schools, had its sports teams photographed. I was in the football team for two years and so have two photographs. The chalked dates on the ball held by the team captain seated in the centre are 1946 and 1947. I am standing in the same position in each case, at the left hand end of the back row. There the similarity ends. In 1946 the figure who confronts the onlooker is small compared with most of the others, though stocky, and the round face is childish. The eyes are like buttons; to speak of them as opaque would perhaps convey a false suggestion of mystery; in fact it is clear that what you see is what you get. There is no belligerence but the child stands firmly, bullet-headed, compact, with his own kind of self-possession and even self-satisfaction. One feels that he knows very little but he knows who he is and in his own way is in charge of his own small existence.

The second figure is taller, but the extra height has the effect of a disability. The hair is parted and brilliantined, with a quiff scarcely more oily than the face below. The expression is a shiftily defiant smirk. It is a face, as Walter Pater said of the Mona Lisa, into which the soul with all its maladies has entered; also, clearly, a face perched uneasily above a hormonal revolution its owner has no idea what to do about. He is Baden Powell's 'Unhealthy Boy', except that he is making a not altogether successful effort to stand straight. It is clearly only a misplaced desire for symmetry which makes me feel that the end of the war was the end of simplicity. Common sense suggests that this is too simple, and the photographs prove it. The desire for an objective correlative should fasten rather on the crisis of the post-war British economy, the acute shortages of the years 1947 and 1948. It was in the latter year too that I changed schools, making the usual ignominious transition from a senior and a monitor, a peremptory censor of small boys, to a new boy,

constantly censured, my former pomp now one with Nineveh and Tyre.

Yet I am not altogether wrong, I think, to connect the growth of maturity with the end of the war and the events associated with it. The process of disillusion had begun even as the war was ending. I began, for example, to lose enthusiasm for its instruments. In fact my attitude to military technology constitutes the only kind of growth in myself during the war that I can recognise. Otherwise, after the period of rapid if now largely indiscernible development which must have preceded it, and the growing pains which became so evident not long after it ended, I seem, during the war, to have remained remarkably the same. Around, I think, the time of Wavell's victories in the Western Desert I was enjoying the William books of Richmal Crompton and playing football. At the time of the dropping of the atomic bomb, these were still my enthusiasms. My appreciation of military technology, on the other hand, passed through three distinct phases. At the beginning I had no concept of obsolescence at all (such obliviousness is not uncommon in the adult world at the outbreak of wars). I, too, would have sent the Polish lancers to attack Panzers in 1939 or the red-trousered French cuirassiers to charge machine guns in 1914. By 1944 I was expert in such abstruse matters as the relative rates of climb of the *Spitfire Mark IV* and the *Messerschmidt me110*. But this was a brief and uncharacteristic expertise. By 1946 I was already a resentful military Luddite. Like a cavalryman despising the tank and wistfully recalling the gleam and smell of harness leather, I deplored the new jet aircraft: not graceful, birdlike things, but winged bugs, which had, unfairly it seemed to me, usurped the place of the *Hurricanes* and *Spitfires* to which my loyalty was irrevocably given. Later I experienced the same disillusionment when the great battleships I had seen in my childhood were replaced by small, bulky, so-called frigates festooned with little darts and pods. I was no longer an enthusiast for military might; at most I was the guardian of an archaeological interest, which soon faded. But towards the jets I felt a positive hostility and even fear; their roar as they passed over the house scared me as the drone of the German bombers had not done and I was afraid they would crash into the roof. Either I was losing my childish sense of invulnerability or else, perhaps, there was some delayed shock suppressed earlier, which the jets had called to the surface.

My aesthetic disapproval and crusty military conservatism (which innoculated me in advance against the space comics of the fifties) contributed in some way, I think, to an increasingly adult sense of what war meant and what it might still mean to me personally. Pictures of the ruined cities of Germany, so complete in their devastation, of Hiroshima

and Nagasaki, of the extermination camps, lifted a veil which, during the war itself, except, so to speak, at the actual point of impact, covered the reality, and whose warp and weft were a cultivated, defiant chirpiness and the bland phrases of official communiqués: 'heavy damage', 'pockets of resistance', 'mopping up operations'. Now, with the danger and combativeness over, the ruined cities of the enemy seemed merely ugly and no cause for rejoicing.

During the war, even among ourselves, there was perhaps something of the anaesthesia of pity one experiences in hospital awaiting an operation, when the groans and rattles behind adjacent drawn curtains are merely the background to one's own ordeal. I remember only one case of conscious pity during the war. We were told at school assembly that a new boy would be joining the school who had had a bad time in the London bombing and whose health had suffered because of it, and we were to treat him kindly on this account. The effects on him were very apparent. He was a cockney boy with a bad facial twitch and a periodic uncontrolled hysterical volubility that we would normally have mocked. He was in other ways rather unpleasant, but we behaved. I think, with all the forbearance we had been asked for. He was the only 'casualty' I saw.

Another puzzling and rather disturbing episode to me at the end of the war was the 1945 election. Not that I was perturbed by the result; I was disturbed that there should be an election. Surely the Germans were the enemy. Why were we contending among ourselves, and for what? Why did the enemy, among my mother's friends, now appear to be Mr Attlee, rather than Hitler? In my own family the full spectrum of political attitudes was present. I asked my grandmother how she would vote. She said she would vote Liberal. I asked why, and she said because she was Chapel. Had she been a churchwoman she would have voted Tory (Labour she did not consider). But as Chapel she should and would vote Liberal, as she always had. I wish I had pressed her further to explain the connection. My mother swallowed the Churchill speech and the Beaverbrook press compaign against Harold Laski as the sinister architect of a totalitarian state (she was later to become a close friend of his only daughter). She woke me, on the morning the results were declared, weeping, which startled and disturbed me a good deal. She had done nothing like it during the war. My father was, I am sure, part of the famous servicemen's Labour vote. I do not remember his saying so, but he gave clues, like speaking disrespectfully of Churchill. It may have been his only Labour vote.

I voted myself, in a sense. We had a discussion at school organised by the headmaster. Almost all the boys proved to be Tory, though without

any reasons they could give. There were two dissidents, I and the headmaster's son Andrew. We were Liberals. I had read the three party leaflets put through our door, and was impressed by the Liberal candidate. I do not now remember why, but he seemed to wish us well and I was impressed. The future political correspondent of the *Telegraph* and the *Mail*, on the other hand, thought that the Liberal leader, Sir Archibald Sinclair, would make the best Prime Minister (he may have been the only person in the country to think this). His reason was that Sir Archibald had been Air Minister, and as air transport was going to be very important in the future, he was the best prepared of the three leaders for the highest office.

My parents had obviously experienced the war in very different ways, which were reflected I think in their different responses to the I945 election. For both the war had been, I suggest, emancipating. To my mother, though I had prevented her doing war-work in any but voluntary and part-time ways, it had brought responsibility. She had managed a household, brought up Grace and myself, made close friendships with women of various social classes. My father, who has always been attracted I think by the idea of a life without possessions, had clearly enjoyed the simplicity of life in RAF huts, above all on the Shetland Islands, just as he had enjoyed being in central London despite the V1 and V2 bombs, but he also bore some of the resentments and scepticism of the other ranks. My mother, a civilian, had wholly identified with the war effort and found self-respect in doing so. For my father, a serviceman, I suspect it had been important to his self-respect to hold some of himself back, individual, untouched and critical.

My father's re-entry into family life was on the whole a smooth one. There were two main causes of friction, two campaigns which he waged, in one of which he was successful while the other he lost. The first was his campaign to stop reading at meals. My mother and I had regularly taken meals throughout the war with books propped in front of us. Reading was our main form of recreation. We did not, I think, listen to the wireless so much as after the war. Apart from news bulletins - and even these we cannot have listened to religiously; I remember that Italy had been out of the war for three days when we heard of it - the only programme I can identify with reasonable certainty from the war period, as well as after it, is *Monday Night at Eight*, with its short thrillers, introduced with spine-chilling music by *The Man in Black*. We were not ITMA fans, though we all liked *Much Binding in the Marsh*. My father now decreed that reading at meals was bad for the digestion and contrary to good manners and should stop. With some grumbling he

was obeyed. His other campaign was to repair my lack of religious education; my mother had attended church but not taken me. Now my father decided that we should sample all the religious services. Anglican and Methodist, that the neighbourhood offered. Some of my early Chapel experiences were repeated, and High Anglican ritualism added to them. I hated all of them impartially. After a few weeks of bitter resentment and satirical descriptions on my part, the experiment was discontinued. I was abandoned to heathenism. My early distaste for religious services was not positively atheistical. My mother taught me to say my prayers and I did so devoutly. I began to give them up around the time I am now speaking of. The crux was oddly enough a subject in which I took little interest then and take little now: astronomy. The knowledge of countless lifeless worlds, separated by astronomical distances, drastically altered, if it did not altogether destroy, my conception of God. The God who had created these, if he had, seemed a different person from the one to whom I had prayed to bless myself, my parents, my grandparents, Uncle Tree, Auntie Torrie, and so on through more and more distant grades of consanguinity and affinity. The latter God proved incapable of sustaining the burden of what I now knew of his creativity. The astronomical God, on the other hand, seemed not worth praying to; I found it impossible to believe that Auntie Torrie, Uncle Tree or even myself were of much concern to him, if I should concern myself with him, and I ceased to talk to him or consider his purposes, moods and prejudices, as I had done up to a point with his predecessor. I know that this process was complete by the time I was thirteen. In my first year at grammar school we were asked who wished to attend confirmation classes. My hand remained down. The nevervolunteer principle would in my case have had some influence with me, but I clearly remember thinking that I did not believe what I should be taught. In Scripture lessons I became a scoffer, an esprit fort, a militant rationalist, a thorn in the Chaplain's flesh and a stumbling block to the faithful.

In the winter of 1947-8, as it must have been, my parents faced a dilemma I am now very conscious of myself, though then my own views were, with considerable uneasiness, the opposite of theirs. My grandfather, as I now know, had paid my fees as a day boy at Bramdean. He was now retired. He could not possibly pay the fees of a boarder at a public school, and it was for public schools that many of the boys at Bramdean were entered. My parents, I became gradually aware, for reasons which I then found incomprehensible and now think mistaken, longed to send me to a public school. It would, for them, have been the

complete demonstration that they had been able to give me a better start than they themselves had. But they could not afford it. They were advised that I should not win a scholarship; my Latin and Maths were not good enough. They certainly could not afford to send me to Sherborne or Clifton or Harrow where some of my fellows were going. I now find it very pathetic to remember what barrels they scraped, getting prospectuses from minor, minor public schools, from boarding establishments for the sons of Distressed Methodist Ministers, from heaven knows what minnows nibbling in the public school pond, just so long as they could be accorded the species-designation. I was then and am now thankful that they were disappointed. Then I simply knew I did not want to go away to school. The blessed, peaceful evenings of reading at home would have to be given up for who knew what austerities and barbarities. Now I cannot think of any gain I could possibly have derived that would have justified the sacrifice, or any sacrifice at all, that would have been required of my parents. No doubt Sherborne or Harrow might have given me something; I should, for better or worse, have been a little different. The only difference I can think of as a clear advantage is that I might eventually have approached Cambridge with more confidence and therefore exploited it, as an undergraduate, more fully. But in any case Sherborne or Harrow would not have been my lot. I doubt if, at the kind of 'public school' my parents might have tried to afford, I should have got as good an education as I actually received.

I have spoken throughout of Exeter School, to which I went in the autumn of 1946, as my grammar school. In the school itself considerable store was set by calling it a 'minor public school', whatever that was. It was a Direct Grant school, a Headmasters' Conference school. But grammar school seems to me its most honourable as well as most accurate and now poignant designation. The origin it claimed, by a slightly tenuous connection, was remote, with the medieval hospital of St John: almshouses, to which by the thirteenth century a few scholars were attached; the school's badge is a maltese cross. The site of the old school in the city centre, which was bombed in 1942, is commemorated now by a small statue of a blue-coated boy. The school was re established on the outskirts of the city in the eighteen-seventies, with buildings by Butterfield. It accommodated a boarding house, School House, in dormitories and studies on the first floor. School House in my time was a strange tribe, with its own rituals and forms of justice and injustice. I think it was largely inhabited by the sons of what one might call the other ranks of empire: its old boys seemed to go in inordinate numbers into such occupations as the Rhodesian Police or planting tea in Nyasa-

land, pursuits quite alien to day boys. I think being a prefect in School House was probably a very good preparation for the Rhodesian Police.

Butterfield's buildings bear the same characteristic signatures offenestration and patterned brickwork as those at Keble College. Indeed, the resemblance is so close that dining in hall at Keble later in life I experienced the opposite sensation to the one that later life often brings, namely that the familiar has shrunk in size. Here indeed was the familiar, but enormously enlarged. The building was not a quadrangle, however, but faced outwards. The inner space half enclosed by the two wings had acquired a clutter of bicycle-sheds, huts, and similar sub-architectural debris, but the outer sides had fine views, slightly spoilt since my time by the new Devon and Exeter hospital across the road, which, however, being built in the nineteen-sixties, has fortunately acquired a disease of the concrete and is to be pulled down. The ground slopes down slightly from the front and side of Butter field's two ranges, joined by a corner tower, so that the asphalt area in front of the main entrance, used by the school cadet corps as a parade ground, forms a kind of terrace, with views over the playing fields to the Haldon hills and Haldon Belvedere in the distance. Beyond the terrace, sloping down to the playing fields, was the prefects' lawn, a much coveted patch on which the prefects strolled with hands carefully placed in their pockets, another coveted privilege. These, a special tie, and the exoneration of prefects from wearing caps, were the chief badges of rank and distinction and provided, like knighthoods and OBEs, much costless happiness to those who enjoyed them. It was not a serious deprivation, as a junior, to have to keep one's hands out of one's pockets, but it was a deep satisfaction to be allowed later publicly to plunge them in.

The staff, who always wore gowns, had two strata, the old and the not so old. The former, a handful (two of them had taught my father) generally resembled the old dons I came to know in Cambridge in the 'fifties. Most wore shabby black suits under their gowns, with waistcoats and watch chains; one wore frequent egg stains as well. They seemed more idiosyncratic than their juniors. The latter wore sports coats and a good many seemed to conform to a not disagreeable type: dry and not particularly expansive but agreeably sardonic and free from cant (a characteristic not shared by their chief, the headmaster, of whom more later). There were, of course, exceptions: damp enthusiasts, hysterics, or men in whom laconic wariness and lack of illusions had turned into mere sullenness. Some subjects, notably science I think, were not well taught, and my Latin was given no help to improve. But the subjects I cared about, History, English, Languages, were generally well, or very well,

taught. If I do not name names it is not from ingratitude, but only because gratitude is a hard emotion to make interesting.

It is rather unfair on the school, and certainly odd since I took them for only one year before being released joyfully to concentrate on what I understood and could do, that among the classes sharpest in my memory are the science ones. Perhaps it is partly because of their setting. The chemistry lab, for example, smelt powerfully of gas, like a sulphuric spring. On our first morning the master explained that science was different: historical facts, grammatical rules, we took on trust and by authority. In science we would see for ourselves. He then performed an experiment, I forget what. It failed. I thought we should spend the rest of the class drafting a letter to the Royal Society pointing out that we, Lower VA at Exeter School, had refuted Boyle's law (or whatever it was). In fact we were told to write the experiment out in our books as though it had happened the way it was supposed to happen. This occurred so often with mine that I began mentally to interpolate a 'not' into our reports of experiments. 'The crystals were (not) observed to change colour'; 'the gas in the first chamber became (did not become) cloudy'. I began seriously to disbelieve in science. Even God seemed to suffer no such regular disconfirmation. Marks in chemistry were awarded chiefly for neatness, and for drawing apparatus. I was not neat and could not draw. I have sometimes looked at distinguished chemists and wondered if they owe their eminence to neatness and the ability to draw apparatus; perhaps I am mistaking a necessary for a sufficient condition. There was also a Darwinian process, equivalent to sexual selection, which took place in the lab (perhaps elective affinities would express it better). We chose our own pairs for experiments; the incompetent and manually inept, wallflowers until the end, found themselves paired. My own pair was if anything even more incompetent than I. We broke a lot of equipment but otherwise accomplished little.

I remember the first experiment in the physics classroom also. The master, I think, oversold the thing. We were, he said, to witness and measure the expansion of metal when heated (I do not know why we were to do this: he did not say). He aroused exaggerated expectations. I think I expected an expansion something on the scale of that which I had begun rather dazedly to experience myself, when heated. The physics master's copper rod extended itself by something like a millimetre, and he seemed very pleased about it. I thought him easily satisfied. When it came to expansion, physics seemed a very poor second to physiology. The only interesting thing about physics was the benches, which were perforated with countless holes made by generations of compass points.

In the holes mercury had accumulated, making mercury wells. When these were probed with a compass point a small blob of mercury emerged to shine in the light. If one teased a number of these together they amalgamated into a perfectly good little ball, with which one could play a kind of hockey with compasses. I became quite adept at it. This was the only progress I made in physics.

Given my severe limitations – un-mathematical, unable to think in three dimensions - I could, I am sure, never have been much good at science. Any requirement of a pass as a condition of a leaving certificate would have left me unqualified and ineligible for university. On the other hand I do now think I could have been helped at least to see the point, and to understand the nature of scientific reasoning, if the subjects had been taught more philosophically and historically, instead of with the experimental bias which prevailed. Even atomic and sub-atomic physics, which we could not do experimentally, however, seemed to me simultaneously tedious and incredible. Had I been taught something about the use of hypothesis, and also been taught the subject historically, with an account of why the obviously more sensible views of, for example, Aristotle, had been abandoned for the assertions which now strained my credulity, I might have done better. It was only in my late 'teens and early twenties, when I began to read for myself a little philosophy and history of science, Conant and Toulmin on conceptualisation and scientific inference, Einstein and Infeld's *The Evolution of Modern Physics*, Sherrington's *Man on his Nature*, Gillispie's *Genesis and Geology*, and *The Origin of Species*, that science began to make any sense at all.

I did not do Biology. It must have been an option, which only those specialising in science took. I did not regret this; again it seemed to be much to do with drawing. I only went into the biology lab once or twice. It too smelt, but of ether I think. It was furnished as a witches' den, with eye of newt and toe of dog and bottles containing foetuses of various species, with distended blue veins. On one occasion I was called in by some friends when the master had been called away. The exercise was to dissect some frogs. The frogs had arrived, but were alive and frisky, hopping about. The ether or chloroform which was apparently usually employed to prepare them for their educational duties could not be found. One small boy suggested electrocution - 'like in America' he said. He was an unpleasant boy, the kind who pees for preference in swimming baths. I cannot remember the details of the subsequent attempt, with inadequate equipment, to recreate the specialised conditions of a State Penitentiary. I think we were all surprised as well as

disappointed that he did not electrocute himself, and had gone along with the thing chiefly in the hope that he would do so.

At games my career followed much the same pattern as at Bramdean. After initial bewilderment I enjoyed playing rugby but was no good at anything else. Apart from games, the chief extra-mural activity was that of the cadet corps, which paraded, in full uniform with rifles, once a week. Here I encountered the pathos of untimeliness. If, at eight, I had been given a real rifle (albeit of First World War vintage) with blanks to fire, a uniform, a band to march behind and moors to crawl about on, I would have thought I had gone to heaven. At sixteen I merely wanted to stay at home and keep warm and dry and read Baudelaire. Marching was tedious, and only interesting when things went hilariously wrong for the cadet shouting the orders. The other elementary skills required - map-reading, shooting, stripping the Bren gun (Bren guns, according to the orders given, seemed to jam so often I wondered that any army had ever bothered with them) - seemed not too difficult.

Once a term we had a field day, usually wet, on Woodbury Common, just to the north -west of Exeter. I think once we may have gone to Dartmoor but I cannot be sure. Field days seemed to consist chiefly of getting lost, more or less deliberately. Getting lost was initially rather enjoyable. A section, under a corporal, would be detached. Then, showing initiative, it would detach itself a little further until it was able to shelter from the rain and from the eye of the higher command in a clump of trees where it would eat its sandwiches, smoke and tell dirty stories. Then it would transpire that it had been forgotten about, was really lost, and would have to tramp a very long way to reach the buses to be taken home. I suspect this may be a very fair preparation for some aspects of real infantry operations. We only very rarely encountered the enemy. Then we were allowed to fire off our blanks; I once, firing in echelon, shot off the beret of the boy just to my right. Our most serious casualty was the result of an unintentional self-inflicted wound suffered by a friend of mine. Told to empty his breech, he did so by placing the muzzle of the rifle on the toe of his boot and firing. He was not seriously hurt - several toes were scorched and blackened - but he was taken to hospital. His mother was a friend of my own, so I was given an account of the manner in which the news of his misadventure was given to her by our commander. Captain Barker (Captain Barker is the Devil's right-marker, as our song had it) was a large fat man with the regulation ginger moustache and a version of the clipped, reedy, sing-song voice made fashionable by Field Marshal Montgomery. His main mistake, I think, was to hasten to give the news before removing his uniform. In

battledress, with swagger stick and bulging, though no doubt empty, revolver, he walked up the small suburban path and rang the bell. With military bluntness he conveyed his news and commiserations: "Mrs Bwown. I am vewy sowwy to have to tell you that your son Wodger has been shot". It was apparently some time before Roger's mother was able to take in the second and more reassuring part of his message. I dare say the first impression had been not so much of a lethal accident as of a field court martial and summary execution.

Later I joined the RAF section of the Corps, which was thought more civilised. Actually it was more tedious. We were taught the mysteries of the jet-engine and the principles of heavier than air flight. The latter I understood but they seemed to me implausible; I felt the Wright brothers must have been in some way misled, and wished we still used dirigibles. This prejudice, an example of the danger of a little knowledge, was later a drawback to me when I became a civilian air passenger. We did in fact have one flight in the corps, in an old Second World War Dakota with no seats and a lot of holes in it. I did not find this reassuring. We also had a kind of glider which we launched rather in the fashion of a Roman catapult. The glider was secured to the ground and two teams of helots, including myself, like extras in a film by Cecil B DeMille, would tug elastic cables across the playing field away from the glider each at an angle of about twenty degrees. Then we would peg them into the ground, the chosen boy would be seated and released on a short flight, easing the controls down to land. On one occasion the stick became jammed, the glider stalled, and the boy in the seat fell vertically from an appreciable height. He escaped with bruising and a badly jarred back. I became glad I was never the chosen victim and tugged contentedly at my elastic rope. I was never promoted but remained a private and then an aircraftsman for the full five years of my service, thereby beating the record of my father, who rose to be an LAC. The corps, now non-commitally called the CCF (Combined Cadet Force) had originally been named the Officers Training Corps (OTC). I was clearly not officer material.

The corps was the special pet and enthusiasm of our headmaster, though he did not serve in it himself. One often got the impression that to him it was the flower of all our activities. A significant number of boys went to Sandhurst each year, and this output was regarded as at least as important as the one to Oxford and Cambridge. One of our contemporaries, Under-Officer (later Major-General) Pugh won the sword of honour for the best Sandhurst cadet of the year. For almost all of us two years National Service loomed; it was the next hurdle. We might mock

the corps, but so long as National Service existed the corps had the future on its side. We were given our National Service medicals at Topsham Barracks, just down the road from the school. To my dismay I was A1. One of my friends got much credit among us for his artistic answer to the question about bed-wetting, writing, untruthfully, not since I was sixteen and three quarters. Another, a serious, skinny youth, wrote in reply to the final 'Any other illness' question 'A Sense of Cosmic Insecurity'. He had to explain the concept of existential angst at his medical, at the top of his voice, standing naked in front of a deaf MO. He got off for weak lungs. I was deferred to go to Cambridge for six years and then National Service was abolished. It often seemed that to our headmaster a National Service commission represented the point and goal of our education. That and worldly success generally, of which he spoke with a candour and unction which, like the blatant patriotism of Kipling's Jelly-bellied Flag-flapper, made most of us cringe. Although he was undoubtedly wholly committed to it, his cult of success, any success, was so undiscriminating as to have the effect of insincerity, like the flattery we had the occasional opportunity to see him devote to the eminent. One of his nicknames, 'Creeper', was appropriate here, even though it initially derived, I think, from his habit of walking about soundlessly. Perhaps the cult of success was mostly for our benefit and exhortation and in private he had his own discriminations, though I doubt it. If so it failed with most of us miserably; I am speaking now chiefly of his sixth form. An odd combination of brashness, intensity and cant, he was utterly unlike his staff, whose chief characteristics tended to be sceptism or unthinking conscientiousness. We often used to speculate on what they thought of him.

He came in my second year. The old headmaster seemed indeed old, a bent, frail old man, always formally but shabbily dressed in black, with a white moustache and a doddering, ironic manner. I never spoke to him but I found him sympathetic and admired his style. The view in Exeter, I think, was that the school had been allowed to slide - certainly aspects of it when I arrived were anarchic - and that the new man would pull things around. This was clearly his own view; he spoke in a voice consciously rich with authority and purpose. He was a Pembroke (Cambridge) man - the old one was from Peterhouse - who had taught at Merchant Taylors. He had had a successful army wartime career in Intelligence, ending as a temporary Lieutenant Colonel in occupied Germany (German was his subject). None of us doubted that we were the vehicles of an intense ambition, and some of us resented it. Perhaps we were wrong about this. He stayed at the school and died prematurely, I think in the late

nineteen-sixties. Antipathy to him and to what I thought he stood for played a significant part in the formation of my opinions in my middle and late teens. It was, apart from my resistance to my father's enthusiasm for sermons, my only real episode of Oedipal struggle and I still look back on it with magnanimity. In his own way he was a significant influence on me, an opportunity for self-definition by antithesis. He was a philistine, I would be an aesthete (though had I known it, the aesthetic values I was capable of responding to were already drastically out of date); he was careerist, I would be detached; he was canting, I would be sceptical. Perhaps he did me permanent harm.

7
Reading Oneself In

One corps field day, I think when I was fifteen, had an ending more memorable than anything else I have recalled about those occasions. We had tramped some miles with pack and rifle around Woodbury. We had got wet. We had, I expect, got lost. We had got back to school and had hot water poured by the sergeant major through the barrels of our rifles, pulled them through and thankfully stacked them. I had gone home, changed out of uniform and had a bath and supper. I was tired but not exhausted. I decided to go to the theatre, the old Exeter Theatre Royal, where I understood there was a musical show. I sat down in the stalls, the lights went down and the orchestra played the opening bars of *The Marriage of Figaro* overture. I had never heard them before, and the excitement was extraordinary, as was the whole evening which, to my ever-increasing delight, followed. I do not remember the company; the production and performance were, I dare say, average but they were a revelation to me: my first opera, an opera, wholly unforeseen, and when I was already luxuriating in the sense of a return to civilization. It was one of the evenings of my life I would most like to live over again.

I have begun with that experience because it is unfortunately unique, a Peak-in-Darien moment in which I was suddenly given access to a whole world of adult experience which was to be important to me in the years immediately following. What pop now is, opera was to me and my most immediate friends, among whom the pursuit of Caruso, Gigli and Galli-Curci 78s became a common obsession and bond. I had heard classical music when my father listened to the wireless, mostly Mozart and Beethoven, but opera (almost purely Italian opera; I acquired an ear for Wagner only later) was different; opera was ours. It was not, of course, easy to see live. In the summer of 1950 or 51 my parents took a house in Ashtead, in Surrey, for a holiday. We went to Sadlers Wells and later I went there several times on my own, an adventure because it

meant getting myself across London. I heard *The Bartered Bride*, *Eugene Onegin* and a third I do not now recall. Onegin's ball was two couples, which struck even me as short measure, but they managed a colourful and animated chorus for the Smetana. I also went several times to the filmed version of *The Tales of Hoffmann*, which almost replaced Olivier's *Hamlet* for me as the peak of my cinematic experience, which was in fact small. I saw the latter several times also, the first time being in Blackpool in 1949, where we stayed with friends of my parents from Plymstock who had moved there. Olivier and Frankie Howerd in the Winter Gardens were the high points of my Blackpool experiences; Howerd would have enjoyed the conjunction. My preference for Olivier over *The Headless Woman* and other sights of the Golden Mile indicates, I suppose, that I was already notably a prig. The other epiphany was the Van Eyck *Adoration* at Ghent, which I saw when I was nineteen; we were staying for a week in Bruges and I took the train to Ghent for the day. It was my first such experience with a picture; I had begun to learn about them, following, I think, my parents' tastes, since my mid-teens, but again this was my own epiphany. My liking for architecture is more interesting because I think it was almost entirely unprompted. By my middle or later teens Pevsner's *History of European Architecture* was my bible, Bannister Fletcher's *History of Architecture* with its superb plates had been one of my great discoveries in the school library, and I had begun to read writers on the baroque like James Lees-Milne and Sacheverell Sitwell. It was a taste which I know must have come early, because I remember consciously enjoying the Italianate stucco villa architecture of one of the roads on my way to Bramdean; the route changed when I was thirteen.

It is much harder to identify points of transition and moments of revelation in reading. As I have said, my mother and I spent much of the war, including meal times, reading. I wish I could remember more of what I read, apart from *William* books. I know I had a collection of Robin Hood stories because I was bothered, when I read another version, by variant readings; I felt there must be an Ur-text, and that it was mine. I also had a child's *Robinson Crusoe*. I was not, now to my regret, brought up on Homer, though Mrs Alexander read us Kingsley's *The Heroes* and I remember being fascinated by a lesson or two at Bramdean, ancillary to Latin, on the Greek and Roman pantheon. Departmental gods seemed to me a lot more interesting, and more plausible, than monotheism. I was brought up, however, not with Epic but with Romance; I had a child's version of Malory, with illustrations. These are worth dwelling on though I can remember them only generically,

because they coloured, literally, my impressions of the past, to the point where I became resistant to any others. The illustrations were I think chiefly Morris and Burne Jones, perhaps taken from the Moxon edition of Tennyson (which I have never looked at). When later, at school, we read Chaucer's *Prologue* and looked at the Caxton illustrations, I found myself refusing to recognise these fifteenth-century woodcuts of misshapen human bundles, looking like sleeping bags with legs protruding from them, as medieval people. Medieval people were Pre--Raphaelite. I had, I suppose, a similar experience when, in London in 1944 or 1945, I was taken to Madame Tussaud's. I remember particularly the room of tableaux from English history, which I now recognise as representations of Victorian paintings. Millais' *Princes in the Tower*, Delaroche's *Execution of Lady Jane Grey* and so on. I thought I was looking at English history and so in a sense I was, but at the historical sensibility of the nineteenth century; I was intensifying that sense of the presence of the latter which I had already found in my grandmother's house. Later, when I became capable of recognising and reflecting on this I became interested in this superimposition of cultures, of one seen refracted through another and then, of course, through ourselves: looking at my ten-year old self looking at Delaroche, looking at Protestant martyrologies, looking at the stage-managed death of a sixteenth-century woman.

I am unsure about most other reading. I remember my father, on leave, reading me *Pickwick* which before the war's end I loved. My own reading certainly included G. A. Henty, whose works were copiously available in the children's section of the Exeter City Library. The library had been bombed and many books burnt; the upper floor still stood empty, dark, gaunt and haunted-looking, at the top of the main stairs. But much remained, and even in my teens I felt no great sense of its limitations. In Henty it was not, I think - I hope it was not - the effortlessly successful careers of his young heroes that chiefly appealed to me; they usually ended their careers, precociously covered with honours for retirement, domestic happiness and wealth, just at the point at which, if they had kept going, they would have themselves become historical characters. I do not think it was chiefly that. I think it was the atmospheres and the sense of great events, just as I had been thrilled in Mrs. Alexander's readings about the Black Douglas men stealthily approaching the castle in the dark disguised as sheep (or whatever it was). Now I was similarly thrilled by the bell tolling on Saint Bartholomew's night for the massacre of the Huguenots, the sinister tragedy of Vallenstein, the Grand Armée trudging through the Russian snows, and the

wickedness of Alva and the Council of Blood in *By Pike and Dyke* (which I now recognise as a crib of Motley's *Revolt of the Netherlands*, itself, despite its reputation, often a rather repetitive martyrology). To the adult reader Henty's treatment of these will seem jejune and even unpicturesque rather than over-coloured, but they were all new to me.

There was one massive *Boys' Annual* which, around the end of the war or soon after, I read and re-read. It was a volume already old, with manifestly old-fashioned illustrations, though it must have been post-Great War because it had some stories from that war in it. My parents were rather pained because I swopped for it a book about stamp collecting I had been given, but it was an excellent swop; it was far superior to my more recent annuals, in bulk, quality and maturity. There were many stories, almost all serials. I can now identify the literary masters from whom they derived, though I could not, of course, do so then: chiefly Kipling, Stevenson, Jules Verne and Rider Haggard. They were all, I think, considerably superior to, say, *Sapper*. School stories were Stalkyish. Stevensonism was represented by a Jacobite story whose hero, almost in the manner of Scott, was an old Jacobite of the '15, a plotter for years thereafter, who was finally broken by the failure of the '45. Stevenson was still more clearly present in spirit in a thrilling story about a pirate ship which destroyed all its enemies with red-hot shot, which included buried Spanish treasure, a villainous and apparently indestructible pirate chief, and a lesser pirate, smooth and brave but weak, torn between his loyalties to the Jim Hawkinsish young hero and his pirate colleagues. The Jules Verne story was almost a crib (perhaps it was by Verne), and featured a great (and benign) inventor called Carnac, with his own dirigible-cum-submarine, who avenged himself and saved the world in some way which now eludes me. Rider Haggardism was represented in a story called *The Lost Legion*, about a Roman Legion, still, if pointlessly, fully organised and functioning, discovered by some explorers in Africa or South America. I forget which. I think I thought it dotty. The whole thing was a spectrum of boys' reading, for, I would guess, boys of about twelve or thirteen, and dating, again at a guess, from the earlier nineteen-twenties. I wish I still had it.

It is not so much childish reading or perhaps precociously adult reading that I now find hardest to track, but the transitions between them. Perhaps in a sense there were none. I do remember, oddly enough, being struck by this myself, at quite an early age. I was perhaps thirteen or fourteen when one day at school we were asked to write down any books we had read during the past month. Mine was a longish list and, made self-conscious by writing them down, even I realised it was an

oddly incongruous collection of titles. It is tempting to exaggerate and to say my list included both *William the Rebel* and *The Critique of Pure Reason*. This would I am sure be inaccurate, but it did include things like *Biggles Flies West* and *The History of Henry Esmond*. I was given the latter as a present and read it eagerly at once: more of the seventeenth century through a nineteenth-century lens; unfortunately my copy has no dated inscription. I also read *War and Peace* at least twice in my mid-teens, in the Everyman edition. I bought the Penguin Classics, in translation, more or less as they came out, from 1950 or so onwards, chiefly *Madame Bovary* and Maupassant, though something told me to give Manon Lescaut a miss. It was about this time, too, that I began reading P. G. Wodehouse. I read the contents of my parent's bookshelves too. I was I think, fortunate, both in their extent and their content. By that I mean that they were not overwhelming. It was possible to read virtually all of them, and I did, obviating the need for random or informed choices (I was always prejudiced against books recommended to me). Also my parent's books of the nineteen-twenties and thirties, Galsworthy, Hugh Walpole, Priestley, Shaw, Chesterton, Masefield, were accessible to a bookish mid-teenager. I sometimes think that my own children, at least in their teens, were repelled by the quantity and heaviness of my own books, which lacked graduated steps, or if they were there they did not know where to find them except by recommendations which were also a kind of pressure. My parents had Shakespeare's tragedies and comedies, in separate volumes - less forbidding than the complete plays, and I read them accordingly. Above all, they had the *Complete Plays of Bernard Shaw* - not in fact quite complete, since he was still alive and writing. I read them all. including *Too True to be Good* and *Pen Poison* and *Petrefaction*. Some I read many times. What fascinated me was the characters' articulacy, their willingness to give an instant account of themselves. I liked, of course, the paradoxes, the defences of cowardice, of armaments, of money, of hypocrisy, and the farce. I thought for a while that I believed in Creative Evolution. Shaw, of course, led me to Ibsen, in Archer's translation; I also read Shaw's musical and theatrical criticisms, which in turn led to Max Beerbohm and Oscar Wilde and to the diaries of James Agate and literary and theatrical gossip. I preferred reading plays to seeing them I think, and in my parent's collections of plays read the theatrical artificers of the thirties like Ashley Dukes, John van Druten (*Young Woodley*) and Priestley's *Dangerous Corner* and *Time and the Conways*.

On my own account, I am not quite sure how, I found Aldous Huxley: not yet the Californian guru but the 'intellectual' novelist par excel-

lence. I not only enjoyed at least some of Huxley's own work, particularly *Those Barren Leaves*, and some of the essays; I was fascinated by their allusiveness: Dostoevsky, Baudelaire, Kant, Pascal, Crebillon, Swedenborg, Hume - who were all these people? It began to be clear that reading everything was going to take a long time. Reading the table talk of Huxley's garrulous Peacockian philosophers, like Mr Cardan, was like having one's own tutor, complete with reading lists. I began to be conscientious. It was certainly Huxley who, in this sense, introduced me to Baudelaire and - an odd couple - Hume. Wavering from Creative Evolution, I wondered if I might take up Satanism; however, it seemed to require one to be miserable virtually all the time, instead of just sometimes, as I was, and also possibly to have syphilis. I decided Satanism was not really my cup of tea.

I read Hume, especially book three of the treatise, which seemed the most interesting. I can still remember the sense of excitement with which I read the argument that moral distinctions are not derived from reason. It was exciting both in the pleasure I felt at following the argument and in its conclusion. I was glad that moral distinctions were not derived from reason. For one thing I felt sure that my headmaster would, as I now saw erroneously, think that they were, and be annoyed that I knew otherwise. Why I was so sure of this I am not altogether clear; perhaps I thought it was the kind of thing a conventional dogmatist soul would think, so naturally he would. Hume and I became allies, fellow subversives. This was the beginning - I think I was about seventeen – of a strong amateur interest in philosophy which lasted a number of years. I read two introductions to philosophy by Joad, which I thought helpful. I read Bertrand Russell's *Unpopular Essays* and bought and read through his *History of Western Philosophy*.

I listened to Moral Philosophy broadcasts by Isaiah Berlin called *Freedom and its Betrayal*, which I found highly exciting. Moral and political philosophy seemed the way to personal identity. To know if I were a Utilitarian or a Kantian would be to decide in what then seemed the most important respects who I was and to be able to justify that chosen self. It did not occur to me at seventeen or eighteen that the choices might be made otherwise than by reading and thinking about what one read. It was only through reading that I was aware that there were choices at all; I was what I read. I not merely accepted this as self-evident but regarded it, I think, as defining intellectual responsibility and therefore virtue. In these reminiscences I have been trying to do justice to the earlier selves I would at that point have dismissed as irrelevant, the prehistoric ages before the dawn of rational self-consciousness.

I have said nothing so far directly a bout politics, apart from the 1945 election. In 1945, I was apparently, a paving-stone Liberal, undeterred by the Methodist connection. By 1950 I was, I know, a virulent Tory, my principles moulded, I am afraid, by no better an agent than the Beaverbrook Press. My parents took the *Daily Express* and *Sunday Express*, which therefore became the first adult newspapers I read. It became axiomatic that the shortages and restrictions of the later nineteen-forties were the fault of the Labour government. I remember particularly the political caricatures of the *Express* cartoonist Cummings, whom at this time I admired and later came to detest. I began to change in the early 'fifties, after the return of the Churchill government. I have one marker for this. I was chosen, I do not know why, with two others, to go up to the Houses of Parliament.

I remember the debate we listened to in the Commons. It was a defence debate, the one introduced by Churchill with the Virgilian 'virumque cano'. His translation, I forget what it was, was corrected from the Opposition bench, and I remember his genially thanking the honourable Wykhamist member opposite (Crossman? Gaitskell?). I was rather unwillingly impressed by Attlee who responded. I dare say he knew in outline what Churchill would say, but he seemed to me to be improvising brilliantly. I was particularly struck by how tiny he and Churchill seemed, an effect increased, of course. by the foreshortening as we looked down at them from the gallery, but they were very small relative to the other front bench members around them. I was certainly not anti-Tory at this point, but I was also no longer violently partisan. I cannot yet, I think, have been reading the *New Statesman*, or I would have been more partisan in the other direction, but it cannot have been long afterwards that I began to take it regularly. I have sometimes wondered how long a period elapsed between my newsagents' order for the *Wizard* and that for the *New Statesman*. Three years? Not much more I think, and two seems too few to be plausible. I do not know how I came to the latter, but I can guess at some of its attractions. It may have been its view of the Empire. The corps, my headmaster, and the prospect of National Service had notably altered my attitude to Empire. The gods of Bramdean, which in more vulgar shapes were still those of my present headmaster, were no longer mine. I, like the country, could not afford them. The *New Statesman's* line on Empire was, I suppose, among other things, to say that we should not fight to stay. I was not a pacifist, at least not a principled one; but I was greatly against dying or even being made uncomfortable for the sake of white planters and settlers. That would have been like dying for the careers of my con-

temporaries in School House.

I am reluctant to think that self-interest was my only link to the world according to Kingsley Martin, but I find it hard to identify much else at this point. I was neither a socialist nor an economic liberal. If I was anything with any passion I was an intellectual libertarian. I remember reading *Nineteen Eighty Four* and wondering if I would have time to read all I wanted before the thought police arrived and what my breaking point would be. It was this that made Berlin's broadcast lectures fascinating to me. But whatever my initial motives, reading *The New Statesman* regularly eroded all my Tory prejudices, if it came nowhere near making a socialist of me. They were so clever, these people, wrote so well, knew so much and had, some of them, such odd names: Aymer Vallance, G. W Stonier, Adam Curie, Malcolm Muggeridge, Rayner Heppenstall, Asa Briggs, Norman Mackenzie. Again, who were these people? Above all, though, they were not my headmaster.

If the New Statesmen were my guides to modern, in the strict sense of contemporary, thought, there was also a pull in the opposite direction, created in part at least by the austerity conditions of the immediate post-war world. When I wrote earlier that I wanted to read everything the aspiration was not so absurd, given the conditions in which I pursued it, as it will sound. My situation, in provincial England in the years immediately after the Second World War, in some respects resembled that of a scholar in the Dark Ages, in that in some acute shortage of books I had been through my parent's bookshelves. Even I could see the limitations of the school library, though the Exeter public library was better. There were, of course, the *Everyman Classics* and the *Nelson's Classics* series. I could see that they might take some time, but they were finite; one could look at the lists. New books were few; when I said I read the Penguin translations as they came out I meant it literally; all of them. They were few enough to invite this; it was only later that there came to be enough to make selectivity possible and desirable. For the moment it was Penguin's editors, not I, who made the selection.

There was one major exception to this. Exeter was well-served with second-hand bookshops, and I came to spend much of my leisure time in them. I liked their silent, musty atmosphere, the book-bindings and designs of different periods, the licence to read for long periods without buying, the choice. I was helped in my enthusiasm by what was, I suppose, in one sense a disability. As with my toys in the earlier part of the war, I had virtually no sense of obsolescence. Did I decide that Psychology, the Philosophy of Religion, Political Science or the policies of

Richelieu or Charles V seemed interesting? I would read the books on offer undeterred by the fact that their publication date was 1880 or earlier. I have become more self-conscious about this since I have made, even, a kind of trade out of that self-consciousness, but in another sense I have remained, culpably in a scholar, indifferent to the notion of being up-to-date. At the time of which I am now speaking I might, I think, if pressed to name an ambition, have said that I wanted to be a man who knew his way around a second-hand bookshop (I do not mean anything to do with rarity of editions). In all modesty, and speaking only of books published after, say, 1700, I think I have achieved it. This certainly implies some sense of cultural sequence and provenance, some attention to the order of time and place, but it does not, for me at least, include the concept of the out-of-date. I am out of date in most of my knowledge, by anything from ten to a hundred years, but I could, I think, make a better shot than most people at, say, the Cambridge History or Moral Sciences Tripos in 1892.

Where do these preferences and indifferences come from: laziness; naiveté; or a deep, unacknowledged and incoherent scepticism? But in that case why bother with the subjects at all? And in any case, where do they come from? I have spent much of my professional life trying to reconstruct and understand the content and motives of other people's intellectual lives; it is salutary to attempt to do the same with my own. Admittedly I am dealing here with a period of sparse or non-existent contemporary documentation, but it is not really documentation but explanation that is lacking. It is at least possible, with some inevitable vagueness about dates, to draw an intellectual profile of myself and my tastes between, say, sixteen and eighteen. I know that I loved epigram, to excess, especially if impish rather than gnomically wise. I had also learned from Shaw and Wilde and Chesterton, a love of paradox. I liked urbanity rather than prophetic zeal; I hated D. H. Lawrence, to whom I was led by Huxley, and found him unreadable. I liked the surprises of wit. I read the whole of *The Decline and Fall* in my last summer at school but disliked what I saw as the systematisations of these in the planned displacements of surrealism and the conscientious pursuit of the absurd; surprises run amok were no surprises and became tedious; I found *Tristram Shandy*. for example, tiresome.

At school, in English, apart from Shakespeare, we read Donne the metaphysical poets then fashionable - and Johnson, Landor, Keats and, our most modern venture I think, Hardy. I liked them all. That is, I was less interested in their unique qualities and my direct responses to them than in the uses of language and the literary conventions they shared

with their contemporaries. I liked the variety of English literature for its own sake, the diversity of period idiom. I was, naturally, drawn to parody and had a fair talent for it. Some of this I felt - I certainly came to feel later- as a limitation; and it is one of the reasons I chose not to read English at university. I shared the iconic view of works of literature, then at its height (to some extent I still do), but I doubted if I had the vocation for a priest of the temple. For one thing I had a disreputable inclination to look at literature for identifiable ideas. Compared with the implied praise in Eliot's reference to 'a sensibility so fine that no idea could violate it' mine was a willing accomplice in ideological rape.

Nevertheless, the choice of subject remained a real issue for me in the Sixth Form. I knew that I would like to go to university, but I was not looking to Oxbridge. When I failed O-Level Latin my housemaster said reassuringly, 'Well, you won't need it except for Oxford or Cambridge, and you've no chance of that anyway'. I agreed with him. It was simple obstinacy, not any hope of practical advantage, that led me to insist on taking it again; I thought I could pass. I did so at the end of the following term, partly because for the first time since Mr Alexander I had in the remedial class a good Latin teacher (if you are out there, Tufty Lenton, thank you) and partly by dealing with the unseen translations from Virgil, which I could not cope with at all, by learning Day Lewis's translation by heart and knowing enough Latin to identify the passage and to turn it into awkward but accurate prose of my own. As with O-Level Maths, it was a close-run thing.

The way to Oxbridge was not, therefore, barred, but I did not think myself up to it. I debated the choice of subject, however. The thought of Philosophy was enticing but intimidating. Later, at Cambridge. I thought of changing to Moral Sciences, but I suspected that anyone as poor as I at algebra would be no great logician. Also for some reason I was never attracted to the philosophy of mind or very much to epistemology. It was moral and political philosophy chiefly that attracted me, and Cambridge had no PPE (if it had done I probably could not have coped with Economics). But this is to anticipate. At school I took, eventually, four A-Levels: History, English, French and German. I enjoyed the languages and their literatures (chiefly Corneille - whom I did not like - Moliere, Marivaux, Maupassant, Lessing, Schiller), especially the sound of them well read, particularly poetry. But I was not really quick enough at picking them up. Realistically the choice was between History and English. Apart from my limitations as a critic, there was a consideration in favour of History which weighed with me and of which I am now not proud; I thought it the more masculine subject, offering,

somehow, like political philosophy - which I scarcely distinguished from political science - a grip of the modern world. I had read Somervell's abridgement of Toynbee, and toyed with the idea of' 'laws'. I was soon to find out at Cambridge that I was not a 'real' historian, though I could imitate one well enough for Tripos; not, that is, an empirical, archival, preferably political, historian. I came to dislike, when I met it there really for the first time, the fetishism of the latest view, suspecting, often rightly, that this was a matter of passing fashion. I came in due course to a short-term solution, focussing on the historiography rather than the history, without, of course, finding a way through the fundamental epistemological impasse. Here I was, I suppose, ahead of my time and I take no pleasure in it; my dislike of currently fashionable, self-confident, self-contradictory relativisms is, I suppose, as Wilde might have put it, the rage of Caligari seeing his own face in the mirror.

The question of English or History was resolved by my History master, John Nelson. He told me in the spring of 1953 that he would like to put me up for the History Scholarship exam at Christ's, Cambridge, his own College, the following December. I was astounded, but immediately attracted, and agreed. He said "There's a man called Plumb there; I think you might get on". By doing so he determined much of the future course of my life; not only my subject and my tutors, but also my wife and children (and grandchildren, my dear boy), for if otherwise I had gone the Oxbridge route at all it would almost certainly have been to Exeter College Oxford, where most Oxbridge candidates from the school went, and where the then senior tutor, the ancient historian Dacre Balsdon, was an Old Exonian. John Nelson was a northerner, who came I think from one of the northern schools whose benefit the Lady Margaret (or John Fisher) had in mind when Christ's was founded in the early sixteenth century, and with which there was still a connection.

I went to Cambridge with three others from school to take the scholarship exam in December. We took a taxi from the station together; they were at Pembroke and St John's. I remember the looming bulk of the Fitzwilliam in the dark winter's afternoon, the lights in Pembroke Porters' lodge, the great gates of Trinity and St John's. My chief story of my visit there has been told by others about themselves, no doubt just as truthfully as I tell mine. I was so diffident that I did not dare to ask where the lavatories were (known in Christ's as Fourth Court, they are not readily apparent) and did accordingly go, the entire time I took the exam, to the Gents in Market Square. It is not my fault the story has become a cliché; it is the truth. I did, however, show one piece of initiative in finding my bedroom. I was given a room (I thought) on E stair-

case, Second Court. There was an inhospitable looking sofa but no bed. I had heard that conditions were spartan but this seemed excessively severe. I prepared myself, nevertheless, to sleep for three nights on the sofa. I did, however, wander out into the court and met (as I discovered later), Bill Cornwall, the red-nosed buttery-man. I asked him where I should sleep. In the bedroom, he said. I said there was no bedroom. He came with me to look. Then he recalled that mine was the only set with the bedroom not opening off the keeping room. He found my bedroom and unlocked it for me. I had heard that college servants expected tipping for all services. I gave him a large tip for finding my bedroom. If he was surprised he did not show it but pocketed it grinning.

In Hall that evening, and for the next few days, my most memorable acquaintance was the one I came to think of as 'The Experienced Candidate'. At breakfast he deplored the bacon and said it was inferior to that at Balliol. Lunch was meagre compared with - I cannot be sure of the identification. Dinner was not a patch on Peterhouse. I was awed by so much sophistication and experience (though I entirely agreed, on the evidence of the here and now, with his strictures). It was only much later that I realised it must have been bought at the price of continuous rejection. He did not turn up at Christ's the following autumn; I hope he found a niche somewhere. My bedroom faced over Christ's Lane, now demolished for the reconstruction of Drummer Street. It was rowdy and I heard the college clock strike many hours. The examination was in the Senate House. (I enjoyed invigilating there later, for some amount, I think, ending in 6s 8d; one could sit in front of the Vice Chancellor's throne and give orders to hundreds, as well as pacing the aisles in one's gown like the slavemaster of a galley.)

When I looked at the first paper - it was the Essay Paper - I panicked. There were half a dozen questions of a general kind, from which to answer one. I seemed to know nothing about any of them. I gazed at the coffered ceiling in despair for about an hour. Had it been any of the other, substantive papers, with four questions, I should already have been done for. Eventually I got bored with doing nothing and I was too diffident to draw attention to myself by walking out. I knew I was finished and the knowledge brought calm. To pass the time I began to tinker with a question. The topic was, I remember, 'The End of the World'. I wrote, copiously once I had begun, about the idea of progress and eschatology, and what difference a vivid sense of finiteness would or should make to the former. I cribbed from Bertrand Russell's essay *A Free Man's Worship*, which I had read. I handed in a reasonably substantial answer. The ice broken, the papers that followed seemed not too

difficult. I regurgitated what history I knew. In the translation paper one had to choose two languages, from Greek, Latin, French, German, and I think Italian and Spanish. The French and German passages were not too difficult (I was to set some a few years later). The next ordeal was the interview. Dr Plumb's rooms were (and remained) on 'O' staircase; handsome, with a still life over the mantelpiece and glass-fronted bookcases, but nothing like the splendour to come, with the cabinets stuffed with Sèvres and Vincennes. I remember the first trickle of that later flood, two Sèvres cups appearing on the mantelpiece in the later fifties. Plumb seemed snappish and irritable and not to enjoy interviewing much. The generosity, conviviality and zest I came to know well were not apparent, though the snappishness was to become familiar too, especially when one's essay was not up to scratch or he thought one was becoming complacent. I should exempt him now from what I have said earlier about the cult of the latest view, the most recent article. Jack cared about such things to the extent that Tripos examiners did, but for his own part he liked panache and, in its place, imagination. John Nelson was right: we did, fundamentally, get on, though I sometimes disappointed him, and I came to owe him much. Of the interview I remember only that we talked about Cezanne. Fortunately I had been into the National Gallery on the way up to look at *Woman With a Rosary*, which the Gallery had just acquired. I decided, however, that I did not like him and did not want to go to Christ's.

I told my parents so when I got home. This was partly self-protective because I thought I had no chance, but also partly true. My windows on E staircase had had a view of the Fellow's Building. I thought it fine, as it is, and mentally said goodbye to it when I left, and also to the portraits in Hall which had struck me: Milton, Darwin, Cudworth and Henry Moore. A few days later the telegram came saying I had won a scholarship. I rang John Nelson, who told me to come around, and we spent the evening in Butterfield's tower - he was by now Housemaster of School House - talking about my future, on what I now think of, though I had two more lazy terms at school to come, as the last day of my boyhood.

8
Cambridge I: Undergraduate

I was tempted to end this memoir with the last chapter. All childhoods are unique because at the time we do not know that they are not. But first experiences of Oxford and Cambridge, in particular, come to us already freighted with other people's memories. The *Brideshead* clichés lurk on all sides: in Cambridge, punts on the river and tea at Grantchester, daffodils on Queens' Backs and cherry blossom at Trinity (Houseman's college), and pinnacles and battlements swaying against the night sky as beer or wine took effect. They are the equivalents of, in other traditions, the Parisian accordion and the model in a garret *sous les taits*, or the foaming beer tankards, with lids, and lilac blossom, with *Gaudeamus Igitur* played softly in the background. It is tempting to put them altogether aside, but that would be to some extent a falsification, a censorship of the past in the name of good taste and a sophistication that I did not really possess, of the kind I have tried to avoid in writing this book. For a good many of my generation, including myself, were by no means immune to seeing in ourselves at least a distant reflection of days of leisured privilege and gilded youth, perhaps wearing a white blazer and a buttonhole and drinking champagne in a punt (I never managed either) just as we could also sometimes see ourselves as *Lucky Jim* or through the heartier version of (medical) student life purveyed in the current film *Doctor in the House*; many of us were in love with Muriel Pavlov, who played the nurse. Another generation, too late for me, would find its self-identification in *The Catcher in the Rye*. It was gratifying to me when recently my grandson described Holden Cauldfield as "a pain in the arse". Time brings its revenges in the war of the generations.

Reality was initially unkind to my anticipations of Cambridge. I had always since Plymstock inhabited nineteenth-century buildings. Grendon Lodge and Bramdean School were under-furnished versions of

what had once been Victorian middle-class comfort. Exeter School, purpose-built by Butterfield, three-quarters of a century before I entered it, ran a good deal, in its main range, to Victorian gothic windows and doorways. Y Block in Christ's Third Court when I arrived there in the autumn of 1954 was something of a shock. My imagination, fed by impressions left from the scholarship exam, had made a setting for the forthcoming Cambridge experience, of quiet grey courts, Tudor or eighteenth-century, of heraldic, gothic-arched gateways, and staircases opening directly into the court. These things certainly existed, but not where I immediately found myself. Y Block - the name seemed appropriately uncompromising - and two-thirds of Third Court in which it was located, was absolutely new. I was only the second inhabitant of my room and the building smelt strongly of new wood and rubber floor tiles. It faced across to its identical twin, W, both being heavy, characterless and wholly without charm, designed by an enthusiast for neo-Georgian, Sir Albert Richardson. We had single rooms, not sets, along corridors, not on staircases as tradition dictated. Bathrooms and lavatories were at the end of the corridor; at least they were in the same building. 'Fourth Court' was the ironical name for the main lavatories and ablutions for the rest of the College, obscurely sited elsewhere. Now it is the accurate name for the nineteen-sixties building, designed in brutalist fashion by Denys Lasdun, the architect of the National Theatre. My name is one of three in the College minutes recording dissent from the adoption of Lasdun's design. The third building in Third Court was a moderately competent late-Victorian pastiche of the admirable seventeenth-century Fellow's Building in Second Court. The fourth side was and is open towards the Master's garden and the Hall. That was the view from the front. Mine, at the back, was across Hobson Street to the cinema and to the back of the Dorothy cafe where my future wife and I were to go once or twice to "tea dances". The cinema was noisy. One could hear the national anthem, always played then at the end of the day's programme, and occasionally bits of the film; *Toomai the Elephant Boy*, not surprisingly, was particularly assertive I remember. Lasdun's building now takes the place of the spiked back wall over which I used to climb, with the aid of a bicycle saddle, from King Street when the College gates had closed at eleven. There was another way in, through the bicycle sheds along Christ's Lane, now another sacrifice to development.

The first two courts and the Hall were, of course, what my memory had recorded and my imagination fondly dwelt on. I moved into First Court at the beginning of my second year. As a scholar I had the

privilege of three years living in College, and I stayed there for the next two years. My rooms, on the upper floor of N staircase, were cold and shabbily furnished but they had a view of the court; there were low, heavy beams, and shutters, and an outer door, the 'oak', which could be closed or 'sported' - surely a Victorian coinage - as a sign one did not want visitors; this feature was retained even in Third Court. It seemed very cold that second winter, with an East Anglian cold new to me. Bottles full of milk, left at the open bottoms of staircases, froze, forcing an inch or more of the contents out of the top. In Hall what impressed me again was the portraits, lit from above, and the great oriel stained-glass window, representing college worthies, including two seventeenth-century poets I had read. It was Victorian, designed by Gilbert Scott when he remodelled the Hall. From the court, when lit from inside, it had an advent-calendar quality against the dark wall, in which I took a childish delight. First Court was a good place from which to enjoy the damp mists of a Cambridge autumn, which always seems more autumnal than elsewhere, under the dim lights; also the smell of decaying leaves from the Fellows garden and Christ's Pieces, the public park over the wall; one could even fancy fenny smells from the river, half a mile away. The portraits in Hall included, of course, the foundress, Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, and Milton and Darwin. There were also Paley, whose *Natural Theology* (1802) I would one day teach in a course on English Intellectual History. There was also Sir John Seeley, Victorian imperialist and Regius Professor of History; I would one day write on him too when, in 1968, I did an introduction to the Penguin edition of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. I should perhaps say that the college connection played no part in the choice of these as subjects. Apart from Smuts and Mountbatten - who came to a Feast once in my time but who was too far up the table for me to hear anything he said - the portraits were of authors, scientists, theologians, rather than those eminent in church and state, perhaps for lack of aristocratic patrons.

Lectures, it has to be said, were something of a test of reverence, as was History as it was taught in the nineteen-fifties. But before describing some I should say that I am conscious here that the transition from child to adult makes a difference in the way an autobiography can be written. As I have said in the Foreword, the relatives and schoolmasters who people my early recollections are, with some notable exceptions, largely caricatures rather than rounded portraits. To have drawn the latter, even if I were able, would have been to travesty the childhood vision I was attempting to recall. But, and here is the difference, I cannot do this to my own friends and contemporaries. I knew most of them too briefly

and at too early an age to offer rounded and revealing portraits and to attempt these would be a kind of impertinence. But I knew them too well for them to appear as the two-dimensional figures, created mainly from external impressions, which is how I saw, and largely continue to see, most though not all of our seniors. These are as much part of my early Cambridge impressions as the portraits in Hall, and not very different from them. An undergraduate sitting at a desk - whose graffiti often proclaim the similarity - is still pretty much a child, with a child's limitations of vision, and lecturers, accordingly, are habitually seen, if they arouse interest at all, as characters, turns, who have wandered into the lecture room from their own world, where they are colleagues, parents, spouses or rivals, about which the undergraduate cares nothing.

Provided one bears this in mind, the Cambridge History Faculty, as manifested to me through lectures, is fair game. I was, of course, prepared to be impressed. The first was rather a shock. An economic historian from Kings came in to one of the Mill Lane lecture rooms, gowned, of course, as the masters at school had been, took off his mortar board, which was becoming infrequently worn, and put it upside down on the lectern, and addressed it confidingly in a low monotone for fifty minutes. I did not go back to him; I do not think anyone did. In fact I believe he never finished a course of lectures; I myself, some years later, gave a course whose last audience was two, one of whom, John Thompson, became a lifelong friend, but that was a quorum. It was said he had been a bright young man. After this unpromising start things improved, as they were bound to do. I next went to Philip Grierson, the history don at Caius. It was mainly I think, on Byzantine history, of which I have never got any kind of grasp, but I doubt if this was Philip's fault. He was feline, clearly very learned, immensely donnish. He had a liking for the scabrous, and always seemed to speak with particular relish of the blinding and or castration of an emperor, which seemed to feature largely in Byzantine history. He also quoted the smutty bits of Gibbon, whom I had read - all of it - before coming up. Philip was kind to me later, giving me my first teaching, which was, remarkably, for medieval history, of pupils he clearly could not bear to teach himself. "Think of them as medieval peasants", he said, "and you won't go far wrong".

The most formidable history lecturer in my first year was the Tudor historian Geoffrey Elton. Geoffrey, whom I got to know later, had the peculiarity that he never looked young or old. He was a short, bull-necked, red-faced, gruff-voiced, balding, belligerent middle-aged man and he remained so for forty years. We did not realize that he was then a young man, or that he was a German refugee. He had in fact only

recently joined the Faculty from London, but seemed rock-like as part of the place. He also seemed tremendously authoritative; tentative was not in his register. He was clearly still resentful of former mentors in London, though we did not know that is what they were, especially of J. E. Neale, the historian of Elizabeth's parliaments. There were frequent jeers at Neale's scholarship and partiality for Elizabeth: "Some historians seem actually to be in love with Queen Elizabeth, which must be a pretty unsatisfying kind of passion". Another dictum we liked and wrote down, was 'The Stuarts were a mistake'. Elton had just published, to much acclaim, his first work, *The Tudor Revolution in Government*, whose unlikely hero was Thomas Cromwell. It was administrative history of the most technical kind. In his lectures Tudor history seemed to have consisted of committees giving birth to other committees or being invented by Cromwell. I remember I likened them to the genealogies in the Old Testament: the Court of Annates had begotten the Court of First Fruits and Tenths, or possibly the other way round, with Thomas Cromwell as midwife, which made him a great man. If I garble this, as I do, it is because it was garbled in my mind then; I avoided those topics in the Tripos examinations. Why we persisted in going to lectures which recapitulated a book already in print I do not know, but we did. I think there was perhaps something hypnotic about Geoffrey's force of personality and his passionate conviction that seemed to insist that Tudor committee structure was the one thing in the world one absolutely had to know about.

Elton was the 'in' thing and I was, I suppose, both bored and deeply impressed by Cambridge professionalism. Another aspect of this, compared with school, was that it involved reading articles, often excruciatingly dull, in the academic journals, whose abbreviated names became a common currency: EHR (*English Historical Review*), *ECHR*, *Trans Hist Soc* and the rest of a mainly drab but in its way awesome array. Schoolboys and amateurs read books; we read articles. It was induction by ordeal. So my reverence for Elton's lectures stifled for a while a wistful nostalgia for lightweight but interesting school lessons, and for the days when the sixteenth century had seemed to consist of such superfluities as the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, the Pilgrimage of Grace and the Marian persecutions, and even Mary Queen of Scots, before they were pushed aside by the apparently inexhaustible bureaucratically reproductive energies of Henry VIII's Privy Council. I have to recognize a significant amount of masochism in my zeal for my initiation rituals as a historian. Geoffrey, incidentally, always looked as though there were too much blood in him. His wife was pale and

emaciated-looking, though my college supervisor, John Kenyon, admired her ability to drink level with Geoffrey and himself: "fine leather-bellied woman, Sheila Elton", was his tribute. In our ribald undergraduate mythology the Eltons' relationship was symbiotic; they had to be connected up once a week or she would shrink and wither and Geoffrey would explode.

Quite different but equally popular were the lectures of the King's economic historian John Saltmarsh, which are remembered I find by every Cambridge historian of my generation and later. Saltmarsh was emphatically a turn, though whether he intended to be I never knew. He never ad libbed, and some of his eccentricities just seemed native to him and unobserved by himself. He was a small man with Dickensian side-whiskers and looked like an illustration by Phiz. He always had a haversack over his shoulder, supposedly containing sandwiches. He had a high, fluting voice and in lectures an almost liturgical delivery, with characteristic repetitions, such as "I have now to speak ..." Much of his success was due to these. I saw him during the bitter winter of 1963 skating under Clare bridge, as others were doing, looking like the famous Allan Ramsay portrait of a skating clergyman. There was something ecclesiastical about him; his scholarly oeuvre was a short guide to King's Chapel. He lectured, I think, on the whole span of English economic history, and liked gadgets; there was a famous lecture in which he brought in a model of a fulling mill, but we thought he liked best the early, archaeological part; he put much zest into the enunciation of the names, and practically sang *The Beaker Folk* and *The Deverill Rembury People*. My friend Michael Ratcliffe said the last sounded like something from the social calendar: garden party at the Deverill Remburys. One notable eccentricity was the map. For each lecture he had unrolled on a blackboard an economic map of the British Isles. Each lecture began in the same way. He would go over to the map, stand rapt in front of it, with his back to the audience for a short while, and then return to the lectern and begin. He never went to it again. We waited on tenterhooks for two terms to see if the map would be referred to. It never was. He just needed to feel that it was there and the ritual was never omitted.

Jack Plumb did not lecture in my first year because he was on leave. I was soon bidden to call him Jack. We were both rather drunk at the time, after my first Commemoration of Benefactors dinner, when all the History Scholars had gone back to his rooms, but it held good when we were sober. In the second year his lectures were of course assiduously attended. I find it difficult now to recall how good they were, though I

know they could be exhilarating to listen to. They must have contained some of the detailed analysis of the ways eighteenth-century parliamentary majorities were maintained, in the manner known as 'Namierism', from its pioneer, the abrasive Polish émigré Sir Lewis Namier, on which Jack had written his doctoral thesis, published much later as *The Growth of Political Stability in England*. At the time, however, he was known just as the author of the Penguin England in the Eighteenth Century (I950): he published the first volume of his unfinished life of Sir Robert Walpole while I was an undergraduate. There is no doubt that he had become bored by Namierism; perhaps he always had been. It was at the time a necessary route to advancement, but it had diverted him from his truer talent for social history, expressed to some extent in his Penguin and pursued later by some of his pupils. At the end of his writing life he wrote on leisure and consumption in the eighteenth century, but it was too late for a new career.

But though his lectures were ostensibly on political history he surrounded it with a penumbra of robust, earthy but also glamorous social history, dwelling on the incomes and extravagances of conspicuous consumption of the eighteenth-century aristocracy, in which he clearly took a complicit delight. It was not exactly romanticized, being too ribald and down-to-earth for that; noblesse oblige was not part of the picture. He seemed to enjoy their eccentricities and their grisly illnesses. There seemed no doubt he would have liked to have been an eighteenth-century aristocrat. His lectures went with a swing and left a glow of excitement at their contemplation of the human comedy. His supervisions - the Cambridge term for individual tutorials - were much the same, but with the added features of flattery and intimidation. They were almost openly a kind of athletics coaching with the Tripos examinations as the big race. It took me some time to realize that praise (extravagant) and condemnation (sometimes equally extravagant) bore only a faint relation to the quality of the essay one had read and had almost everything to do with his estimate of the current state of one's morale: depressed and needing encouragement or cocky and needing to be taken down several pegs. He would conjure up glittering visions of our future successes and also cultivated an effective line in salutary insult. Later, when I was a research student, and I would call on him socially, he would look up over a book as he always did and, if he had not had good reports of me recently, would say something like "There's a job going in Omaha. Would you like me to recommend you ...?". While I was an undergraduate I at one point developed a certain restlessness with my subject and went to tell him I was thinking of changing to

English. He simply said "You'll lose your rooms in College" (which I had as a Scholar) "if you do", and went back to his book.

Jack took an intense interest in his favourite pupils' careers; they were almost extensions of his own personality and he was rewarded by a stream of exceptionally distinguished academic pupils. Only in Cambridge itself, after graduation, did they not make so much headway. Jack's enemies in the Faculty were powerful, particularly Elton and Owen Chadwick; he suspected a Christian mafia associated with the latter. Jack was a militant atheist. Finding him once taking an interest in the appointment of a college chaplain I expressed surprise. He said "I'm hoping for one with halitosis". His fine rooms, later elaborately furnished with cases of Sèvres and Vincennes porcelain ('Jack's pots') as he became ever more affluent, were above the chapel. It was said, not without evidence, that he tried to time the flushing of his lavatory with the consecration of the host below. His was an English lower-middle class anticlericalism. There were aspects of him, not least his general view of historical progress, about which he was not reticent, which reminded one of H. G. Wells, whose *Outline of History* he greatly admired. It was said he had been a youthful Marxist, but he really had no use for theory of any kind, which was not an uncommon feature of the Faculty. He had in many respects the qualities of a novelist, which apparently he had wanted to be, in the wake of his Leicester schoolfellow and Christ's mentor and friend C. P. (Lord) Snow, who had been a scientist at Christ's and became a civil servant, novelist and, briefly, government minister.

Jack's social resentments, which he clearly nursed, took the form of emulation; he would be a better judge of claret, porcelain, pictures, great eighteenth-century houses than their owners, whom he sometimes visited when doing research on Walpole; one ambition was fulfilled when he deservedly became Christ's wine steward. We, his Scholars, were I think part of his revenge, and the results, for us, still seem to me to have been entirely beneficial. Surlier and more suspicious subsequent generations might have resisted being taught to appreciate wine, and inducted into 'the Establishment', though Simon Schama has testified to the appreciation of it. Certainly I had no such reservations and I am entirely grateful. I think as a young research Fellow at King's in the nineteen-thirties - he had been a Leicester, not a Cambridge, graduate - Jack may have had to endure slights, or at least he thought he had. When after the war, which he spent at Bletchley Park, he became sole History Fellow at Christ's, I think he was determined that his Scholars - he was a lot less interested in History Commoners - who were almost

entirely from grammar schools, should have as good a time as more privileged undergraduates in more glamorous colleges like King's, and he succeeded. He had us to dinner, which, having the rare privilege of a dining room and small kitchen, he cooked. When visiting scholars were passing through Cambridge he would invite us to sherry before Hall to meet them; I remember A. L. Rowse, Trevor-Roper, Garrett Mattingly, Daniel Boorstin, Richard Hofstadter.

Later Jack would invite myself and my fiancée to Westhorpe, his seventeenth-century country house in Suffolk, which we both found taxing. Jack did not have the gift of relaxation himself or of helping others to relax; I do not think he approved of it. His hospitality, in food, wine and comfort, was generous but otherwise on the lines of Dotheboys Hall, with Jack himself playing a leading part. It was on one of those visits that he introduced us to Angus Wilson, met by chance in the Angel at Bury St Edmunds. His novels and stories were then enjoying a considerable vogue and I had admired them. He invited us out to his cottage, which proved disconcertingly to be full of stuffed birds. I had been most impressed in his writing by the satirical accuracy of his ear for the inadvertent self-betrayals of upper-middle class English speech. The puzzle became how he cultivated it, because conversation with him proved to be a rapid, entertaining monologue with few intermissions. Life with Jack as one's patron, then, was exciting but demanding; his favour was earned, not a sinecure. Michael Ratcliffe caught this well: "As a Scholar I was Michael. When I got a 2.1 in Part I (of the Tripos) I became Ratcliffe. When I got a First in Part II I became Michael again, but when I dawdled in research I was Ratcliffe. With a job on the *Sunday Times* I am Michael."

Jack was an intensely energetic, combative, driven, greedy man; I used mentally to compare him with the fiercely obsessive monsters of ambition and will in Balzac. He was greedy for money, possessions, power, status, honours. I am sure it irked him that he got only a knighthood while other academics of his generation, Annan, Briggs, Kaldor, got peerages. I think when he eventually became Master of Christ's he enjoyed it less than he had expected. He would have felt thwarted if he had not achieved it but it meant detail he no longer cared to be bothered with and patience with worthy but unworldly colleagues whose subjects did not interest him either. In earlier years he had been greedy for his College and his pupils as well as himself. As he became grander and more remote from undergraduates and even from Cambridge, with a London and New York life outside it, where he felt more appreciated than by what he saw as envious and small-minded

colleagues, he became more wholly self-centred. The Mastership recalled him to Cambridge for a while, but it was really too late. In the 'eighties he became an enthusiastic supporter of Mrs Thatcher, feeling that she protected his investments, and seemed at times even to take a sadistic pleasure in taunting academics, including myself, who, without the private wealth he had accumulated from royalties and shrewd purchases and investments, felt badly the inflation of the 'seventies and later the effects of the Thatcher government's scorched earth policy in higher education. He would have said it was our own fault for not having been successful enough and for having married and begotten children, a subject on which his views became positively Malthusian.

Because in later life Jack became a monster, cantankerous, bullying, sour and resentful, it is important here to stress the earlier years; the zest, energy, resilience, generosity, sharp-edged geniality and wit, and the love of talent in the young and the wish to foster it, which he did. I have sometimes thought that those he taught in the 'forties felt closer to him even than I came to do. Towards the end only some disappointment or humiliation in the life of one of his acquaintances seemed to bring a wintry smile. The last time I saw him was a couple of months before his death in 2001. By some private arrangement he was still living in his college rooms. He complained that the College staff were having four days off and that he would starve. In the grandeur of those rooms I did not like to say "Dial a Pizza". I spoke to the Master about it who said it was nonsense. The staff were having one day off, not four, and cold meals would be taken over to him on a tray. The last thing I heard Jack say as I was leaving his room, as if to himself but meant to be heard, was "I suppose I may have an apple somewhere". But at least he never became cowed or docile; that would have been almost unbearable.

The need to take Jack's portrait full-length has led me far from my first year. At the beginning of my first term Jack said I would be going to Dr Spooner for supervision in Medieval English Constitutional History. It was only long afterwards that I learned it was an option. I had a choice. I am grateful, however, because not only was it interesting but if I had not done it I could not have written my second book, *A Liberal Descent* (1981), though it is not about medieval history but in part about some of the historians who wrote it. Frank Spooner, who died in 2007, was an economic historian who later worked with the great French historian Fernand Braudel. He proved to be a languid, rather elegant young man with a gently meditative, almost soliloquising manner of supervising. I liked him. Listening to one's essay and then commenting on it, he would lie back almost prone in his chair, contemplating the

ceiling, with the tips of his fingers together so that he looked rather like the effigy on a tomb. He also wore yellow socks, which impressed me, though I should not have done so myself. His reading lists, dictated, were also impressive. The one for the first week consisted just of about a dozen articles. I was used at school to a couple of text books which lasted us a year. Feebly I asked him where I should start. It was the wrong question. "Oh, browse among them", he said vaguely, "browse among them". So I did. After I had read out my essay, Frank, still prone, would murmur appreciative things. They tended to be obliquely suggestive rather than explicit, in a fashion that might have seemed elderly in so young a man, but I was intrigued by them: "A golden age" he would murmur, "yes, a golden age", of an obscure couple of decades in the twelfth or thirteenth century - obscure at least to me. It was all very civilized. Only once did Cambridge show its steel. I had already read much in the recommended reading list one was sent before coming up, thinking this would be required. Actually it was never mentioned and I found most people had read nothing at all. I am glad I did though, because I read Huizinga's *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, Robert and A. J. Carlyle's *History of Medieval Political Theory in the West* and Gibbon. Also on the list and so read by me was Joliffe's *Constitutional History of Medieval England*, which I liked. Since this was the subject we were doing it was natural to mention it to Frank. "Ah Joliffe", he said gently to the ceiling, "He's unsound on the Witan you know". I blushed, literally, at having read an author who was unsound on the Witan, and never mentioned him again.

In my second term I was sent for medieval European to Rupert Hall, the College's historian of seventeenth-century science. I did not play fair by Rupert, because of a crisis about which I need only say that I parted from my future wife in February, apparently for good, after we had known each other for three months. I had met her on 5th November 1954. In those days 5th November in Cambridge was more like a minor revolution than a festivity, with a massive police presence and some quite serious injuries. I had found myself standing beside her on the pavement of St Andrew's Street, opposite Christ's, with a mob rushing down the road, throwing firecrackers, towards a line of police outside Emmanuel. I said "Are you frightened?" and she replied "Well it is a bit frightening", so I said "So am I. Let's get out of here", which as chat-up lines go still seems to me a good one. She must have been very reckless or had already summed me up correctly as innocuous, because we walked in the dark across Christ's Pieces and then across the deserted Midsummer Common to her home in Chesterton. When I got back to

Christ's I found a police cordon around the gate and had to tap on a policeman's buttons and say "I live here". After the following February we did not meet again until we met by chance during the Long Vacation of 1956, when I was able to see off the competition, which included a Philosophy Research Fellow of Trinity, by whom I had initially felt heavily outgunned. We are due to have our fiftieth wedding anniversary later this year.

Summer came and I learnt to punt. My third term provided an altogether new academic experience when I was sent out of college for supervision for the first time, to the émigré medievalist Walter Ullmann. Walter later became a Fellow of Trinity, but at this time had no college room and supervised in the upstairs back room of his terrace house in Owlstone Road in Newnham. The room, made perpetually foggy and almost asphyxiating by Walter's pipe, contained only two straight-backed wooden chairs facing one another about three feet apart, a table and books piled up the walls flat. His children, whom Jack claimed he named after popes, would usually be making a lot of noise in the garden. When the noise became intolerable Walter would rush to the window, fling it up and shout down to the small Sylvester, Hildebrand and Innocent - if Jack was right, which he may not have been - to be quiet. There would be dead silence for about half a minute after which the noise would begin again at the same volume as before. Walter was my first exposure to Germanic, or in his case Austrian, academic manners and professorial autocracy. In a large lecture hall in Vienna or Graz it might have been tolerable or even impressive. Three feet apart, exposed to the full blast of Walter's pipe and personality, in a back room in Owlstone Road, it was to call for more fortitude than I possessed.

We sat down and I began to read my essay. After a few sentences a protesting hand was raised: "How much more is there of this stoff" my new supervisor said. "Well ... quite a lot, actually". "Go on, go on" (almost every imperative or interrogative from Walter seemed to need one or more repetition). I read on, falteringly now. Another arrest: "You are wasting my time". Here I am glad that I had enough spirit—though I was also genuinely anxious to be out of it - to start to stand up, saying with as much formal English courtesy as I could assume, "In that case I'd better not det-". More hand-waving, both hands this time and frantically: "Sit down, sit down, sit down". I should think still better of myself if I had remained standing, but I did as I was bidden. I have wondered since what would have happened if Jack had had to tell Walter that one of his supervisees refused to return to him without an apology. I think it not impossible that it might have been given. Walter was

ferocious and impulsive but not stern. Then I should have felt a pompous fool. He was, in fact, I was to discover, rather warm-hearted; he just did not have the Socratic touch. I was allowed this time to continue to the end of my essay, but what ensued then was vituperation rather than criticism, with much repetition of "this stoff". Where had I got it? Made cautious by the Joliffe debacle, I did not say I had got it from A. J. Carlyle, which was the truth. Something told me it would not be wise. It all seemed a long way from Frank's pleasant, beamed attic room and Frank himself being gently complimentary to the ceiling. I left trembling and only recovered a little when I discovered my experience was not unique. I went to see Michael. As I stood in his doorway he looked at me and said: "You got it too. Good." We quite rapidly learnt - minds being concentrated by the prospect of hanging - that the only route to safety in Walter's supervisions was to paraphrase his own published writings. The effect was immediate and gratifying.

He would look at one open-mouthed, hands held up, palms outward, in astonishment that one should have been granted such a revelation of truth: "Good, good! But that is right! Good, good!" After that it was easy and he became volubly genial. His special subject was the papacy and he would crow gleefully at examples of papal deviousness and double-crossing. "They were no fools, those old popes. He said of the current one, with contempt, "Those old popes, they ruled the world. What does this one do? He opens radio stations!" He would often warn one against the deviant views of other scholars, which he treated as heresies, putting their works on his personal index. One should not read them lest one should be corrupted and led from the truth (his). "Do not read him Burrow. He is no good. He is wrong. Do not read him". The work I was being warned against was, it seemed to me, usually some History of the Papacy in German in eleven volumes, published in, let us say, Munich in the eighteen-nineties. I gave my promise and I have kept it. I have kept the faith, Walter, I have never read it. He was particularly fond, I remember, of the three discordant (I believe) accounts of Charlemagne's coronation. He would throw the three books down on the table with a single gesture, like a croupier in a casino with a pack of cards, and each would open automatically at the required, well-thumbed, greasy page. Then he would stab a finger rapidly at each in turn and, turning to me with the now familiar schoolboy glee, would screech exultantly "You see! You see!" Thanks to the poor parson I read Latin haltingly, but I said that I saw. Walter had that effect on one.

One other academic feature of my first year which is worth mentioning was the attempt to teach me economic history by my future

colleague at Sussex, Barry Supple. Barry was a Christ's research student from the LSE who lived and taught in a basement in Mill Road, a slummy part of town. He was a kind of phoenix, because when I next met him many years later he had become Sussex's Chairman of Arts, a very big figure indeed, ranking just below the Vice-Chancellor; he later became Master of the Cambridge college Saint Catherine's. My use of the word 'attempt' implies no criticism of him, for he was a very good teacher, but refers only to my own inaptitude for the subject, on which there were starred compulsory questions in the Tripos papers. To me it seemed a mysterious subject. I never understood why the causal connections so confidently affirmed by economic historians held. Why, for example, did inflation appear sometimes to stimulate the economy and sometimes to depress it? I got by in Tripos, which I must have done, by learning to parody the manner of articles in the *Economic History Review*. I am a rotten economic historian but a good parodist, and I think the examiners, though they may have been puzzled by the content of some of my answers, must have been impressed by my professional manner. As the Victorian Cambridge philosopher Henry Sidgwick said when examining an Oxford thesis, where the philosophic idiom was different, it was nonsense but (he put it as a question) it was the right kind of nonsense.

During my first Long Vacation I went for three weeks to the Rhineland. I had not made any friendships close enough for a companion. I took the train from Ostend to Cologne, after which the plan was that I should hitch-hike and stay in youth hostels. I had booked the first three nights, however, in a tiny pension in Cologne and I am glad I did because it proved more interesting than the hostels. It was not really a pension but a room to let, in a big, old apartment block, with stone communal stairs and no lift. The nearest lavatory was on the next floor beside the stairs. My hostess was a solitary little old woman who had clearly in every sense seen better days. She slept, lived and in some fashion cooked in a tiny bedroom with an inconveniently large bed in it, of which I caught a glimpse. I slept in her drawing-room, a quite large room but overstuffed with heavy and clearly at one time expensive Wilhelmine furniture, and a camp bed in the centre of the room for me. There was also a large and opulent looking mirror in an ornate giltframe. The chief decorations were photographs of German officers in uniform, iron-crossed and beribboned, in silver frames; men of different ages. Each seemed to represent a family tragedy and to lead to the tiny bedroom-kitchen next door and the communal lavatory beside the stairs. I wish now I had had the common humanity to have asked

about them, but I was too shy. She gave me my breakfast in my sleeping quarters and otherwise I ate out. I did not mind these arrangements; they made me feel like Herr Issyvoo. I discovered, and this held good for the next three weeks, that I could afford to eat well, with lots of meat, in restaurants used by German businessmen. The pound seemed to go a long way in marks in 1955. I had come to Cologne largely for the sake of its big Romanesque churches. They were all shut for renovation, as was the Cathedral. The one opposite me, Saint Gereon - I was in Gereonstrasse - was huge and pockmarked with shrapnel but otherwise intact, a testimony to its immense solidity; it looked like a fortress. Around the cathedral the central area, beside the Rhine railway bridge, was acres of flattened, compacted rubble. I had seen it before, in Exeter and in London, but never on a scale like this. It was while walking across it that I was accosted for the first time by a prostitute. I had seen plenty on the streets of London; it was before they were swept indoors. They were highly recognizable, often in imitation leopard-skin coats, with high heels and long, thin, rolled coloured umbrellas, and frequently a small dog on a lead. This one was nondescript and not in uniform. I was too nervous to be attracted, so did not find out how far the pound stretched in that direction, but I was flattered. I had just turned twenty. Reconstruction in Cologne seemed only just beginning, in a shoddy way, and after a couple of days I found it depressing. I decided to postpone hitch-hiking and took the train to Heidelberg, a picturesque journey along the banks of the Rhine and the Neckar. Heidelberg was refreshing; I was among tourists, my own kind. I found that German white wine drunk in an open-air cafe above the river, opposite the town, was a very different matter from when swigged lukewarm from a bottle at the end of an undergraduate party.

I stayed in the youth hostel and used them thereafter. My general air of bemusement led to my being taken for someone from the Eastern Zone; the wall was not yet up. I was flattered to be taken at least for a German. There seemed to be no other English speaking German, which, unlike French, I had never done except at school, was at first an ordeal, requiring an effort of will. In Cologne, on my first day, I remember being in a department store which had a large cafe and feeling very hungry. There were cakes, trolley loads of them, but I shrank from taking the plunge, though I must have spoken already to my hostess. I had to tell myself that unless I spoke German to someone I should die of hunger in the midst of plenty. My German, I came to realize, was eccentric: polished but inaccurate and inadequate. I remember asking an old woman the way to the railway station. I used the subjunctive and she

held up her hands in admiration: "Ach, wie schones Deutch Sie sprechen". We walked on together and I could tell that she became more and more bewildered that this young man who spoke such beautiful German seemed lacking in bits of elementary vocabulary. I found German spoken through loudspeakers at railway stations sinister even though it was only announcing the names of destinations and platforms. It must be remembered that the war had been over only ten years and the word 'Achtung' through a loudspeaker came weighted with associations. The Germans I met varied from civil to friendly, but there was still a sense of being in enemy territory, which of course was part of the interest.

The food in youth hostels was good and, as I have said, I could afford restaurants. None of this was a problem. Hitch-hiking was. I had never done it and seemed not to know how to do it. After a few days, and buying some silver trinkets for my mother, and for Diane in case I should ever see her again, I decided to hitch-hike to Mannheim; my goal was Mainz, where I wanted to see the red sandstone Romanesque cathedral. I did not know where to start from, apart from walking to the edge of town. Cars swept by, ignoring my pleading thumb. Eventually a police car drew up and two policeman got out and stood over me. They said hitch-hiking on the autobahn was verboten. I knew nothing about motorways. I pleaded that I was an ignorant Auslander. They seemed very large, in green uniforms, with peaked caps and revolvers. Being interrogated in German by policemen was part of my folklore, fed by films and the wireless. Then came the inevitable cliche: "Ihre Papiere bitte". I produced my passport and they relaxed. In fact they became very nice, took me into the car and drove me to where I could legitimately hitch-hike. But my nerve had gone. I still did not seem to be any good at it. After a few ineffectual passes at the traffic I started walking, throwing out a hopeful thumb periodically, and eventually found that I had walked to the suburbs of Mannheim. In Mannheim I was, of course, very footsore and there seemed not much to do. I had thought of trying to get to the nearby baroque electoral Schloss at Bruchsal, highly recommended by Pevsner, but it seemed too difficult. Anyway, it would probably be closed for renovation. I gave in and took the train for Mainz. I had intended trying to see the other two Romanesque Rhineland cathedrals, Worms and Speier, as well. I did not manage that, but Mainz made up for it. After Mainz I took the train to Koblenz, at the junction of the Rhine and the Mosel. It was still visibly battered, with much pockmarking, but not flat like Cologne.

I stopped in the youth hostel in the arsenal of the old fortress of

Ehrenbreitstein, a stiff climb above the town and the river. I knew it had been the site of a seventeenth-century battle; it appears in Byron's *Childe Harold*. That night was the most interesting since Cologne and the decorated officers watching me undress before the great gilt mirror. There were about forty youths in the dormitory, all German. Because it was an arsenal there were no windows and the smell of Lederhosen was pungent. The lights were put out early by the Hausvater. Then they began to tell dirty stories. My German, I found, was good enough to grasp the mises en scene, usually Catholic; we were in a Catholic area. They also seemed highly traditional, often featuring monks and nuns. Language apart, one could have been listening to Boccaccio or Marguerite de Navarre. "Es war einer Monch ... Es gibt drei Nonnen ... " I could follow them well enough until the punch lines. These being (a) obscene and not taught at Exeter School, (b) often in dialect and (c) delivered to yells of laughter, I never got at all. In the course of two hours I heard about two dozen dirty stories and did not get the punch line of a single one: a novel torment for Tantalus.

I took a steamer down the Rhine to Bonn. I was not yet a Wagnerian, so did not think of Siegfried, but tried to remember as much as I could of Goethe's poem as we passed the so-called Lorelei rock. In the next bed in the hostel in Bonn was a Scotsman in a kilt, the first British person I had met for over two weeks. He was perfectly amiable but was to prove a deep embarrassment. He spoke no German at all. I had the impression that he had not spoken to a human soul for several weeks. This led him to overcome racial prejudice and talk to me eagerly, or try to. The trouble was that I could understand only about one sentence in three, whereas with the German youths around us my ratio of comprehension, though not a hundred per cent, was much higher. I began to try to avoid him. I took the train back to Cologne and Ostend and arrived in London with just enough money for a train ticket to Exeter. I took a very early morning train because I could not afford a night in London, and walked from Saint David's station across the city to my home as dawn was breaking.

Back in Cambridge for my second year I was looking forward to doing the history of political thought (Plato to Rousseau), which had interested me ever since schooldays and discovering the work of Figgis in the school library. One reason was that being textual one could in it confront the past in its own words, not mediated through those of historians or in selected documents. The other, of course, was that it ministered to my so far academically unsatisfied inclination to philosophy. So far my intellectual interests and the syllabus had not

markedly coincided, though I had developed a taste for the technicalities of feudal law and royal justice in Medieval England and had made the joyful discovery in their early twentieth-century interpreter, F. W Maitland, of an historian who could make any subject, however technical, an intellectual treat. My college supervisor for political thought, John Kenyon, proved to be more interesting in himself than as a commentator on the texts. It was not his subject. He had written a big political biography, begun I think under Jack's supervision, of James II's minister the Earl of Sunderland. In political thought it was to his credit that he did not pretend. Two of his aphorisms I found so memorable that I wrote them down. One, prefaced by the prodigious sniff and accompanied by the deep, despairing sigh that were his conversational trademark, was "I always find Aristotle a bit wet". I wrote it down without letting it be seen I was doing so (Aristotle = bit wet). The other was "Of course the fing" (he had trouble with the 'th' sound) "about St Augustine's City of God is that it doesn't just include men, it includes God and angels and fings". I already knew this - the insight into Aristotle had been new to me - but I wrote it down: 'C of G = men, God, angels + fings'.

John was a heavily built, deep-voiced, melancholy man with a perceptible Yorkshire accent, and one of the numerous pipe-smokers in the History Faculty. I had one myself when I started teaching; it gave one time to think. His view of life seemed to be a grimly robust despair. I have since realized that the sniff and the deep sigh - almost a groan - that was its counterpart were correlative. The former was the inhalation prior to a remark, which it therefore signalled, and the latter the exhalation as it was delivered. I got to know him better, of course, when I became a Fellow. He was candid about his limitations, and his grimly comic view of life, which chimed well with Jack's, included himself. Once I remember his saying about the political thought syllabus we had in a fashion explored together, "I've got to give up teaching it. I've been doing it for a long time so last vacation I fought I'd better re-read the texts. They're quite different from what I've been saying". I did not like to ask if Aristotle had been a revelation to him. He later went to become professor of History at Hull, and came back to report: "When I was in Cambridge no one ever paid any attention to what I said so I got used to saying all sorts of irresponsible fings just to be annoying. When I got to Hull I sounded off in the same way about the syllabus and they said "Yes Professor, of course Professor, we'll try it Professor" and they changed it all and now the bloody fing's unworkable". John's conversational speciality, aided of course by the sniff, was deflation. I remember once a

visiting American talking on High Table about his holiday in Tuscany or the Dordogne and then, feeling obviously that he might have been monopolizing the conversation, turning to John and saying "And where did you vacation Doctor Kenyon?" After a vast premonitory sniff, and accompanied by an almost cosmic groan, he had his answer: "Sheffield" John said.

I have said nothing so far about the Christ's Fellow I became fondest of, the literary critic Graham Hough, then about fifty. Being in English he had not taught me, which was perhaps as well, because he became bored by the repetitiveness of supervising. I remember when I was a Fellow his coming into the Combination Room after a morning of it and saying "It's this constant contact with fresh young minds that makes our profession so disagreeable". Because Jack was on leave in my first year he was my tutor, a purely pastoral role, and was kind to me, lending me books, when I was ill. He had been briefly a Catholic. It was one way, he said, of learning what European civilisation had been about, and in a Catholic church "one did not have to bother much about what they were saying up at the smoky end". He was a poet and painter in a William Morrisian, Arts and Crafts tradition on which he had written a book, *The Last Romantics*. He seemed very donnish, but brisk, not fussy. His greeting, when I first presented myself at his door, was much more genial than it looks in print: "Hello, come in. Who the hell are you?" He dressed almost invariably in a tweed jacket or suit, often with a check or yellow waistcoat, which was rather dashing, a bow tie and a fisherman's hat; Jack, in contrast, though he also wore a bow tie, always wore a dark suit and had a very broad-brimmed black hat which looked like a famous Toulouse Lautrec poster. Graham was another pipe smoker. No nonsense, deflationary but not cynical, except light-heartedly, was an habitual conversational register. He subscribed, he said, to the old Cambridge principle that if it can't be said in baby talk it's probably balls. The last was a favourite term of condemnation, uttered not dismissively but protestingly, on a rising note of expostulation: "But that's balls!". Tartly phrased, but reasoned demolition would follow. He was not wary of emotion, though not over-indulgent in it. He was in a fashion a Romantic, a lover of women, though I do not know how many of them he actually had, and capable of being suddenly and unexpectedly moved by literature he knew well, as what did he not? He had been a prisoner of the Japanese, taken in the fall of Singapore. He seldom spoke of it but I remember his telling us once that at the end of the war the guards had made them dig a trench at the perimeter of the camp; "we knew why". When he was in his eighties, Diane, who also loved him,

and I lived for a term almost next door to him, when we had a cottage in Grantchester belonging to King's, thanks to the Provost Bernard Williams, while I was on leave. We saw a good deal of him. He was by this time nearly blind, and lonely. He told us one evening of his last hours of freedom in Singapore. He found temporary refuge with a Chinese nurse who had taken an extra-mural class he had given on English poetry. Knowing he was going into captivity she had offered him a choice from her small collection of books. He had chosen *A Golden Treasury*. She put out her hand to check him and said "Oh, I'm terribly sorry but I can't spare that". He said it had made him feel that teaching English literature had not been, after all, such a bad way of spending one's life; there were tears in his eyes. He chose a Yeats instead, which stayed with him, and became the nucleus of *The Last Romantics*. In old age, being unable to read, he would walk around his cottage declaiming poetry to himself from memory in English, French, German, Italian and Latin. He was a kind of Tory anarchist; he said that after seeing how badly very senior people behaved at the fall of Singapore one could never take authority seriously again. I came to find in Graham traits and ways of being an academic that I felt I would be glad if, in a lesser way, I could make my own. I have no idea if I have.

In my second Long Vacation I went to Italy, this time with two companions: John Dixon Hunt, who was later, among other things, to become an authority on Renaissance gardens, and Michael Ratcliffe. We travelled overnight from Paris to Milan. Coming through the Alps at dawn, misty and Wagnerian, and emerging on to the plain of Lombardy and to Lake Como just as waiters were putting up coloured umbrellas over cafe tables in the morning sunshine, gave one a sense of what eighteenth and nineteenth-century travellers must have experienced when, from their carriages, they had their first sight of the longed-for south. After a day in Milan, where I liked the 'fascist' railway station even better than the liberal-democratic, modernist one seen later in Rome, which it was allowable to admire, we went on to Florence. John, who was our organizer, had booked a pensione in the Piazza Annunziata because he was convinced it was the model for the one in *A Room With a View*. E. M. Forster was still about in King's, where I held a door open for him once. John was a Kingsman. The Pensione Morandi certainly had the right kind of Edwardian ambience, though the situation was wrong; there was no view of the Arno. However, for me to step out and immediately see the slender colonnade of Brunelleschi's Foundling Hospital, familiar from a photograph in Pevsner, on the other side of the piazza, was pleasure enough. Still influenced by Forsterian piety, John

insisted we go to San Gimignano, which I found depressing, and also to other hill towns in Tuscany and Umbria, which I liked much better, though some were very smelly. I thought of how terrible it must have been, ten years before, not merely to climb those hills but to fight up them.

I had predictably been dazzled by Milan cathedral, but the banded liquorice stripes of green, black and white marble of Tuscan gothic took some getting used to. I tried to get into San Annunziata on a festival day to hear the liturgy but was defeated by the press of people constantly pushing in and out past the heavy leather curtain. On holiday with my parents in Bruges I had sometimes gone into churches to hear the priest say, or better sing, the office, and had also gone to the tiny church of Saint Julien le Pauvre in Paris for the same reason, just as I had gone to hear evensong at King's on dark, winter afternoons. I was hostile to Christianity but responsive to Catholicism, partly or perhaps mainly because it seemed to epitomize the wider world of Europe, like croissants and aperitifs and proper coffee. I did not, of course, know that the traditional liturgy was doomed to the disaster which was soon to overtake it. Later I went quite often with Diane, who was then a Catholic, to Benediction in Chesterton, where she played the harmonium while placid Cambridge businessmen sang of their longing for persecution and martyrdom in the hymn *Faith of our Fathers*. I liked *Tantum Ergo* just as I liked the long Latin grace at Christ's, which I soon knew by heart, and as a Scholar sometimes had to say in Hall.

In Rome, where we stayed in a palazzo (Salviati) converted into a youth hostel, beside the Tiber, I could and did walk quite often to Saint Peter's. I had read no Henry James, so Rome held no reminiscences of Isobel Archer, Daisy Miller and Roderick Hudson. I was in love with the baroque, and felt starved of it in England. I had missed it in Germany the previous year; I should have gone further south. Actually I prefer the porcelain-like delicacy as well as grandeur of the gilt and white baroque interiors of Southern Germany and Austria to the heavier Italian versions. Thanks to John's initiative in getting tickets we went to the opera several times in Florence and Rome, where I was amazed by the audience: shouting, roaring approval, clapping before the end of an aria and booing. Exeter City scoring a goal scarcely aroused such enthusiasm in my phlegmatic countrymen. It was in Rome that I first heard of and learnt the meaning of the phrase 'rock and roll'. I had bought an English newspaper and learnt from it that my home town had apparently been vandalized by gangs of youths maddened by 'rock and roll'. There was an American serviceman in the next bunk so I asked him what it was and

he explained. The following year I jived inexpertly with Diane in the Criterion pub on Cambridge Market Square. My image of Terpsicore the Muse of dance has always been of a girl saying "Ow!" and nursing a foot I had trodden on.

The intellectual interests which began to stir in me during my final year became bound up with my choice of a research subject at the end of it, and so are better treated later. I knew that I wanted to stay on if I could, but I needed to qualify for a grant for another three years and would otherwise be immediately liable for National Service. I took Tripos Part II with an imagined red-capped military policeman standing beside my desk ready to put a possessive hand on my shoulder should I fail to get a First. It worked, or something did. Before going on to my thorny path to research, however, it is perhaps appropriate to round off an account of my undergraduate years with something about my generation's general appearance and ethos. Many undergraduates' of course, were just nondescript but for the self-conscious there were several styles to choose from, though spotted bow ties and coloured waistcoats were common across a considerable range; I had both. The two main contrasting styles were, in the language of the time and place, hearties and arties. It was a distinction which ran back to the beginning of the century and even into the nineteenth, as the antagonism between athletes and aesthetes. Hearties tended towards a countrified, even horsey look, with hairy tweed jackets or hacking jackets, check shirts, silk cravats, waistcoats or thick-knitted pullovers, cavalry twill trousers and heavy brown shoes. Aspirant arties tended to wear corduroy jackets in green, grey or plum colour; mine, for some reason, were successively black and brown. True arties spanned a range from smart to louche, but dark coloured shirts and abstension from the more obvious forms of undergraduate uniform were signals. The latter's archetype was just 'a Cambridge undergraduate' - of the period, of course, marked by the bow tie and the coloured waistcoat, sometimes carrying a long umbrella, with a duffel-coat as an over-garment, under a gown. No one wore a hat except that hearties occasionally had caps. The striped college scarves, which seem to have lasted, were ubiquitous; both Diane and I had them.

One exceptional category was the few African undergraduates, who always seemed extremely smart, in suits, with silk ties and dazzlingly white, well-ironed shirts with stiff collars. The latter were obtainable, with rounded corners; I had one myself but cannot remember wearing it. Perhaps it was on formal occasions, when college ties were also permissible. Another category, but more as a matter of manners than dress, was the smooth man, whose characteristics were social

imperturbability and savoir faire and a polished manner. It was, of course, and perhaps still is, largely a social category. I doubt if a grammar school boy could have been one, but even hearties, who were generally from public schools, really belonged to a more noisy, rough-haired and sweaty breed. There is perhaps a tendency to regard the smooth man as perennial- we all know what is meant - but the word, I think, had a resonance special to the time and place. Gowns, of course, were worn for Hall, lectures, supervisions, examinations and in the streets after dark. The Proctors still walked at night, with their top-hatted 'bulldogs' very fit and fleet-footed, fining the un-gowned. Pipe-smoking among undergraduates was not uncommon - I forget when I first had mine. Those with pretensions to elegance smoked Balkan Sobranie or Black Russian cigarettes with gold tips, and at least one of my friends had a cigarette-holder. A few wore wing collars; I think there was a Royalist or Jacobite club which adopted them.

In the nineteenth century Christ's men had apparently been known as 'Christians', but this had dropped out as it became inaccurate and therefore presumably tactless. For fifty years, in the fifteenth-century, before its refoundation in 1505, the college had been called God's House. My friend and fellow History Scholar Bill Petchey remarked how fortunate the change had been. Could one imagine oneself being called a Godsman, or shouting "Come on God's"? I do, however, remember some years later an incident associated with the divine names for the colleges. I used to take our son Laurence for walks along the towpath in his pushchair, from which he learnt to imitate the shouts of the coxes encouraging their eights. At one social gathering, having presumably heard the name of the college mentioned, he made a considerable sensation by suddenly calling "Get your finger out, Jesus". On one occasion, lacking a babysitter, we had to take him to a rather formal party. I was talking to a woman when a most peculiar expression appeared on her face. Laurence, from the floor, was running a hand experimentally up her calf.

Looking back I am struck by the extreme masculinity of our society, despite the three women's colleges and the handful of women in the Faculty. It was not until much later that women were admitted to the men's colleges. Parties, though sometimes all male, were not invariably so because there seemed to be something like undergraduate entrepreneurs who, rather like colonels raising regiments in the seventeenth century, could somehow supply a job-lot of nurses from Addenbrooks or girls from the teachers' training college, Homerton. The undergraduates who had succeeded in ingratiating themselves

would escort them home when the college gates closed, at 10 pm for females. Then they would report back for a kind of debriefing, usually as confessions of various kinds of failure. I was reminded of bomber squadron's returning after failing to find their target, with the difference that anyone who did not come back was envied not pitied. Overtly homosexual behaviour, still of course illegal, seemed unthinkable, though it was known there were flagrantly homosexual dons, mostly, reputation said, in King's.

The masculine ethos was underlined by the omnipresence of former national servicemen, who were repositories of oral tradition in the form of obscene songs and recitations. The game of rugby has always been associated with these, but I think National Service thickened the brew. One could also hear occasional casual uses of slang evocative of army and empire: 'shufti', 'bint', 'recce', and 'liberate' (for steal), and, ubiquitously, which an early twenty-first century sensibility now makes me reluctant to print in full, though I could easily now print the obscenities, "w-g". Some of the songs spoke loudly of long hours of barrack-room boredom and frustration in remote places, like *The Harlot of Jerusalem* (I wonder if there was a Crusader version) and *Queen Farida*, who was the consort of King Farouk of Egypt and whose alleged exploits rivalled those of the Byzantine empress Theodora and the Roman one Messalina. They told of a world of limitless cynicism in which foreigners were all unsavoury touts or pimps: "Small boys are cheap today (to *La Donna e Mobile*), cheaper than yesterday, two bob or half-a-crown ..." The ending of National Service made, I think, a considerable difference, though not as much as the later admission of women to male colleges. My own rise to be a senior member meant, in any case, that I led a more sheltered life.

But the masculine ethos, in different forms, of course, pervaded the lives of senior members too. College Governing Body meetings took place in a fine panelled room with a heraldic fireplace, that, on those occasions, was always hazy and fragrant with pipe smoke. I saw what I now think of as this masculinity, from a slightly greater distance, in the History Faculty too, in the attitudes to the subject it fostered: unsentimental to the point of being unimaginative, and certainly not playful, except when leavened by the occasional flamboyant homosexual, which I welcomed. Historians seemed to take easily to official points of view and the practical realism of insiders. Some had worked in Whitehall or in other ways for government during the war and one later told me that it had influenced his understanding of history: very valuable, he said. Now it is history's victims whose perspectives are most

eagerly sought and identified with. Jack's word for his colleagues was 'grey'. I have naturally here been drawn to attend to the more colourful. John Kenyon, like his later colleague at Hull, Philip Larkin, with whom he shared a taste for traditional jazz, managed to make the deepest shade of grey into a powerful idiosyncrasy; in him it was black. Eventually he seemed to repudiate allegiance to Jack and to adopt Eltonian austerity as the badge of approved professionalism. Namierite preoccupations with details of parliamentary patronage did, of course, nothing to introduce lighter tones, and nor did the relentless pupping of Tudor committees. But for me that was all about to change.

9
Cambridge II: Growing up; Research

In my third year I encountered two members of the History Faculty in whom I found for the first time my intellectual interests and my formal instruction coming together. It was rather like the transition at school on going into the sixth form. These were Peter Laslett and Duncan Forbes; Duncan was my supervisor for a term and Peter took a kindly interest in me. Knowing them, though they were not without idiosyncrasies, made it possible to stop thinking of nearly all the members of the History Faculty as, at best, entertaining grotesques, amusing as a spectacle but wholly alien, and to begin to think of them as intellectual fellow-beings, despite the gulf of knowledge and sophistication between us, and my awe of them.

To explain this I have to return to my early interest in philosophy. Cambridge Moral Sciences, as philosophy, in a residue from its institution in Victorian times was called, did not promise to foster this. It seemed heavily oriented towards epistemology, logic and the philosophy of science, and much less so towards the moral and political philosophy that chiefly interested me. The few meetings of the Moral Sciences Club that I went to in the rooms of Professor Braithwaite, in King's Fellows' Building, had more human than philosophical interest for me. There was Braithwaite himself, vigorously apparently catching flies above his head with both hands in protest at what had been said: "Oh, but I say, but I say, I say ...". There was Alfred Ewing, old and tiny, bleating from his unobtrusive corner, like a small sheep, unfashionable Idealist noises that no one attended to. There was also Casimir Lewy, the Polish logician, whose voice and accent were so harsh that they seemed to come more from a machine than from a human throat, especially since they were usually uttering symbolic logic, which I could not follow at all. Collectively they still seemed shell-shocked following the death of Wittgenstein about four years earlier. There seemed to be a hesitation,

as though waiting for an expected intervention that never came.

Diane was reading philosophy at University College, London, in the small but distinguished department presided over by A. J. (Freddie) Ayer. In our third year I used to go with her to meetings of the Philosophy Society in Ayer's room in Gordon Square, where he sat, supremely elegant and intimidatingly quick and lucid, behind his big desk, smoking through a long cigarette-holder. There things were much livelier. Diane and I would have had supper in a small Belgian restaurant in Soho a few doors away from the well-known and much more expensive Gay Hussar; it had no license and one brought one's own wine in from Kettners. The menu, cooked and served by Madame, was invariable but good: steak, frites, salad and camembert. Then, earnest young people, we would go on to Gordon Square and philosophy. Freddie, as I came to think of him, though he did not know me, was a remarkable turn in himself; it now seems a limited and positivistic one, but it was immaculate and very formidable in its way, with sheer speed on the draw as a salient characteristic. The Wittgensteinian mode, by contrast, seemed to require long and presumably pregnant silences as imaginary inverted commas were placed around the last word or phrase to be uttered. Freddie, partly through being in London and partly through his own eminence, got interesting visiting speakers; Isaiah Berlin was one, giving a version of his recent Oxford Inaugural on *Two Concepts of Liberty*. Epistemology seemed more common, and there were one or two old relics of Oxford between the wars like H. A. Pritchard, who appealed to my liking for the past. Freddie had been the enfant terrible of English philosophy then, the chief evangelist of 'Logical Positivism', which he had brought from its fountainhead, the Vienna Circle, where he had served an apprenticeship. The standard of discussion, the close and relentless way arguments were dissected and pursued, was a revelation to me. I had known nothing like it in Cambridge, where the hesitations may have been intended to suggest profundity, and may actually have done so, but to me suggested only lack of communication. After the Gordon square meetings I admit I quite often had to ask Diane, who, against the grain of the Department, had become an enthusiast for the later Wittgenstein, to take me through the arguments again, which she helpfully did.

I knew that I did not have it in me to read Moral Sciences. Apart from its emphases being uncongenial, and my genuine interest in history, it seemed to incline too much towards the mathematical, and symbolic logic seemed only another version of the algebra which had baffled me at school; I always had to turn the symbols back into examples before

I could understand them, which defeated the point of using them as an abstract shorthand. It was natural, however, that I should gravitate towards the History of Political Thought, which has since flourished so notably in Cambridge, though it did not particularly then. It was the nearest one could get to Political Philosophy, and I think this does a good deal to explain the flowering of the subject in Cambridge and its orientation towards history. In Oxford it would have been different. There philosophy is studied either in conjunction with the classics or, as Political Philosophy, alongside Political Science and Economics (which I would not have wanted to do either), which, if it has any empirical reference at all, encourages a focus on the contemporary world, with only a very perfunctory attention, if any, to the fact that many of the key texts in political philosophy were written for societies now long past. In Cambridge then, anyone with my kinds of interest could satisfy them only in the History Tripos, and this, over the past five decades has ensured that those who pursued them there would be likely to be historically as well as philosophically minded. Talk of 'The Cambridge School' in the History of Political Thought has become an irritating cliché, implying much more unity than has in fact been the case, but the intensity of attention to the subject, somewhere between Philosophy and Intellectual History, is undisputed.

There was an abstract second section to the history of political thought papers in which contemporary philosophical issues could be directly confronted. The chief patron of this was Peter Laslett, though his own area of scholarship lay in the seventeenth century; he had edited, and made a startling discovery about, the political theory of John Locke. Peter, whom I later got to know quite well, and who was helpful to me, had had, and continued to do so, an intellectually eclectic career, beginning with working for the BBC Third Programme, of which he became an eloquent defender. He was interested in extending the experience of education into later life, and became involved in 'The University of the Third Age'. Before I finished Tripos he had edited the first volume in a series, which he continued with collaborators, *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, which published outstanding articles in political philosophy, which I, of course, eagerly read. Later he moved on to become a pioneering historical demographer. He was an arresting lecturer on the seventeenth-century: highly analytic, vehement, and sibilant. To sit in the front row, worth it for the content, was always to risk a certain amount of spit. What was it about Trinity? Walter Ullmann was also an extravagant spitter. I am sure Peter would have taken me on as a research student, as he later did my former undergraduate pupil

Quentin Skinner, if I had chosen to do the seventeenth or eighteenth century rather than the nineteenth.

One reason for my choice, however, was my undergraduate supervisor for 'Theories of the Modern State', as the modern part - i.e. since Rousseau - of political thought was called: Duncan Forbes, a Fellow of Clare to whom I was sent out. In Duncan I had for the first time a supervisor whose interests came close to my own. He also gave, most exceptionally for the period and for the History Faculty, a very impressive course of lectures on Hegel which I attended. He was a tall, fresh-faced, fair-haired, buoyant man, in his mid-thirties, who made a striking figure at College Feasts in Highland evening dress. As a young subaltern in the Seaforth Highlanders he had won an MC at Anzio; to read the citation is to get an extraordinary impression of courage and leadership in a very young man. His philosophical interests differed from Laslett's, which inclined to positivism and 'English Analytical Philosophy', as it was called. Forbes, who had been a research student of Herbert Butterfield, was in a German Idealist tradition. In the early 'fifties he had written remarkable articles on the Scottish Enlightenment, which drew attention to it almost for the first time, in the short-lived but distinguished journal edited by Cambridge's leading Idealist, then in the History Faculty, Michael Oakeshott. By the time I came up Oakeshott had taken Harold Laski's chair at the LSE. I first met him as my Ph.D external examiner: a small, twinkling, impish figure, of immense fascination and charm. Forbes as a scholar was, I think, underrated in Cambridge, his interests then being thought outlandish. His Special Subject on the Scottish Enlightenment, unfortunately given too late for me, was taken by some of the brightest of the next generation of history undergraduates, including Quentin and John Dunn.

Duncan's lecturing style was distinctive and characteristic. He would come in, remove his jacket, roll up his sleeves, put his gown on over his shirt, and stride about excitedly and enthusiastically. He had a braying voice and a manner of breezy, genial informality, swooping down on particular words or names for emphasis. I remember his speaking once of some seventeenth-century jurist as "one of those bloody Dutchmen with Latin names". He clearly saw interpreting a past author as a kind of protracted grapple in which he would try to pin his adversary down. He revered David Hume, on whom as a historian he wrote an important book, but would speak of him when finding him particularly elusive as "the bloody man".

Duncan was, as I have said, one influence drawing me towards the nineteenth century, with his supervisions and his lectures on Hegel and

Marx. I was less aware then of his interest in the Scottish Enlightenment. The Victorian was a period I was in any case finding congenial. I was, I suppose, part of the rediscovery of the Victorians as worth serious attention, after their burlesqued treatment in Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* (1917) and his imitators. I had read, for example, and appreciated Geoffrey Faber's sympathetic study of the Tractarians, The Oxford Apostles and his life of Jowett, as well as Duncan's study of Thomas Arnold and the Broad Church historians, *The Liberal Anglican Idea of History*, which came to figure for me as an example of how intellectual history could be written. To be a 'Victorianist' was beginning to seem precisely the kind of chance to look at literature, social history and 'thought' that appealed to me. No one that I recall much used the term itself, but the founding of the journal *Victorian Studies*, which offered just this mixture, suggested that others too found it appealing. I published my first article in it in 1963 and I would have been puzzled where to place it if the journal had not existed; later it seemed to become rather sectarianly feminist and I cancelled my subscription. Victorian England seemed to be as much a distinctive civilization as Ancient Greece or the Italian Renaissance, which needed to be taken in as a whole, as in G. M. Young's classic pre-war essay, *Portrait of an Age*, which I greatly admired. Of course it may well be that the kinds of coherence discerned in it, social cultural and intellectual, had more to do with the way it was beginning to be perceived than with anything particular about it compared with other periods.

In deciding on a period for research there was also a practical consideration. My German is better than my Latin, which seemed to point to the nineteenth century rather than the seventeenth, and certainly not to the Middle Ages. Duncan, however, did not want me as a research student. In fact I do not think he had any. I am sure he had nothing against me personally. He just did not much like having research students and I sympathise with him; a research supervisor is a classic instance of responsibility without power. Also he clearly had none of the desire to replicate himself which sustains some supervisors, and nor, I think, have I; I have always preferred teaching undergraduates, who are more open and impressionable. As the Scottish Enlightenment, of which Duncan was the foremost scholarly pioneer, became more of an industry, he noticeably stepped back. Not that he lost interest in it, but he did not, as he said, believe in 'history by committee'.

At least Duncan did not, unlike another prospective supervisor Noel Annan, take me on and then drop me. Annan had just become Provost of King's, and I used to go to see him in the Provost's vast drawing room,

which later, in Bernard Williams's time, I was to know well. The Provost's Lodge was fairly new, but the drawing room had at least one historical association, though I did not know it, as the room where M. R. James, Provost in the 'twenties, first read his ghost stories to Christmas house parties. Annan had hung it with yellow drapes, satin or velvet, I cannot remember, so that calling on him was, I used to think, rather like visiting Genghis Khan's tent; Annan was, of course, too smooth for a Mongol, though there was something a touch imperial about him. Tall, bald and booming, he was a commanding figure. I had found that I identified senior members largely by the kind of sound they made. Elton and Kenyon growled; Harry Hinsley, the historian of SOE, was a growler of almost Churchillian quality; Jack snapped, Saltmarsh fluted, Laslett hissed and Duncan brayed. There was no doubt about it, Annan boomed.

He would hold forth from one side of his desk, not uninterestingly. I, on the other, would listen. Then the phone would ring. It was the time just before the building of Churchill College, Cambridge's first new men's college for a century. Annan was involved in the planning, and the conversations usually seemed to be about this. After about twenty minutes on the phone - "yes, four million ... yes, Gulbenkian Trust ... yes ..."—he would put it down, lean towards me and boom "Now what was it you were saying. It was frightfully interesting. Do go on". After which he would start talking again. John Hunt once showed me a notice in King's porters' lodge, before he became Provost, which said "Mr Annan will be available in his rooms on (days and times given) to any member of the College who wants to come and talk". Someone had crossed out talk and written "listen". After a while Annan gave me up; I was too boring. I was boring, but I feel inclined to say I might have been less so had he allowed or even encouraged me to say something. It needed more force of personality and social confidence than I had to break in.

I was taken over by George Kitson Clark. We had little intellectually in common but he stood between me and the Faculty; he was more broad-minded than he seemed, and he made me work because I was frightened of him. I remember dodging into doorways in Trinity Street to avoid him when I had not written a chapter of my thesis for what he regarded as a sufficient time. He was stout, apoplectic-looking, stertorous and flatulent, with a voice somewhere between a boom and a honk. Insurance companies must have looked at him askance. Jack once described him, when overwrought, as "breathing fire from every orifice". He would proudly say "I am a Victorian", meaning he was born in 1900. It was not difficult to imagine him as a Victorian headmaster of Thomas

Arnold's vintage, which is probably why he scared me. He was a stickler for protocol. Once I went to see him with my gown under my arm, having forgotten to put it on. He said even more loudly than usual "Don't you want to put on your gown" and I discovered I had an urgent desire to do so.

He was a bachelor who lived above Trinity Great Gate, where he had his own private lift at the back, so he would sometimes appear, disconcertingly, like a deus ex machina, when one had seen him a few moments before in the court. His staircase was covered with a collection of Victorian Christmas cards, which inspired Jack to invent the slander that he had a collection of nineteenth-century pornographic postcards. There is a famous scene in the Marlene Dietrich film *The Blue Angel* in which the professor, having acquired a postcard of the singer, played by Dietrich, discovers that by blowing at her skirt, made of real feathers, he can make it part - after which for him it is downhill all the way. Jack did an imitation of Kitson, red in the face, cheeks puffed out, eyes bulging, blowing at a similar card for the same purpose. Jack's comments on, or fantasies about, colleagues often tended to be Rabelaisian: "balls haven't descended"; "walks as if he'd wet himself". Friends were not spared and insult was part of conviviality. He was a short man and so am I. To settle an argument about who was the taller we once measured ourselves against a doorpost, to considerable excitement, though I don't remember any betting. Jack won by about a third of an inch. Competitive in everything, he was predictably jubilant. Pretending to look at me consideringly, he said "Of course you're not a real dwarf, are you? You don't have an extra-large head". The Reverend Charles Raven, former Master of Christ's, married, when in his eighties, a rich woman of a similar age, who died on the honeymoon. Jack's version of the event was as predictable as it was unsympathetic. Raven was a histrionic, emotional man who liked to cultivate the young, but I did not care for him.

The scene on which Kitson chiefly shone was his presidency of the Nineteenth-Century Club, which met in his rooms and regularly had distinguished visiting speakers. Two occasions stand out in my memory. One was the visit of H. L. Beales, from LSE, who was about the same age and weight as Kitson but left wing. Kitson clearly thought that Beales's paper had insulted Victorian England, which was after a fashion under his personal protection. The discussion turned to county elections, which Beales thought were generally corrupt while Kitson asserted the contrary. They fell to citing specific counties (which I have to make up at random, since I cannot now remember which they were). Unfortunately it turned out that they had never worked on the same

one, so they sat on each side of Kitson's fireplace, two fat, angry old men, firing the names of counties at each other like a pair of battleships exchanging broadsides "what about Nottinghamshire then?", "I don't know about Nottinghamshire but what about Northamptonshire?", "I don't know about Northamptonshire, but you're not telling me that Nottinghamshire was corrupt", "And you're not telling me that Northamptonshire was clean", "Well, what about (a bellow of exasperation from Kitson) the West Riding? ... " I thought nostalgically of the sharply defined, closely argued disputes in Freddie Ayer's room and doubted my subject.

Another memorable occasion was the visit of the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm, who gave a version of what became for a while a famous thesis about the working-class standard of living in early Victorian England (poor). It depended essentially on matching wages and prices, over time, to establish an average tendency, but it did not really work because there were too many complicating variables, some of them resistant to measurement or with inadequate data. The star of the show on this occasion was Edward Wellbourne, the Master of Emmanuel. Wellbourne held at that time, deservedly, the always keenly contested though informally bestowed title of' "the rudest man in Cambridge".. It had previously been held by another historian, Kenneth Pickthorn, Master of Corpus, while Wellbourne's successor was yet another historian, Maurice Cowling, who admired both his predecessors though few others did; the title was held until death or total incapacity, no holder having been known to have lost his grip. Wellbourne neither growled nor brayed nor snapped nor boomed, he simply went on and on implacably, in a slow monotone, with long pauses, utterly impervious to attempts at interruption. I remember once an eager research student, bursting with a question and assuming, reasonably enough, that Wellbourne had finished, began to ask it. Wellbourne, ignoring him completely, began again, or I suppose in his own mind resumed. They spoke in a kind of counterpoint for a while, for the student was dogged, but eventually he knew when he was beaten.

Wellbourne had been a poor Cambridgeshire boy and let one know it. On this occasion he took exception to Hobsbawm's argument in a way that began quite sensibly and became more and more preposterous. I was reminded of it later by the Monty Python sketch of cloth-capped men steadily outdoing each other in recounting the hardships of their youth ("walked twenty-four miles to work, worked sixteen hours and walked back again, on a cup of tea" - that kind of thing). "Bread prices?" Wellbourne said: "Bread prices mean nothing. My mother would have

been ashamed to buy a loaf of bread. Baked our own. Shoes? My father made all ours. Sugar prices? Grew our own sugar beet. Tea? Grew it in the back hedge". I admit that I may have invented some of the latter part of this, but it reflects the general tenor of his argument. They got away from prices and on to the quality of life. Kitson suddenly produced a, to me, electrifying question, though it would of course be commonplace now. He said to Hobsbawm "Have you ever looked at the early history of brass bands?" Hobsbawm, with aplomb, said he had. Then they got on to leek-growing.

When I became a Research Fellow of Christ's Kitson invited me to dinner at Trinity, the only time I have dined there. At dessert I sat next to Anthony Blunt, later exposed as a former Soviet spy, whose long, melancholy face, like a highly bred sheep's, and rough-haired, tweed three-piece suit, were unmistakeable. Ian Richardson, in Alan Bennett's play about Blunt, played him as a dandy. That is not how I remember him, though he was certainly fastidious. Dessert was taken at a very long table, with about six of us occupying one end. The butler had to enter from the far end and he was wearing very squeaky shoes; he was old and frail and may have been only an under-butler. It did not matter when the squeaking receded, but when it began again, far away, and gradually increased in volume as he approached with another decanter it became quite nerve-racking; I noticed that we all fell silent for the final approach and touch-down. Someone said "What a nasty wine Chateau Yquem is". All I remember that Blunt said to me was something about passing the fruit. After his treachery had been revealed, Jack led a campaign in the British Academy to have him expelled. I would not have supported it but I was not then a Fellow. My conversations with the famous, or notorious, seem to have followed the same pattern. When I sat next to Dr Leavis at Downing it was, I think, the mustard that formed the talking-point. His protégé, Maurice Shapera, on my other side, however, was talkative and unpleasant. He was later murdered when at the University of Kent, after a rough-trade pick-up at Dover Docks.

To explain how I came to be Kitson's research student and began my first misguided and abortive attempt at research under him requires a digression about my political views at the time. It rather embarrasses me, not because I am ashamed of having held such views, but because it seems now so irrelevant to the question of my research topic, but I am sure that it was not. In my third year, in 1957, I became uneasy about what seemed my natural predilection for looking at the ideas of an educated minority. It was not that I was drawn to the hard-headed pragmatism of the political historians. It was rather that I had become

troubled by what my juniors a few years later, by then to my irritation, would call 'elitism'. What about the workers then? This was where political attitude became relevant. When I came up I had been wholly apolitical. The two main parties seemed to be converging, the conservatives still chastened by their defeat in 1945, Labour by the experience of office and their own subsequent defeat. In 1955 I cycled one day to Ely, and it was only when I saw the polling booths open that I remembered there was an election. The next year, 1956, changed that, with our ineptly conducted and blatantly falsely excused invasion of the Suez Canal Zone. Suez dominated that summer, with its threat of war in what seemed a very bad cause. The sense of guilt was increased by the simultaneous Soviet invasion of Hungary; there seemed not much difference between the irresponsibilityof our action and the brutality of the Russian suppression of the rising in Budapest. I remember sitting in the piazza in front of the cathedral in Milan looking at the sequence of neon newsflashes on the building opposite and wondering if there would be war. Many of my undergraduate generation were reservists, liable for recall at any moment. I remember a party at which impromptu orators stood on chairs and denounced our "police action". The most eloquent contribution, however, came from a man who had sat silent, apparently stricken and almost catatonic, all evening. During a lull in the noise he suddenly said, mainly to himself, "Oh Christ! Chatham Barracks!".

I went to a protest meeting on Parker's Piece, where we were blessed by the Reverend Mervyn Stockwood, the University Chaplain, later well known as the leftist Bishop of Southwark. He was a decorative cleric with a blue rinse and much mauve silk about him, and the largest pectoral cross I have ever seen. Most of us were there to protest, but there were groups of the opposite persuasion, mostly, it seemed, college rugby clubs, which after deliberation had come to the conclusion that our action was in the interests of world order and international peace and earnestly wanted to punch anyone who thought otherwise. They also sang *Land of Hope and Glory*. Scuffles broke out, but Parker's Piece is a large open space and no harm was done. I told Jack later about this and he was lofty: "lost my collar in the Guildhall in the 'thirties at a meeting about Spain". There was also, I remember, a march through the centre of Cambridge. I still think it was unfortunate that the Labour leadership had told protestors to shout "Law not War". In a procession headed by plummy-voiced dons, with Noel Annan booming at the front, it came out as something like 'Laugh not Waugh, Laugh not Waugh'. I was also disappointed in the Labour Leader, Hugh Gaitskell's broadcast, though I detested the one given by Anthony Eden. I had heard Gaitskell at the

Cambridge Union, and found him prissy and school-masterish.

If 1956 was a kind of turning point, so in a different way was 1957, when, now engaged, I went with Diane to South Shields, on Tyneside, to be viewed by her grandparents and assorted aunts. I remember particularly her grandfather, a Yorkshire-man not a Geordie, who had been a sergeant-major in the Great War - higher than any of my relatives - and was now a bus driver. He restrained, I thought reluctantly, the snarling, teeth-baring dog he kept, which clearly had adverse views on prospective grandsons-in-law and wanted to see the colour of this one's insides. Grandpa patted him proudly and said "Aye, he's a one man dog". He also called me "Jack", the only person ever to do so: "Stick to your books, Jack". Well, I have, pretty much. The relatives were comfortable lower-middle class but this was virtually my first sight of the industrial north. South Shields is only a mile or two from Jarrow. I remember miners with black faces on public buses; they must have been from collieries without pithead baths, a decade after nationalization. I had, of course, read Orwell as well as Marx.

It reinforced my feeling that in my research, just beginning, I should try to find out "what the masses thought about it all". I have no idea if the example was well chosen. I knew, that is, that I felt most at home with what is now called "discourse" - which seemed a good word when Michael Oakeshott used it, but has since fallen into bad company - rather than facts, but need it be the discourse of intellectuals? I continued to think of myself as on the left rather than the right (which is a designation I have never accepted, and particularly not during the Thatcher years) until the student revolts and the Trades Union militancy of the nineteen-seventies caused a revulsion of feeling more powerful even than Suez. It will be seen that my political attitudes were more episode-driven than the product of hard thinking, which I had supposed myself to be committed to. I seem to have been, throughout this period, an increasingly battered Keynesian, with dwindling working-class sympathies, which was the reason the Trades Union-led inflation of the seventies was so intellectually as well as practically painful. You can't fine tune the economy if the populace insists on kicking the door down and rifling the till. Academics, of course, being feebly represented and not in a position to do any immediate damage by withdrawing their labour, suffered severely. I remember a philosopher colleague saying on the occasion of one of our token strikes, "not another bit of metaphysics will be done until we get our rights". The situation gave rise to another unfortunate slogan when, in reference to the deficit in our pay rise, academics were advised by their union to shout "Rectify the Anomaly".

It was ironic that my leftism of the late 'fifties should have landed me in the arms of such a high Tory as Kitson Clark, but I know it played a part. Indicating my area of interest with a phrase I hoped the Faculty would find acceptable, which also accurately indicated my extreme vagueness about the matter, I had said I was interested in studying "public opinion" in nineteenth-century England. I would have done better to say leek-growing. I was sent to Kitson, who said "If you are going to study public opinion you must do an election". Well, if I must I must. The ensuing debacle was not his fault but mine, for being so vague. I was too passive to argue and had too little idea of what I meant to argue convincingly. Perhaps I should learn on the job. Doing an election seemed fairly far away from what I think I had in mind, which was something like working-class culture, but I had no idea how to do that anyway. I had been powerfully impressed by Richard Hoggart's recently published *The Uses of Literacy*, and in fact had chosen it as a college prize. E. P. Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class* still lay six years in the future.

So I was set to do an election, the general election of 1886. I tried, goodness knows I tried. Prior to it had been the split in the Liberal Party over Gladstone's Home Rule Bill. I was supposed to look at shifts of opinion in the constituencies from previous elections. I was, that is, to be not Richard Hoggart or E. P. Thompson but, retrospectively, David Butler. I can think of virtually no task to which my talents are less suited. To make things more complicated there had been a Parliamentary Reform Act, involving changes in the constituency boundaries. I sat, day after day, with the election returns printed in *The Times*, as though they could somehow or other disclose their meaning. Another puzzle: Kitson had said "You must keep a card index. One card, one fact". I brooded on this. What was a fact? And what made it one fact? Surely most facts were compound. How would I know when I had reached bedrock, the ultimate, unsplittable atomic fact? It seemed unlikely that Kitson, in posing this conundrum, had meant to refer me to Bertrand Russell's Logical Atomism or to Wittgenstein 's *Tractatus* (it was a startling thought that he and Kitson had been Trinity colleagues). Anyway, why did historical research require a preliminary metaphysics? There were also less profound problems. Should I, for example, enter the election returns alphabetically by constituencies or by MPs? I bought a box and some cards and optimistically wrote on them a few of what I hoped were facts. They seemed unhelpfully heterogeneous, and no more suggestive in their new home than in the places from which I had transcribed them. I waited for them to say something to me. Clearly I was meant to do something with

them, but what? Research seemed horribly difficult. I had not felt so lost since, after O- Levels, I had been allowed to drop the things I was no good at, but this time these seemed, appallingly, to include history. The only talent I had, it appeared, was for writing undergraduate essays and I could not go on doing that forever. I was very miserable and becoming desperate. My Damascene moment came when I had tried to tell another research student what I was doing, "Oh, how interesting", he said, "Will you be drawing graphs?". Should I be drawing graphs? I had never been any good at graphs. And graphs of what? If my subject required me to draw graphs I was doing the wrong one.

Michael Ratcliffe had been having the same kinds of difficulty, with a different subject, but after a few visits to the Public Record Office he solved them in a spirited fashion by clearing his desk and going to London to become, with Jack's backing, assistant literary editor of *The Sunday Times*. He later became the literary editor and the moved on to the same position on *The Times*. He was thus in a position to become my patron, and in the 'sixties I did a good deal of reviewing for both papers. As undergraduates a number of us had the habit of gathering in someone's room, usually Michael's, to drink coffee and read the Sunday papers. We particularly admired the theatre criticisms of Kenneth Tynan. I remember once we agreed that we would like his job. Michael achieved it when he became drama critic of *The Observer*. He had always had a keen and perceptive interest in the theatre, which I had not really, though I did not realize it. I just liked the idea of being a dramatic critic, polishing epigrams to drop in the interval or in my column.

In the meanwhile, at the end of 1957, I was up a creek without the courage to burn my boats. I was very conscious that I had a grant only for nine terms and that I had already wasted one of them. If, to alter the metaphor, I once got off the rails and fell down the embankment I should probably never manage to scramble up it again. It discouraged adventurousness. If I had been a natural political or social historian I should no doubt have found a way through by rethinking my unpromising subject, perhaps by narrowing or widening the questions asked. My junior in College by two years, John Vincent, would certainly have done so. But I lacked the right kind of imagination. Rescue came unexpectedly, at least partly as a result of a routine conscientiousness, which led me unconsciously back to what I could do. I thought of it as background reading for an historian of Victorian public opinion; I wanted to be as erudite all-round as G. M. Young was about Victorian England, and of course my lack of progress in research meant that I had all the more time and energy for this. During the Christmas vacation I read *The Ori-*

gin of Species. It seemed wonderfully intelligible after those election returns. Darwin led me on to Herbert Spencer, the Victorian 'philosopher of evolution'.

I began to think. Had he been "done" recently? It seemed not. Might not I do him then? Well, it was public opinion of a kind, I mean evolution dash it. There had been a lot of it about. Later I got tired of just Spencer and found some other contemporary figures to work on who seemed to be part of the same or at least a similar complex of ideas. I had a subject. A year later I had a successful research Fellowship dissertation, egged on, of course by Jack, and later my first book, *Evolution and Society* (1966), for which I had to borrow the thirty pounds to get it typed. Darwin had thrown me a lifeline and I had caught it; I did not so much find my way through the creek as manage to airlift myself out of it altogether. But in the short term there remained the problems of Kitson and the Faculty. Trembling, I wrote to him in January confessing that I was a renegade. I got back an utterly charming and kind letter, which I have foolishly lost, beginning "Dear Burrow, It is of the utmost importance that you should feel comfortable with your research subject". Probably he was aware that I was getting nowhere and was partly relieved. He stood manfully between me and the Faculty and managed the approval of my change of subject. Though he admitted he knew very little about what I was now doing he did not give me up; he both let me get on with it and kept me at it. I remain forever grateful to him.

Marriage in October 1958 and election to a Research Fellowship at Christ's the following spring changed my life. But I may as well here, in defiance of chronology, finish my intellectual journey to the point when I turned the typescript of my book in to Cambridge University Press in 1964, ten years after I came up as a Scholar. Doing my new subject allowed me to indulge a taste for sociological and particularly anthropological theory which I now think distorts the book in places; Victorian social evolutionists are also counted as early anthropologists. Perhaps in some ways I am not a natural historian, because I did not really want to do research at that point. I would have preferred to do an M.Phil or B.Phil in philosophy or anthropology. I did not feel I was yet well educated enough to do research and in beginning it right away I was following the line of least resistance - especially to Jack.

I took my Ph.D in 1961. I was fortunate to have two sympathetic examiners, Michael Oakeshott and the Professor of Anthropology, Meyer Fortes. I was so nervous that I forgot my gown. When Oakeshott saw this he immediately took off his own to put me at my ease. They agreed about hardly anything and one could scarcely ask me a question

without the other wanting to challenge its assumptions: "Do you really think ... ?". I found I was falling into the role of mediator, but it was clear that they did not really want me; they just wanted to get on with their argument. They were complimentary, however. Thanks to Fortes I was subsequently asked to give a course of lectures on the History of Anthropology. I have given lecture series in Cambridge for the Faculties of History, Archaeology and Anthropology and English (for the English Moralists paper). I wonder if this is a record.

My book, when it came out, had a considerable success; people seemed surprised that ideas of social evolution were to a significant extent independent of Darwin. It was, I can now see, in some ways a daring book, and a still more daring doctoral thesis, in taking on a large theme in a small compass, but it was daring only because it was also naive and ignorant. I simply did not know what a thesis in Intellectual History should look like. Perhaps hardly anyone did. There seemed to me few models, though Duncan's *The Liberal Anglican Idea of History* was one, but it had never been a thesis. A more appropriate one, had I known it then, might have been]. G. A. Pocock's *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (1957). He, like Duncan, had been a research student of Herbert Butterfield's. I knew Butterfield only slightly, and later, and found him opaque. I also never managed to get much out of his then widely admired writings, apart from his early essay on *The Whig Interpretation of History* (which it denounced), which still seems to me valid three-quarters of a century later. But I did not really have a model. I wrote my book as I would have written a long undergraduate essay, because I did not know how to do anything else. I did understand that the approach to my cast by modern commentators, who naturally tended to be sociologists and anthropologists, could not, as a historian, be mine, and I said so in the book.

It was something, I think, I had learnt from Butterfield's essay. The Whig historian, to use his term, is the purveyor of a teleology; that is he writes as history his own story, in which past historical agents are assigned parts, chiefly as promoters or opponents of progress. But, the objection goes, people in the past were quite oblivious to the historian's story; they had their own intentions and purposes, their own sense of the roles they played. In committing oneself to being a historian, these are what one is trying to recover and understand; to understand, that is, how people in the past saw their world and why they acted as they did. This cannot be done by supplanting what weighed with them by a later story of which they could have had no idea; a story written from hindsight and by taking sides, whose sense of what is relevant is determined by a future

end to which the story is advancing, probably represented by the historian's own time. This is Whig history.

This is the right place, I think, if not perhaps the right time, to insert a footnote about my attitude to the kind of history, intellectual history, within which *Evolution and Society* fell. By the time it was published I had left Cambridge. My most brilliant undergraduate pupil, Quentin Skinner, was now a Fellow of Christ's. He was to become the dominant figure in Cambridge in the History of Political Thought, with a glittering international reputation, and subsequently became Regius Professor of History. He and I fell into the habit of exchanging drafts of our work for comment by the other. During the second half of the 'sixties he published a series of outstanding articles, partly laying out the methodological principles he thought we should be following in the history of ideas and partly giving empirical demonstrations of these through consideration of texts and contexts, mostly in the English Civil War period (now revised and republished in *Visions of Politics 3*). I had read these in draft, though I do not remember having made any far-reaching criticisms. I welcomed cordially the anti-whiggish, i.e. anti-teleological, stance he had adopted. Quentin, however, brought to it an altogether new rigour and precision of statement and diagnosis. Even though I knew the earlier articles well, I was much struck, as many others were, by an article in 1969 entitled "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas", which contained a devastating analysis of the various incoherent assumptions and misguided strategies of scholars who supposed themselves to be writing the history of political thought.

When I read it I remember looking back anxiously at *Evolution and Society* to see if it had committed these delinquencies. I wrote to Quentin saying that his article had made me feel like a pianist in a brothel who did not know what kind of establishment he had been working in. That is, I did not think I had committed these sins myself - I am not so sure now - but I had certainly been oblivious, as everyone but he had been, to what exactly they were and their ubiquity in the genre in which we worked. The kind of history into which I had blundered, scarcely knowing what I was doing, in 1958, had become, largely thanks to him, ten years later, immensely more refined, self-conscious and self-confident, and Cambridge was on the way to becoming its centre. Bluff denigration by political historians was becoming replaced by a salutary nervousness, while there was a sense that Namierism was now in the past; Namier had dismissed all discussion of principles and ideologies as irrelevant. I myself, elsewhere, was just about to join in teaching a course on the history of the social sciences (see Chapter 9) whose anti-whiggish

stance was very clear to its founder and organizer, Donald Winch, and to myself.

This academic excursion has taken me far ahead of my personal life at the end of the nineteen-fifties. I submitted my Ph.D thesis in autumn 1961, a couple of weeks before our son Laurence was born. He did not seem to see the point of going to sleep for several years, and I have sometimes thought that if I had delayed the completion of the thesis I might not have submitted it for several more years. We had an unfurnished flat and were lucky to get it although it was a long way from the centre, at 400 Milton Road, right at the end of its bus route, near the sewage farm. We bought some very cheap second-hand furniture and stained the floorboards because we had no carpets. Diane had not managed to get a grant. She had been working all the year at the Inland Revenue for the money for a honeymoon, which we took in Switzerland on her earnings. We delayed this until the Christmas vacation, so when we got married in October we went for a few days to London, staying in Upper Woburn Place. I remember strolling up to the Euston Road and looking at the great Doric arch in front of Euston station, and thinking what a marvellous symbol it made of massive solidity and endurance at the beginning of a marriage. Within a short time it was gone, a victim of official vandalism, as though it had never been.

We set out for Switzerland from Brussels, where we had friends, taking the train down through the Ardennes. Luxembourg City, where we stayed the night, smelt of wood-smoke. Our next stop was Strasbourg. The European Parliament was already there but not obtrusive, so one was able to enjoy the paté and the tarte a l'oignon, and the storks nesting in the holes in the steep-pitched roofs. In Lausanne, our main destination, we stayed in a hotel, the Hotel de la Paix, which seemed the height of luxury. It was high above the lake, with a view of Mont Blanc from the big picture window in the dining room. It was my first introduction to international haute cuisine. After a trip on the lake to Vevey and Montreux, coming back in the dark, there was a sudden violent storm. I am not nervous at sea, but pitching in a small boat, which seemed to groan inordinately, to the accompaniment of thunder and lightning among the mountains, I found more alarming than exhilarating, and remembered that to enjoy the sublime one was supposed not to be actually in the boat.

We also had a few days in the mountains in a chalet-guesthouse. We had truite au bleu and made the discovery that in its native habitat Gruyere was an excellent dessert cheese, but we felt out of place because we were the only people not skiing. We spent New Year's Eve at a fair

in Lausanne. I was concentrating on firing a rifle at a target, when I became aware that Diane, behind me, was being enthusiastically kissed by about half a dozen local youths. To avert gang rape I turned around (putting down the rifle) and remonstrated, to be greeted by smiles and calls of "Bonne Année". Just then the cathedral bell started ringing in 1959 and I realised I had been churlish, so I said "Bonne Année" back. Diane did not seem to have minded. It was the year I got my Fellowship.

10
Cambridge III: Fellow

I was elected a Research Fellow of Christ's around Easter 1959. Again I knelt in front of the Master in chapel, though this time we adjourned not to the Master's drawing room but to High Table in Hall and then to the Combination Room. In the latter the Senior Fellow proposed the health of myself and the lawyer, Paul O'Higgins, one day to be Vice-Master, who had also been admitted and was junior to me, thanks to the alphabet, by about twenty seconds. Around the long, highly polished table someone offered the snuffbox. I think I may have had a vague idea that it was part of the ritual and thatI might not be properly a Fellow unless I took it, which I did with explosive results. I like snuff now. There can be few more dramatic or agreeable transitions in life than that of being a research student, treated in those days no differently from an undergraduate, one day and a Fellow the next. One left behind dull food in Hall and climbing over the wall, which I often did, having seen Diane home to Chesterton. I was already, thanks to Jack, doing some teaching, which I enjoyed and which made a little money. On one occasion, climbing in, I rather embarrassingly met one of my pupils; he seemed a bit surprised.

Then overnight, the opulence of High Table, greater then I think than now. And wine in the Combination Room, invitations to Feasts – we had a great one that year, of course, to celebrate the centenary of *The Origin of Species* - the familiarity of seniors and the deference of the butler and porters; these called undergraduates "Sir", but irony was often apparent. I now had rooms in College again, big panelled ones, M 3, in the corner of First Court. A College tradition said they had been Milton's. I am inclined to doubt the existence of a persistent tradition back to the early seventeenth century, but if it had become attached to my room by the late eighteenth Wordsworth had certainly got drunk in it; he says so in *The Prelude*. The rituals of Christ's Combination Room,

which to Jack and others was simply "the Room", were mildly exacting. Each evening when people gathered there after Hall the senior Fellow of the evening - never the Master, who was only a guest - known as the President, took a vote on whether port or claret should be drunk. It was the duty of the junior Fellow of the evening, often, of course, myself, to enter the number of bottles drunk in the wine book, dividing the cost between those drinking, together with any bottles presented and any bets made or paid. I remember once a toast to one of the forty English martyrs just canonized, who was a Christ's man; someone said it was always gratifying to see a member of the College doing well in after life.

The wine books were rightly prized, because they stretched back in an unbroken series to the later eighteenth century. The College's first History Fellow, in the nineteen-thirties, had published a book on them called *The Custom of the Room*. The junior Fellow making the entries was called "Mr Nib",or sometimes just "Nib"'(in All Souls he is "Mr Screw"). I hope the name endures: "Madam Nib"? "Ms Nib?". Blotting or otherwise defacing the book was a fineable offence (in bottles). I got adept, having taken surreptitious instruction, at scraping out errors with a razor blade. I have been through the books several times. Bets are their most interesting feature, because through them one can reconstruct the conversation that led up to them, and so are presentations. In 1815 a Fellow presented three bottles, an unprecedented number, to celebrate "the victory of the Duke of Wellington over Bonaparte in person". There is a later entry of a bet on the date of the fall of Sebastopol. Bets on Tripos results, of course, are common, as are those on forthcoming marriages, though the female was never named. A marriage made a vacancy in the Fellowship because married Fellows were supposed to resign; the statutes made holding a Fellowship incompatible with marriage. The college controlled much ecclesiastical patronage and was expected to exercise it on behalf of recently acquired Fellow. Sometimes the Cambridge mathematical interest is evident, as in a bet on the exact dimensions of the Room. In the eighteen-fifties a Fellow bet that "Stephen of Trinity Hall" (first editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography* and Virginia Woolf's father) could walk faster over fifty yards backwards than another named individual walking forwards. Leslie Stephen was a famed pedestrian, who thought nothing of a walk to London.

To anyone with an interest in the recent past the composition of the current fellowship was fascinating. Set apart were the four or so Fellows who were "under the old statutes", which meant they had been elected before the 1922 Oxford and Cambridge Act. It seemed a highly desirable

status; like Roman tribunes, they seemed to be immune to interference of any kind. They had rooms in college for life and the right, which they remorselessly exercised, to attend College Governing Body meetings, and vote, during the same period. I always thought the reason these twice-termly meetings were held at 4.45 and preceded by a huge tea, with sandwiches, fruitcake, gentleman's relish and much else, was to render the Fellows under the old statutes sufficiently comatose to allow business to proceed. It did not always work. The novelist C. P. Snow, who had been a Fellow before the war, had written a then well-known novel, *The Masters*, about the last pre-war election to the mastership. In the novel the sympathetic defeated candidate was clearly Charles Raven, who had in fact been the successful one. He seldom came in now, but other characters, who were constant presences, were also easily recognizable.

The 'hero' was the College's elder statesman, Arthur Brown, and everyone knew that he was the senior Fellow, Sidney Grose; none of that generation ever used first names, of course, and nor did anyone speaking to them. In the novel he is the great emollient influence, always able to smooth rough patches and fix things to the College's benefit. I did not like him much. He seemed altogether too fruitily complacent and bland and one sensed that the smooth manner covered both steel and deviousness, both exercised no doubt in what he regarded as the College's interests. His subject seemed indeterminate. He had been a keeper of prints and drawings at the Fitzwilliam Museum and during the war had taught both classics and history, which included teaching my own history master at school, John Nelson, but I doubted if he had any serious claims to teach either. He was essentially a "college man" and had served it in various capacities for half a century at least. What he did know about was wine. In Snow's novel he is always ready with a bottle of Old Madeira to open to sooth ruffled feelings. Jack, who revered him and was Snow's friend, snorted: "used to bring in a thermos of cocoa every morning. Lasted him all day."

I once had a note from Grose which was so characteristic I wish I had kept it. It concerned one of those endowed college prizes, usually for one hundred pounds or less, with a prescribed subject and often absurdly restrictive conditions of eligibility: let us say for the best poem of not more than five hundred lines of English heroic couplets on the subject of Cromwell in Ireland, open to sons of clergy of the Church of Ireland who had been born in the counties of Galway or Mayo. I exaggerate, but not by much. Grose's note ran something like "Dear Burrow, I hope you will be prepared to join me as one of the two examiners for the—Prize. I

think you will find the work light as there are very seldom any candidates. There is an annual honorarium of 6s.8d." If one could suspect irony it was an elegant note. Some may think this an abuse, but it was not; it was a way of helping a young man through the impoverished early years. 6s.8d., incidentally, was a common measure. Fines, for example, were I think paid in it and I remember it as payment for invigilation. One might think this a purely university custom, but our rent was paid in that amount monthly: one hundred pounds per annum in twelve instalments.

Snow had noted one characteristic of the old Fellows which I did too. The undergraduates to them were 'the men', while to the rest of us they were "the undergraduates" or sometimes "the young men" though never in any circumstances "the students". "The War", unqualified, was always the First World War; if they wanted to speak of the second one it was "The Last War". They always, after forty years, addressed each other, as they did everyone, by surnames. I much preferred the "villain" of Snow's novel to Grose, where he appears as Nightingale. He was a mathematician called Steen, who had been badly wounded in "The War" and decorated, and whose leg clearly still pained him. Early in the Second War, according to Jack, he had commanded a platoon of the Cambridge Home Guard which had briefly included Jack and Noel Annan. Steen firmly believed the rumour that German parachutists might descend disguised as nuns. It seems that any nun from the nearby Saint Mary's Convent, where Diane had been educated, unlucky enough to be stopped while cycling past the platoon in the blackout, would have suffered surprising indignities from Steen's well-meant patriotic zeal. He had been at the Perse School in Cambridge with the critic F. R. Leavis. I asked him about this. He deliberated. Eventually he said "Used to run a lot". Then, after another pause, in case I was still not abreast of things, "Runner", he said definitively. He was kind to me and gave me some strawberry plants, which under my stewardship sickened and died.

Annually Jack would propose Snow for an honorary Fellowship. Annually Steen would oppose it: "Some of us Master think it was pretty discreditable for this man to live among us as one of us and then (with a gobble of indignation) put the College in a novel" – the last word in a tone of disgust. When Grose, his senior, presided in the Combination Room Steen was completely silent. When he himself presided he was as voluble as his rather limited conversational powers allowed. He specialized in enigmatic short bursts, but had no staying power. He did not intend to be disconcerting; he produced them because he had nothing else to say. On one occasion, presiding in Hall with a College guest

beside him, he had been silent for several courses. Then, some intimation of the duties of a host stirring, he said to him: "I see in *The Times* there has been another albino elephant born in Brazil". I cannot say that the guest, who had hitherto been quite fluent, or the rest of us, really measured up to this conversational emergency. It sounds improbable, but it is solemn truth.

Steen as president had his own way of concluding the customary vote on whether we should drink port or claret. Like many dictators he scrupulously went through the democratic formality. But then, again like many dictators, he made it tacitly clear that an unacceptable result made it null. He greatly preferred port. If there were say three for claret, and two, including himself, for port, he would turn to the butler as though applying a process of deduction which only a higher mathematician, which he was, could understand, and say "we'll have a bottle of port then Kimberley". I enjoyed the "then". He presided most of the time during my first summer, the glorious one of 1959. We did not, of course, go into the garden, but sat with the window to the Master's garden open, and drank Barsac, which he did not disapprove of in hot weather, and which I had never had before. Another wine experience occurred, not surprisingly at my first full College Feast - i.e. not including Commemoration, which Scholars attended. I had taken an undergraduate contemporary, now a civil servant. As we drank the first red wine we looked at each other in sudden astonishment. It was a Clos Vougeot 1949. This must have been the first time either of us had met an outstanding red Burgundy. High Table food was very good even on ordinary nights. I have wistful memories of a steak and oyster pudding called *Dr Marigold's pudding* which I have never met since.

While I was usually junior Fellow, a tension developed between me and the butler. There would be a bowl of excellent fruit in the middle of the large table around which we sat after dinner, "combining", as Jack always said; Grose did too. The butler I am sure regarded at least a portion of it as a perk of his office, while I coveted the same amount for Diane, who had been eating much less well at home. I dined twice a week, which Jack declared to be the absolute minimum. I had the upper hand over the butler. When I had made my entry in the wine book, I would settle down beside the fire and open *The Times* with the air of a man prepared to stay up until the early hours if necessary, which I would have been, and say kindly "It's all right Kimberley, I'll switch off and lock up", and he would have to go off resentfully, knowing that soon afterwards I too would be off, with my prize. We could, of course, have come to an arrangement, like a pair of successful poachers, to share the

spoils, but hierarchy forbade. I think he would have been much more shocked than I by the suggestion. Anyway, for him there was always the next morning.

I have always tended to like the company of the old, finding them more interesting than most of their juniors. I remember once, attempting a Wildean epigram, saying that success in life consisted in mutating from an enfant terrible to a monstre sacré with no interval between. Another striking member of the older generation, though rather younger than the other two, was the Master, Downs, an expert on Scandinavian literature. His greatest distinction was sartorial; he is the only man I have ever seen wearing spats. He was magnificent. Three-piece suits for that generation, with watch chains, were normal, sometimes with a large, flat black tie; Grose wore one. But Downs always wore a wing collar and striped morning trousers. I know he had gold-rimmed spectacles, but were they actually pince-nez with a black rib bon, or has spurious memory invented that? In the summer he would emerge from the door of the Master's Lodge in First Court in a beige, lightweight summer suit with matching waistcoat, spats of an appropriate colour—in the winter they were grey—wing collar and silk cravat and a straw hat. He looked as though about to take a stroll along the promenade at Nice or Yalta around 1900. There were, of course, relics of the past to be seen around the streets of Cambridge. There was, for example, Keynes's widow, a short, dumpy figure, always in a long black dress, black woollen stockings and a black toque. It seemed impossible to imagine that as Lydia Lopakova she had ever been prima ballerina with the Russian ballet. Then there was F. A. Simpson, historian and Fellow of Trinity, a frail old man who had published the first volume of a study of the government of Napoleon III, which, after an adverse review, he never completed. He would wander about carrying a pair of clippers, reflecting one of his two hobbies, which was to snip off the tops of growing plants in the gardens; he drove the gardeners at Trinity to distraction. The other was to watch the small boys at the men's bathing place along the river. It was clear that he was fascinated by budding things; but it was, I am sure, Jack who initiated the professed anxiety lest he should ever get his two hobbies disastrously confused.

In 1962 my Research Fellowship ran out. A full, Official, i.e. teaching, Fellowship was advertised at Downing College. I applied and was elected. It had a limited three-year tenure. The position was clear to everyone. It would give me another three years, in considerable penury - I should be thirty when it ran out - to get the Faculty Assistant Lectureship which would be the next step to becoming permanently estab-

lished in Cambridge. If that happened, Downing would happily renew my Fellowship, which would now cost them a lot less since I should have a university stipend. If not, not. It was a gamble, exploitation on both sides. I never developed any affection for Downing, nor it for me. I must stress here that I am speaking of the College at a particular moment, of just three years long ago, and colleges can change in character quite rapidly.

My own attitude, I am sure, did not help. I had been in Christ's for eight years, mostly happy; leaving was a wrench and the few hundred yards up Regent Street seemed like exile. Having been an undergraduate at Christ's I had familiars at all levels, including some of the bed-makers. Mine in First Court, when I was an undergraduate, was a spirited Irish woman, with whom I got on well. She cleaned Jack's rooms on the next staircase, so was sometimes able to act as a weathervane: "We're in a bad mood this morning". Her husband was a former College buttery-man who had become an alcoholic: an occupational hazard. She once told me he had developed gout. I commiserated, saying I understood it was very painful. "I'll say it is", she said with enormous relish. On another occasion, for reasons I forget, I had slept out of College in a friend's lodgings, and he had used my bed in College. She came in the next morning, as she always did to waken me, standing at the door and saying "Morning Mr Burrow". Laurence, who knew her, sat up in my bed and said "Morning Mrs Tuffnell". She looked at him and, in exactly the same cheerful, routine sing-song as before, said "Morning Mr Griffiths", and went out again. There were, of course, no memories like that at Downing, and would be none. I tended, I know, to interpret all the differences there were bound to be to its disadvantage. Even my prejudice, however, had to concede that the food was good; it was there on one occasion that we had an 1893 cognac.

The Fellowship seemed to be dominated by lawyers and natural scientists; Downing has a strong law tradition. The humanities were heavily out-weighted; I can recall only three apart from myself. There should have been five. The senior historian, of whom I became fond, R. J. White, became ill almost as soon as I arrived and spent much of the ensuing three years in and out of Papworth hospital with a heart condition, so that I was in sole charge of the shop, as acting Director of Studies in history, though I recall no extra money. There was no Fellow in English because the college was involved, for my whole time there, in a fierce dispute with Dr Leavis, just retired, over the election of a successor. This was to dominate College meetings for some time. The Master, Guthrie, an authority on ancient philosophy, was easier to feel

sorry for than to get to know. An inhibited man, he was clearly well-meaning, but lacked warmth and spontaneity. He had an unfortunate resemblance, which sometimes seemed more than physical, to Neville Chamberlain, with a birdlike profile, a rather anguished expression and a prominent, overworked adam's apple. I worked hard with my pupils and mostly enjoyed teaching them. The College got two Firsts in history, which it had not done for some time. No one commented on this. The profession as a whole got several pay rises as well as the usual annual increments. There was nothing for me. It did not help that I could not warm to the College buildings, admired by some. The main court covers a vast area, but the two facing ranges, by Wilkins, the architect of the National Gallery, University College London, and parts of King's College London, though its Ionic porticoes are admirable in themselves, are too low for the space they enclose. A third side was closed by an early twentieth-century parody of them, coarse and undistinguished. The fourth side, to the east, was left open and dominated by the spire of the big Catholic church. After the cosiness of Christ's First Court it seemed like a parade ground; there was a touch of Sandhurst about it. Downing has since put up some interesting buildings, criticized by some as pastiche, which I like very much. I do not know if this was the thinking, but it is as though the College had set out to make itself look as it would if Sir George Downing's will had not been disputed and building had begun in the early eighteenth century instead of the early nineteenth. There was in the Hall an excellent full-length portrait of the daughter who disputed the will and got the College into Chancery, wearing a stunning silver-grey satin dress; she is known as the Malefactress. I liked the Hall, in delicate Georgian green, with imitation marble pillars, hollow when tapped. There was also a good portrait of my historiographical hero, F. W Maitland, who had been Downing Professor of Civil Laws, in whose dining room we held College meetings.

The senior Fellow, a lawyer, found a way of tormenting me, which always began in the same manner: "Ah, Burrow, you're an historian ... ". Then the query: "How many royal castles were completed in Wales in the reign of Edward II?". I would have said "four", but I knew he would have looked them up. The only "character" was the international lawyer, Clive Parry, definitely a turn, if not a loveable one. He spoke in a kind of cross between a growl and a bray—and smoked a pipe. At my first Fellow's Christmas dinner he said to me: "Do you like oysters?" I said no, though I love them now. He said "Good. I'll sit next to you and eat yours", which he did. At one point he said suddenly and loudly "William

Charles Keith Guthrie", the name of the Master, who was fortunately on another table. "I'll tell you one thing about William Charles Keith Guthrie", he went on, "He gives good children's firework parties". Sensing perhaps a lack of sympathy he said loudly to me later "Look at them all! There's not one of them would say the word 'Belly' out loud". He was, of course, right. He may have been drunk, but I think not: just imperfectly house-trained.

The English Fellowship issue, as I have said, dominated Governing Body meetings. Essentially Leavis was trying to nominate his successor, which the College, rightly, would not allow. He wanted his disciple Shapera. The College elected someone else, who resigned before he took up the post; it was said the Leavisites in Cambridge had made his life a misery. The College was left without a Fellow in English for the whole of my time and admissions in the subject were suspended for, I think, two years. A normal opening to College meetings became Guthrie saying, with adam's apple working overtime and with an anguished expression as though after a bad quarter of an hour with Herr Hitler, "I have had a letter (gulp) from Dr Leavis, which he asks me to read out to the College. I am afraid it's (gulp) rather a long letter". It always was. I suppose it was thought too inflammatory to copy and circulate. To anyone familiar, as I was, with Leavis' prose, it was fascinating to hear it read out in a monotone, because one could still hear behind the voice, as it were, the bizarre emphases given to apparently unimportant words which to initiates formed a kind of esoteric code for irony and contempt.

At one point Leavis said he wanted his name removed from the College books; I am not quite sure what this means. Then his portrait disappeared from the Hall. Some thought it a prank by the rugby or boat club, but I was convinced it had been removed by disciples, for whom the College had proved itself unworthy of it, and that it was enshrined somewhere for devotional purposes, as an icon, perhaps between two lighted candles. It was returned later. Leavis did not come in much even before matters reached a crisis, and I only once heard him holding forth in the Combination Room. He always wore a white, open-necked cricket shirt, under an old army greatcoat, and carried a haversack or gas-mask case. He had been gassed in the trenches, and I heard, distressingly, that in his last days he relived the experience. On this occasion he had put the gas-mask case down in front of him and formed one of a circle consisting of some of the most philistine men in College (I am aware that this is an impressive claim). Surprisingly they all seemed to be getting on well, and I listened. I soon realized that whereas for Leavis the point of what he was saying resided in the characteristic, nasally intoned and heavily

stressed qualifiers to the main noun, his audience was catching only the latter: "I mean, it's a kind of King's idea of culture" (snorts of contempt from his audience at the word "culture"). "Well, it's a *Manchester Guardian* kind of liberalism" (more contemptuous noises at the word "liberalism"). There was a view in College among the charitable that 'old Frank' was all right really, but that Queenie, his wife, was unendurable. I never met her but I believe there were grounds for this.

A little later I was to give talks to various sixth forms. There would almost invariably be in the audience a pale, intense-looking young man in a white open-necked cricket shirt. One knew that he would ask a question and that it would be contemptuously phrased. Some of Leavis's disciples even managed to go bald in the same manner as the master, so that with the shirt and a greatcoat the resemblance was uncanny. In fact I was in fundamental agreement with the central dogmas: the importance of a liberal, non-technical, non-utilitarian education, and the place of literary criticism and the study of English literature in it. But this was of no avail if one were not one of the initiates, and even they were in constant danger of excommunication for some obscure heresy, as though Leavis were a magus and the disciples adepts in his occult critical alchemy. Graham Hough and Leavis were bitter antagonists; both had written on Leavis's talisman, D. H. Lawrence. Someone once retailed to me, as an example of the rarified heights of Cambridge literary debate, that Leavis had said in his hearing - everyone could imitate that adenoidal sneer - "Hough! Wants his bottom kicking". I said I wondered what Graham would have done had he been present. "Not turned the other cheek?", my companion suggested gravely. Another Downing memory figures for me as an example of something I had noticed elsewhere as a moment when one begins to have doubts about someone else's academic discipline. I never again for example, had quite the same view of mathematics after I overheard two mathematicians discussing exam papers and heard one say "I thought I detected a flicker of alpha". On another occasion I was behind an art historian, flanked by two female acolytes, going around an Exhibition at the Royal Academy. It was the nastiest exhibition, of paintings from Neapolitan churches, I have ever been to. Most of the dirty, sepia coloured paintings, normally presumably secreted in dark side-chapels, depicted someone having something very unpleasant done to them, or the consequences if its having been done. Numerous St Agathas gazed at their own severed breasts on silver salvers as though at an unexpected poached egg. Judith and Holofernes was another favoured subject. The most objectionable of these was very vivid indeed. The maid grasped Holofernes by the

topknot, while Judith did not slice or chop his head off but sawed at it. The art historian said, with no detectable irony, "I always think of this as a very feminist picture".

My revelation about law came, of course, at Downing. One of the College officers brought up, I am sure not maliciously but as a matter of genuine concern, the fact that I had apparently, two years earlier, been elected into a category of Fellowship for which according to the statutes I was not eligible. The Master said it was a serious matter. I agreed with him. Would they demand my stipend back, exiguous though it was? We sat in dumb consternation. Then Parry said "Master, I think I see a way forward". Guthrie looked as though he had received from Herr Hitler the piece of paper with his signature on it that might make all the difference. "Do tell us, Dr. Parry", "Well Master, it occurs to me that were the College to deem that Dr. Burrow had been elected into a Fellowship in class E rather than in class F then all would be well". I have to guess at the letters; why Guthrie did not tell me to leave the room and why I did not think of it I cannot understand. There was a reverent silence, rather like that on Armistice Day, while the College deemed, I more strenuously than any. Then we relaxed. It was not a light-hearted body, but there was even some mild jocularity. The category in which I was now legitimately nested, or rather always had been, paid no less than the old one. If it paid more no one told me. But I had learnt about the legal power of deeming.

I found a diversion from the College, where colleagues in the humanities were so few, at something we called the Cambridge Political Science Club. I say 'we' because it was invented by two research students formerly at LSE, and myself. They had said that in Cambridge they missed the kind of forum for the discussion of theoretical issues to which they had been accustomed. We decided to start one. I became a kind of informal chairman because I had a room and they did not. We had one or two purely domestic meetings and then we were subjected to a takeover, by Maurice Cowling, who in Jesus had an even better room for the purpose, though like me he had at the time no Faculty post. I did not mind, and became a kind of secretary, inviting visiting speakers. We had some interesting ones: Ernest Gellner, Alasdair Macintyre, Elie Kedourie, Richard Wollheim and Bernard Williams - the first time I met him. Maurice's general line as chairman, chasing Wellbourne's title as rudest man in Cambridge, was dismissive contempt, with reasons not always given: "Do you really mean to say ... ?" Wollheim, however, was particularly badly treated and I seem to remember wrote to complain.

We met by this time in Peterhouse, to which Maurice had migrated.

I met him in Trumpington Street carrying a pile of books on a bicycle. I asked him where he was going and he said Peterhouse: "I've endeared myself to Herbert" (Butterfield), he said. On the particular occasion I am recalling Wollheim gave a paper on "A Paradox in the Theory of Democracy", later published in *Philosophy, Politics and Society*. Maurice's stance, by the way, in a group devoted to the discussion of theories, could be rather crudely described as the view that all theories were rubbish except theories devoted to the proposition that all theories were rubbish, though he made exceptions for theology. Maurice was late and I introduced the speaker. Wollheim was getting into his stride when the door was flung open to admit Maurice and two other Peterhouse Fellows, all smoking large cigars. One of the others was Philp Abrams, later Professor of Sociology at Durham, who died quite young. Between him and Maurice, holding each by the arm, was a blind lawyer called Stone; he was, I take it, a tragic case because he committed suicide. Very slowly, because of Stone's disability, still smoking, they made their way across the room to places by the speaker and me. Wollheim had at first tried to continue, but had to give up and stared in silent protest at the ceiling. I sympathized with him, though I did not much like him. He had taught Diane at University College and I met him again many years later in Berkeley, where he seemed not to remember my inadvertent part in the Peterhouse insurgency.

Alasdair Macintyre did much better; very well, in fact. He and Maurice had dinner with me at Christ's, and began by getting on surprisingly well, considering their ideological differences. They both revered the Professor of Theology, D. M. McKinnon, whom Macintyre had known it seemed at Aberdeen and of whom Maurice highly approved. McKinnon became well known in Cambridge because he sang to himself, wordlessly, loudly and tunelessly, in the street. People used the word "Johnsonian" of him. I never knew whether he actually was dirty or just looked it. After Macintyre's talk Maurice did his usual dismissive turn. Macintyre said brightly "Oh good. You're going to be nasty. That means I can be nasty too", and he was, quietly but eloquently providing a kind of impromptu sociology of people like Maurice who, having made it in Cambridge, became extremely right-wing. Snobbery was a card sometimes rather effectively played against the Cambridge New Right, especially it seemed from Oxford. Stuart Hampshire, the Oxford philosopher, was quoted as having said "Oh, Peterhouse. Grammar school boys in fancy waistcoats".

I did not approve of Maurice in a good many ways, but I could not dislike him and he was obviously an inspiring teacher. There was a ris-

ible air of self-parody in his cultivated ferocity, which he seemed himself well aware of. He had very little neck and a round red face; odd how often the latter, on a human countenance, is a Tory signal. One of his most characteristic expressions was a mischievous smirk. He was one of the few people who have been able to make me feel a prig. His name for me, flourished triumphantly to my face, was 'the rustic moralist'. Not bad!

My time in Cambridge was running out. We had bought a house, 51 Kimberley Road, in Chesterton, a few steps from the river and the boat-houses, which is why Laurence had picked up the coxes' instructions to their eights. The flat had been tolerable before he was born, but it was no place to bring up a small child. The heating was by electric fires, and there was no way of drying clothes except hanging them in front of them. There was no running hot water; only a smelly and explosive water heater above the bath. Diane was understandably discontented about this, but I was afraid that protests to the agent might lead to a rise in the rent. Laurence was born at home and the midwife gave me the afterbirth to bury in the garden. I thought of giving it to our three cats as an economy measure but was afraid of their getting a taste for human flesh. The garden was a small, dank patch of earth and grass, perpetually in shade. I got a gardening book and tried to grow vegetables, but plants seemed either never to appear or to go into a rapid decline under my care. I planted seeds and the book did not tell me, or I missed it, about thinning out. When I pulled up some carrots they were about a foot long, dead white and approximately a couple of millimetres thick, or so it seemed. It was, I dare say, only my guilty fantasy that they were screaming faintly.

There were then no disposable nappies. To wash them and clothes generally we bought a washing machine. It was not a success. The water took ages to heat and there was no drier. One had to fish out the hot, wet clothes from a hole in the top with a pair of wooden tongs; it took considerable strength. Although not on wheels it wandered about the kitchen during a wash, indifferent to wedges. We got a black and white television second-hand from Diane's parents, on which Laurence watched the earliest episodes of *Doctor Who*, leading to Dalek imitations. He had a passion for dinky toy cars. On one occasion I wanted to give him something special. The assistant in Eden Lilley's toy department has obviously summed me up, and he brought out something inferior. I said "No, that one", and he said with an audible new respect and even awe "Oh, you mean the Rolls". I felt I had taught him not to judge by appearances. We ate quite well, certainly better than in Hall as a junior

member; Diane had a recipe for lamb's hearts and invented one for mackerel. After I became a Fellow we drank even better. As a non-resident Fellow at Christ's I was entitled to a commons allowance taken in kind from the College. Since the Buttery had only bread and milk we took it chiefly in wine, and drank Saint Emilion and Pouilly Fuissé with our sausages and offal. We also received as a perk of a Fellowship pots of honey and mulberry jam from the hives and the ancient mulberry tree in the Fellow's garden, though there was nothing like that at Downing.

Kimberley Road was much closer to the centre than the flat. It was a typical small terrace house. It even had central heating of a sort, a solid fuel boiler which produced a glowing clinker that had to be broken up and taken out every few days. Midsummer Common was just across the river, and I could walk to Downing, using Parker's Piece also, across green land almost the whole way, except in the spring of 1963, when the ground was covered in snow for many weeks. But the house purchase was a gamble on getting a Faculty post, without which I could not long sustain the mortgage, even apart from my limited tenure at Downing. But I had to get Diane and Laurence away from small electric fires and no running hot water. We took a lodger to help with the mortgage, John Emerson, an orientalist research student at Magdalene, originally from Oxford, with whom I used to watch *That Was the Week That Was*, and with whom, though he is now at Harvard, I am still in touch.

The Downing gamble had not paid off. I did not get the assistant lectureship for which in successive years I applied. After eleven years in Cambridge it was time to go. Poverty was becoming an increasing blight. Fortunately it was a good moment to be looking for a job. The government and Lord Robbins had decreed six new universities, which were recruiting. I had two initial failures, one at an older institution, Bedford College in Regents Park, now absorbed elsewhere. If I had got it we should presumably have bought some dilapidated artisan's hovel in somewhere like Camden Town, through which we should now be rich, instead of poor. The other was at one of the new universities, Essex, and proved an ordeal. To get from Cambridge to Colchester by train was surprisingly difficult; I had to arrive there much too early for the interview. Colchester in January is an inhospitable place. The only place to go seemed to be the museum in the castle. For a while the Roman artifacts held me, but after a couple of hours they began to pall.

I also began to attract attention from the curators; one of them began to follow me around. What was this man in a suit doing in Colchester in January with apparently nothing better to do than revisit the displayed objects three or four times? There were about four other patrons, but

their presence was explicable; they may even have been regulars. They wore string around their trousers, overcoats with holes in them and woolly hats; some smelt of methylated spirits. Dressed for an interview I was by contrast a figure of suspicious metropolitan smartness.

The interview at Wivenhoe was held in a hut, which everything had to be because there was nothing else. In the anteroom was another candidate and we introduced ourselves. He was Anthony King, now well-known as a psephologist, in the newspapers and on television, much in demand during elections. He said what he did and I said what I did and we looked at each other in some dismay. Had those damned elections come back to haunt me? It was apparent that not only the successful candidate but also the nature of the job were still undecided and so it proved when I went in; they virtually argued about it in front of me. It became fairly obvious that the Dean of the School, the poet and critic Donald Davie, wanted me and that the head of the particular department, a political scientist called Blondel, did not. Anthony King was appointed.

Then I went to Norwich, Diane this time accompanying me. It was our first time in the city and we both liked it very much. The interview was in the gracious surroundings of the seventeenth-century house, Earlham Hall, which had been appropriated by the Administration following the rule that in new institutions, the Administration is always best housed because it is there first. It went well and I was offered the job, in the School of European Studies, and accepted it. In the future lay a house we could afford, a car, and with any luck a better washing machine; also the pleasure of exploring the lanes and great parish churches of Norwich, the cathedral with its superb Norman nave and apse, and its extensive close, the Market and the Norman castle housing the splendid collection of watercolours of the Norwich School, which I would come to know well. Behind lay the Cam and the Backs, Grantchester and teas at the Orchard, the University Library, which I have always bitterly missed and still do, and the rows of small terraced houses any of which might contain an astronomer or a sinologist. Cycle rides to Ely, Saffron Walden and Newmarket I had already given up. But I was free of queries about Welsh castles completed under Edward II and freed, too, from standing twisting my cap in the History Faculty's antechamber, as Dr. Johnson might have said.

As part of my attempt to get an assistant lectureship I had given a paper to the Cambridge Historical Society, which was the History Faculty under another name. Sometimes it had distinguished visitors, sometimes aspirant assistant lecturers like me, going through their paces

before the grandees of the Faculty, trying to keep the local drowsy emperors awake. Aspirants got only half an hour each, so it was a double bill. I gave a paper safely located in the eighteen-sixties, a time before they could either remember or claim to. The only notable feature was the behaviour of Postan, the Professor of Economic History. He was probably in his eighties and should have been retired long before, but no one knew how old he was; he claimed that his birth certificate had been destroyed during the Russian invasion of Bessarabia during the First World War. He seemed to vary his age depending on how he happened to be feeling. I had an odd sidelight on him through my mother, who became close friends in their Devon village with Harold Laski's daughter Diana, whom I also liked. Postan had married the most glamorous figure in the historical profession before the war, Eileen Power, the economic historian at the LSE. Laski's wife, who was upper crust, a snob and a stalwart of the Eugenics movement, had asked, according to his daughter, why "dear Eileen" had married "that frightful little man". Speaking to Laski's daughter I did not like to ask if anyone had ever applied the same question to her mother.

As I began Postan took his hearing aid out. When I stopped he reinserted it. Then he asked the first question, though it was a rhetorical one. He said "You did not mention the Belgian Comtists". I admitted that I had not and he seemed satisfied to have wrung this admission from me, though what point was being made remained mysterious. I made a mental note that when I knew someone would be reading a paper at which Postan would be present I should tell him to be sure to include a mention of the Belgian Comtists. Then when Postan made his intervention he would be able to smile sweetly and say "Oh, but you missed it". I was appearing in a double bill with Philip Abrams, who gave a paper he subsequently published in *Past and Present* on "Reconstruction" after the First World War. We were meeting in the panelled Combination Room, handsome but dark, at Queens'. While I was talking a thunderstorm began, with flashes and loud thunderclaps. It was premonitory and was still going on when Philip finished, when events inside dwarfed those in the outer world. It appeared that in the course of his paper he had insulted the Master of Emmanuel's regiment and Kitson Clark's mother. Kitson had simply misunderstood the point. Philip had said that women's war work had paved the way for the post-war concession of the suffrage. Kitson took him to have said that that women had engaged in war-work as part of their campaign for the suffrage. "My mother's war-work was undertaken simply from patriotism. Nothing whatever to do with the suffrage".

Wellbourne's intervention was more startling. Philip had said that demobilization had proceeded too fast for the labour market but that it had simply been impossible to keep the men in uniform any longer. Wellbourne said this was rubbish. "I was commanding a company in Northern France in 1919 and if I'd told my men to stand fast they'd still be there". We had all heard the stories of Japanese soldiers loose on Pacific islands who still did not know that Japan had surrendered. I think we all had the same mental picture, of a company of now very grizzled and bemused Tommies, still standing fast in somewhere like Etaples, waiting for Captain Wellbourne to tell the when it would be their turn to go back up the line.

Decidedly it was time to be going. Many years later I received an invitation to give a paper to the Cambridge Historical Society. Perhaps I was lacking in magnanimity; I declined.

11
A New University

Looking back at my four years at UEA, as the new University of East Anglia quickly became known, I am surprised that I felt as restless as I undoubtedly did. Norwich is an interesting and in parts beautiful city. My colleagues were agreeable and much more congenial both intellectually and socially than those at Downing. Perhaps it did not help that Cambridge was only sixty miles down the road. Diane's parents still lived there and we now had a car, so we went back frequently. I was able to keep in touch with friends, but I felt an exile; a clean break might have been better. The worst aspect of my new life was undoubtedly the teaching. I had in that respect been spoilt in Cambridge. As a result partly of swopping pupils with Directors of Studies in other colleges ("I'll do your political thought if you'll do my economic history"), I had enjoyed teaching some remarkable pupils, for Caius and Girton, as well as for Christ's and Downing, always, of course, in individual tutorials or at most in pairs. One of them, Judith Brown, is now, as Professor of Commonwealth History, a colleague at Balliol. Another, Quentin Skinner, became Regius Professor of History in Cambridge, and another, Norman Stone, Professor of Modern History at Oxford. In only seven years of teaching in Cambridge I taught twice that number of pupils who got tenured posts in British universities.

I was bound to see a drop from that exalted standard of living, but I was not prepared for it to be so drastic, for it was not only a matter of quality. The kinds of teaching I was used to were supervisions or tutorials and lectures, and at East Anglia there were initially neither, but large classes of eighteen or so, coming to me twice a week for two hours at a time, and with similar obligations to at least one other tutor. They were mostly not professed historians, but German linguists whom the system required to take some history. The School was so new that there was just a handful of second years; the rest were all in their first year.

Because we had been unable to start a programme of interviewing candidates the previous year, most of them had not been selected but had been taken from the 'Pool', or to give it its official name the 'Clearing House' where candidates who had not been offered places waited for offers from universities with vacancies. Some of this time would remedy, some it would not, particularly what I felt was the excessive number of hours they spent with tutors and hence the inadequate preparation time. The result may be imagined. After seven, I felt successful, years of teaching I suddenly found that I did not know how to do it. It was rather like my initial experience of research after success in Tripos.

In History there was a particular problem with the Prelim, which because of the preponderance of first years is what the bulk of the teaching consisted of. All entrants had to do two initial terms divided equally between literature, philosophy and history. I later taught an identical pattern at Sussex with very fair success. But we were supposed to teach "historical method". I do not believe that one can teach historical methods except by doing some history. History is not a subject like economics, which can proceed from learning general concepts to their more complex applications, while to teach particular methods relevant to history like palaeography, demography or econometrics would be wholly out of place for beginners and for giving an idea of history to non-historians. What were we to do? It had been decreed before I arrived, largely I think because there was a book available which did it, that we should concentrate on the French Revolution and that we should compare different contemporary accounts of the same events to see if we could decide which to believe. Lord Acton might have seen some point in it; so might some rather stupid apprentice barrister learning how to expose hostile witnesses as unreliable or liars. As a way of introducing people to what interests historians and how they typically think, it was narrow to the point of absurdity. It is usually more salutary to learn to distrust historians than eyewitnesses.

The following year my friend and colleague Morley Cooper and I set our own syllabus, consisting of historical works we admired for various reasons. They included, I remember, Finley's *The World of Odysseus*, Huizinga's *The Waning of the Middle Ages* and Burkhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance*. We hoped that as well as learning what to admire and what to distrust the students might also get a smattering of historical knowledge. This worked much better, but I still floundered with large classes. Gradually I learnt some cynical wisdom, like "never criticize sharply any remark however stupid because if you do the others will be

more silent than ever". Confronted by silence I often felt I was being driven to deliver an impromptu lecture which would have been better scheduled as a lecture; later, in America, I became, and am, a believer in the extra half an hour added to a lecture period for questions and discussion, which, with the lecture delivered, has a chance of being reasonably well informed. In the shorter term, in due course, I insisted on delivering some lectures at UEA. They were not the fashion there, being not in accordance with the advanced educational theory of the 'sixties and with the innovatory spirit proper to a new university. They were not "Socratic". This point always seems to me to make no allowance for differences in subject. It may be possible by the right questions to get a slave boy to deduce some of the fundamental theorems of geometry; in an empirical subject like history even the brightest slave boy will have little to contribute without some pretty thorough prior instruction. For answers to be deducible they must already be inherent in the question; too often, questions put to the ignorant become a foolish game of 'guess what I'm thinking'.

Morley and I, then, abandoned the French Revolution and which sans culotte had mutilated Madame de Lamballe's genitals (one of the examples in the book) or whether anyone had. It had, however, left me with a scar; I hope my victim recovered more quickly. The loss of my most brilliant pupils had left me feeling not only deprived and helpless but resentful. It was grossly unfair to blame first year students of German literature taken from the Pool for not emulating them, but I am afraid I did. On one occasion I had been trying to get some response only to be confronted by the usual mournful, bovine silence. Intensely irritated by my failure, I was ungrateful when one young woman at last volunteered a remark which I now find entirely sympathetic and appropriate: she said she felt sorry for Louis XVI. I could have made something of it: to what extent was he a victim? In what way might he have behaved differently? Instead, being of course quite young and a different shape from the one I assumed subsequently, I said "Oh do you? I think all fat middle-aged men should be executed". This only enhanced the general reluctance to say anything. Later on, of course, I should have leant forward eagerly like Noel Annan and said "That's frightfully interesting. Do go on". I tried to keep things going, aware that I had behaved badly, and suddenly noticed that my victim was silently crying—something which had never happened before and has not since. I was appalled. I could not draw attention to her by apologizing, but I could at least have had the decency to do so afterwards, when I had ended the class rather early, but I did not; I just slunk away. It was a kind

of turning point. I realized that resentment was getting me nowhere and have felt it since only over specific and avoidable delinquencies. The danger, of course, is of reducing expectations below what is necessary; the obverse of irritation is cynicism.

In attempting a balance sheet of profit and loss in my move to East Anglia I find a good many paradoxes. Teaching was undeniably a minus, but other items were more complex. We had a car, and even a garage, which few of my friends in Cambridge had. I had a steady if not ample income and an assured future. There were many pleasant aspects, beginning with the city of Norwich. Laurence was at a primary school in the centre of the city, and I would often pick him up and take him to the Wimpey for junk food, which Diane rightly condemned, before we went on to the castle, with its strange medieval objects and the well down which we always had to throw a penny. He was growing up. How much I suddenly realized when I had taken him to a film about King Arthur, with an all-American cast of Knights. I thought he had not noticed until, when the divine voice spoke out of heaven advertising the Holy Grail, he nudged me and said "God's English". One could set these things against the fact that central Norwich was very dead in the evenings. There was a river, but not, except outside the city, an attractive one; the finest site in the city, facing across the river to the magnificent east end of the cathedral, is or was occupied by a gasworks. We were, however, only a dozen miles from the sea, at Yarmouth, along a weird road through such flat country that usually three or four flint church towers and the same number of derelict windmills could be seen at the same time, while the sails of boats seemed to be moving through the fields; in a sea mist it was an eerie experience.

We were further from the city centre and the university than in Cambridge, and I usually took the bus to the latter. I was bored by our between-the-wars semi-detached house, though Diane liked it. She was happy looking after Francesca, who had been born in the tempestuous year 1968, when thrones tottered. In Cambridge I suppose we had been difficult to classify socially, as insecure, pauper members of an elite. Cambridge was a company town, and within the company, in the manner of elites, in some respects democratic. Membership mattered, in many ways, more than money, in a fashion that now tends to be found objectionable, though wide disparities in wealth are happily tolerated. There is an analogy with the position of poor whites in the old American South. In debate all were at least theoretically equal; there were no "yes men", though I cannot speak for the science departments. When, in my final undergraduate year, I went on a two-week course at the Admiralty,

I was struck and rather repelled by the amount of deference shown by Principals and Assistant Principals to their seniors, and the frequent use of "Sir"; perhaps I judged too much by appearances. I went on the course because I had expressed an interest in taking the Civil Service exams, which I did, I think, in dismay after the Cambridge Careers Service had declared me unemployable. I have some sympathy with their interviewer; I had shown I remember, minimal enthusiasm for the glittering visions of my future he had attempted to conjure up, as Personnel Manager with Consolidated Grommits, or whatever it was. I enjoyed the Admiralty course, which included an evening's drinking with young naval officers in the tiny wardroom of a submarine, but I had found the atmosphere of hierarchy claustrophobic. It was there, incidentally, that I was presented with the Official Secrets Act to sign by what was in all probability an employee of the KGB. Three people at the Naval Research Station at Portsdown, where this took place, were subsequently exposed as having been working, when I was there, for the Russian superspy Gordon Lonsdale.

Cambridge was hierarchical, but in some respects playfully so, as university and college hierarchies cut across each other. The newly joined, possibly very distinguished, Professorial Fellow ranked in college below the Junior Research Fellow elected before him. I have seen this cause initial bewilderment to an eminent visiting American scholar on discovering that it was his duty to get up and press the bell for the butler to bring in coffee after dessert, though he took it in good part when it was explained. Steen, as president, sitting opposite him, had been gesturing to him and making the kind of noise made by stroke victims trying to recover the power of speech, which the visitor had not surprisingly found more alarming than intelligible.

In Norwich we were easily classifiable: respectable lower-middle class suburban house and car owners. We had two children, one of each sex, and could have posed for an advertisement for our Ford Anglia, except that it was second hand. We could not afford holidays, and did not go to the continent for four years, though we toured Norfolk and Suffolk in the car. I loved Norwich but did not take so easily to its flat county, despite windmills and flint churches and handsome towns like Wymondham. Suffolk seemed kindlier, and there was a fine castle at Framlingham for Laurence, and attractive towns like Bungay and Southwold. On a visit to Orford my odd contact with the KGB may have continued. I had been invited there as the guest of Sheila Sokolov-Grant to look at the diaries of her grandfather, an Anglo-Indian official called Grant Duff, whom I had worked on a little. We later learnt from

the memoirs of the spycatcher Peter Wright, that he had burgled the house, because he suspected her husband, a Russian, whom I met briefly, of being a Soviet agent; Orford Ness was a militarily sensitive location. Wright commented with disgust on the irrelevant Victorian rubbish in the desk, and his mission was abortive. Orford Ness was rather weird, but less so than the North Norfolk coast around Wells, where it seems to be undecided whether to be Norfolk or the North Sea. It seems a very suitable setting for M. R. James' ghost stories. To a Devonian the great wide spaces and vast skies, even compared with Cambridgeshire, seemed uncanny. Absurdly I was bothered by the fact that the sun sank over the land, putting beaches, in the evening, in the shade where there were cliffs; I was used to the sun sinking always into the western sea.

At the university, as I have said, I liked my colleagues, who were mostly experts in German and Russian literature - no French yet - philosophers and social scientists as well as historians. There were pleasant, sociable times in the early evening, when we had finished teaching in the huts for the day, in the old Rectory of the Earlham estate, which we had as a set of common rooms. One panelled room looked out to the small garden which led down to the Yare, not much more than a stream here. It was idyllic. Then, after two years, we had to move half a mile, across the road, to Denys Lasdun's new, brutalist concrete blocks, which some people admired and I hated. It was as though Lasdun had caught up with me and was taking his revenge for my having voted against his designs at Christ's. He had planned the faculty's rooms with diabolical ingenuity. Each adjacent pair formed two interlocking Ls, each arm of which was just too narrow comfortably to accommodate a tutor and two, let alone three, students. A simple oblong would have been able to do this easily. The walls were bare concrete, and there was a concrete pillar strategically placed to make things as uncomfortable as possible. Lasdun had insisted on his own ideas for the desks, which were alternating black and white and very shiny. Most of the rooms faced south. Even in Norfolk the sun shines sometimes and people took to coming in with sunglasses to combat the glare from the desks, which I believe were later replaced. The buildings were linked by open walkways which in winter provided a considerable ordeal. A good many of us regretted the huts.

I would have admitted that I missed the sometimes surreal aspects of life in College: tussles with the butler over a piece of pineapple, Steen's albino elephant and Downing deeming. Pretty well everyone at UEA seemed sane; they were, of course, much nearer my own age. Nearest to bringing a quality of enjoyable eccentricity was the much loved

Professor of English History, Bob Ashton, a High Church pupil of R. H. Tawney at the LSE. East Anglia had a chapel row. I was told every new university had a chapel row, a heated debate, that is, about whether there should be a chapel, meeting house, sacred space of some kind. Various people had said on this occasion that they would not be against this provided that the designated building were equally available to all cults. They made it clear that they really meant all: voodoo, anointing the sacred lingam, pious bacchanalian orgies, anything. They conjured up for me visions of the chaplain tearing open live cockerels over the bodies of naked virgins; animal rights and even feminism were in their infancy. Bob said something like "ViceChancellor, I have listened to this discussion with some anxiety. I am myself of the view that the university should have a chapel, but I have understood from the remarks of some of my colleagues that were we to do so it should be available for the use of Dissenters".

Bob cultivated eccentricity as a style, but the other main exponent did so unknowingly. He was my own professor of European history. He was well-intentioned and I think in some ways a tragic man, who needed affection but did not know how to win it. He was cultivated and essentially kindly and I should not, of course, write about him in this way if he were alive, but it was his idiosyncracies of manner that made him memorable. He was a German Jewish émigré and though he had come to England young enough to attend a public school his accent was as strong as Walter Ullmann's, though North German. He was a fluent linguist but in English clearly had no ear at all. He was essentially benign, especially, in intention, towards the students, but was not, unfortunately, equipped to recommend himself to them. I realized how little when I interviewed candidates with him; we interviewed in pairs. He had a very large desk and very big teeth. The candidate would come in and sit nervously in front of the desk, while I sat beside him behind it. He would lean forward baring his teeth in the terrifying vulpine grin which he intended as an ingratiating smile of welcome, and say ponderously and gutturally, "And now - let us find out - how much - you know". The candidate's reaction was interesting. Usually their eyes flickered immediately towards me. They had seen the same films about German methods of interrogation as the rest of us. I was the one who was going to hit them in the kidneys when they gave the wrong answer. I began to feel underequipped without close-cropped blond hair, pale blue eyes and a belted black leather raincoat.

He had other mannerisms. On a platform, introducing a speaker, he would stride about stiffly, falling into a kind of modified goose-step. He

seemed entirely oblivious of the fact that he was not completely assimilated as an Englishman. He had served in the Eighth Army in Italy in 1944. We once asked him what he did. He said proudly that he had been British liaison officer with the Italian partisans. I pondered on this. If his accent in Italian was at all like that with which he spoke English, it seemed to me that any Italian partisan commander, confronted by him in a British uniform and claiming to be his liaison officer with the Eighth Army, would have been quite justified in having him put against the nearest wall and shot. A worse thought was that his colonel, exasperated beyond endurance in ways we could well understand, might have foreseen and intended this, or at least been indifferent to the outcome: a new version of Uriah the Hittite, victim not of his wife's beauty but his own administrative incompetence. He did, to his credit, tell a story against himself, that as traffic-control officer at the liberation of Milan he had been responsible for what he thought might have been the biggest traffic jam in history.

Another outstanding personality, of a very different kind, was Marcus Dick, the Professor of Philosophy. He had been Senior Tutor of Balliol. Balliol gave its Senior Tutors generously to the new universities: Fulton became Vice-Chancellor of Sussex and another one, Patrick Corbett, first Professor of Philosophy there. Marcus was a dominating, highly impressive figure, with a very handsome face the colour of copper. He was an alcoholic, who gave up periodically, but never for long; I never saw him drunk. He was very clever and had great presence, both of which he used at philosophy meetings to ensure that nothing that might be outside his range occurred; he had reached the point at which he did not want anything to happen that he could not control, and was formidable enough generally to ensure it. I thought him bad for the subject - he had published nothing - but could not help liking and admiring him. He was at once extremely polished, cultivated and authoritative, and in his own way disrespectful and subversive, which is always a seductive combination to the young.

The one of his juniors he did not overawe was Martin Hollis, who was one of the cleverest men I have ever known. He and I were planning to teach together when I left UEA and lost the opportunity. His notion of a soothing bedside book, when one stayed with him, was a small one called *Puzzles and Brainteasers* by Martin Hollis, essentially a book of logical conundrums that could easily keep someone like me awake half the night to no purpose. It was a horrible irony that he should have died of a brain tumour: it was such a marvellous instrument the tumour attacked. He was, very unfashionably, a philosophical

Rationalist, in the mould of Leibniz or Spinoza. I once asked him how he became one, and his answer was "For my first tutorial at New College I was set an essay on the synthetic a priori (essentially the view that substantive knowledge is accessible by reason independently of observation). I was clearly meant to say that it was rubbish, but being counter-suggestible I defended it and have been doing so ever since".

At one point in my first year I was given an insight into the local Puritan tradition. I agreed to give a lecture to the Ipswich Cooperative Education Society. I thought I knew about Extra-Mural teaching. I had done some in Cambridge, for the WEA. Most of the workers seemed to be middle-aged, middle-class women who had been told by their doctors that they needed an interest, though there were one or two elderly male auto-didacts. These could be difficult to teach, wanting to assimilate everything to what they had already read. I remember an elderly woman I found particularly difficult because she had a conspiracy theory. The whole of English history testified, she said, to a conspiracy of the South of England against the North, from which she came: the Synod of Whitby, William the Conqueror's ravaging of Northumbria, the defeat of the Percies by Henry IV, the Pilgimage of Grace, the Industrial Revolution, the Depression - it all added up. I find that when I tell colleagues who are themselves northerners about this they sometimes do not see my difficulties: "common sense", one said. But to return to the Ipswich Cooperators. They booked me for 3 p.m. on a weekday, which seemed odd. My host, a little old Suffolk man, asked me rather anxiously if I would be talking about the Pope at all. I said not, and he looked relieved. There had been a lecturer from Cambridge the previous week (a medievalist I knew) who had talked quite a bit about the Pope and "some of them didn't like that much". Then he revealed that my audience might be, as he put it "a bit old ... We find that if we have it in the afternoons we get a good audience, but some of them are ... a bit old".

We went in. They were the largest roomful of very old men I had, or have, ever seen. Some were already asleep. I made a quick revision of the lecture I was about to give, on the political theories involved in the Revolution of 1688, some of them might remember it, or think they did. More went to sleep as I was talking. I was just launching into a peroration when there was a crash at the end of the room. The double doors were thrown open and two stout women, in aprons and plastic caps, appeared wheeling big metal trolleys, one bearing a huge metal tea-urn and innumerable thick white china mugs and the other laden with sandwiches, cake, buns and biscuits; I did not think I had seen such

an impressive tea since Christ's Governing Body meetings, though I saw no gentleman's relish, but catering for far more people. The audience woke up to an old man. There were no women; the old men had clearly been told to be out of the house and not back until after tea, and had happily complied. The point of the meeting had been reached. I stopped in mid-sentence and decided there would be no questions. The Ipswich Cooperative Education Society (Pensioners Section) had reached the climax of its activities for another week. And I had not mentioned the Pope.

One of the pleasures of UEA compared with Cambridge, of course, was being able to do pretty much what one liked with the syllabus. Everything was new. In Cambridge the status quo was so entrenched, buttressed by so many vested interests, that puny pressure groups - I had been involved with one - flailed at it in vain, though it has changed a great deal since. At UEA I was able to write my own syllabus. I have described the difficulties in actually teaching it, but this, at least, was exhilarating. I could always find some enthusiasm in starting something, in defiance of experience. I described myself to Morley as being like some enlightened nineteenth-century Russian landlord, getting books on agricultural improvements from England, and proudly ordering a shiny new threshing machine from Birmingham, only to have it standing immobilized in the barn because the peasants had broken the spokes and tried to feed it hay (I was still in a disgruntled mood with the students). Then he would go off in disgust to Baden Baden to gamble in the Kursaal and make love to foreign adventuresses - which in my case did not seem to be an option. Now, looking back on this period from the perspective of my generation, it is a different Russian analogy that occurs. We had, it now seems to me, a pathetically short time to rejoice in our freedom from the tyranny of the past, and exploit our liberal freedoms, before being invaded by the ruthless young Nihilists. Or we were like the brief government of Kerensky in 1917, enjoying a few months between the fall of Tsarism and the October Revolution. The Bolsheviks were already waiting in the wings.

I am speaking now of younger faculty, not students, and my dawning awareness that their culture and mine were not the same; perhaps I have exaggerated the speed of the transition. The gap between the attitudes of my generation and those of the one coming fast up behind it was to be even more noticeable in Sussex. The latter were the so-called "children of '68", some of whom had helped to dig up the cobblestones in Paris in that year to throw at the police, and were clearly anxious to repeat the experience somewhere. Before I left UEA, however, the stirrings of

student revolt were still more evident, prepared for by the cultural revolution - too late for me - of the earlier 'sixties, but now becoming politicized by the Vietnam war and the draft of young Americans for it, and the Parisian example. Wearing long hair, and cast-off uniforms of any kind, were becoming common. On one occasion I saw someone in apparently the complete uniform of an RAF squadron leader coming towards me on the walkway and thought how authentic-looking their fancy dress was becoming. He turned out to be an RAF squadron leader, taking an MA to prepare for retirement. Signals did sometimes get confused. I recall a decidedly hippified American visiting professor, with, of course, a beard, telling me how he had given a lift to a bearded man on the Portsmouth road: I always give a lift to a bearded guy because I figure maybe other drivers won't pick him up. But do you know this guy turned out to be really right wing. He was some kind of petty officer in your navy". He seemed really hurt about it. The fraternity of the hirsute had been penetrated by a cold warrior, disguised by a beard. Fascists - Mussolini, Hitler, Eisenhower, Kissinger, the SS - were clean-shaven.

We had a number of American visiting students also. Red-eyed, carrying the regulation smell of cannabis and sweaty blankets, they brought a new Evangel to our innocents. The world was to be re-made and students were to make it. We shifted uneasily. Nothing was too trivial to provoke a demonstration; I once heard a girl at Sussex say "Of course I've been going to demos since I was so high". I spoke to one of the participants in a "march", protesting, I think, at a rise in the price of pies in the Refectory. They had sung the American Civil Rights anthem *We Shall Overcome*. I pointed out that in Alabama there had been a great historic wrong and demonstrators had faced batons and dogs. Were they not, I asked, devaluing the currency of protest? "Oh no", he said, "it's all raising consciousness". "Raise Your Consciousness" was a slogan daubed on one of Lasdun's concrete walls, which admittedly seemed to invite such treatment. There was a national scandal, taken up by the newspapers, about the burning at UEA of a union jack shopping bag; these had been made readily available as part of the jokey-ironic mode popularized by the Beatles, and flag-burning was associated with resistance to the Vietnam war. I deplored both the war, which had become a daily atrocity, and the more parochial forms of protest. It seemed to me that our students, with, I thought, even an excessive amount of pastoral care, and ample opportunities to make their views known, had none of the genuine grievances of the French students with their university system, or those of young Americans subject to the draft.

Here it all seemed gratuitous and imitative, born of a determination not to be left out.

And then I got a letter from Sussex, from a man called Winch.

12
Sussex: Early Years, Town and University

In 1968 I made a train journey from Norwich to Brighton, where I had never been. I had received an invitation to give a lecture at the University of Sussex at Falmer, from the Dean of Social Sciences, Donald Winch, whom I did not know. He and his colleagues had devised a course on the History of the Social Sciences into which he thought a lecture by me might fit. Norwich, appropriately I felt, is at the end of the line; the trains go in to the buffers and have to reverse out again, as they do at Brighton. It was a tedious journey through Ipswich and Chelmsford to Liverpool Street. The train stopped frequently. Old women with shopping baskets got in and got out at the next station; one had a live chicken in a coop which should presumably have been in the guard's van. At Victoria, without realising it I got on, for the only time, the Brighton Belle. The contrast between the two journeys, the East Anglian chicken-run and these fading, between-the-wars elegancies from the world of Agatha Christie, was striking. It was increased when the man opposite me produced a red despatch box with the gilt royal monogram and took out some papers to work on. I recognised him from photographs as Thomas Balogh, one of the two Hungarian economists currently advising the government. The other was Nicky Kaldor at King's; Balogh was at Balliol.

I felt I had entered a different England. The impression was not dispelled when Winch met me at the station in his sports car. From Brighton station one can look all the way down to the sea. Winch, then a bachelor, lived in West Hill Street above the station: a typical, pretty, small Brightonian street of white stucco terraced house with a working-class pub opposite. It was definitely not suburban; it seemed, again typically, both elegant and bohemian. My father later told me that just down the hill, past the station, was the house where the Brighton trunk murder had been committed; he spoke of this as of an amenity. Winch

took me to a restaurant called *Au Pied du Cochon*, which lived up to its name. Steak houses were at that time the height of gastronomic sophistication in Norwich, and by this hour the streets would have been dark and deserted. The narrow streets of the Lanes were brightly lit and crowded. I cannot remember whether at that time there were cafe tables on the pavement, but there may have been; it was like being on the continent, and Dieppe was forty miles away. The lecture the next day seemed to go well. Faculty attended, including Garry Runciman, whom I knew slightly from Cambridge, as a Trinity star and a protégé of Peter Laslett's. He had got a Harkness Fellowship to go to the United States ten years earlier, the year I applied and did not get one. The university was now about seven years old, a year or two older than UEA, and it seemed a mellow and mature place compared with Lasdun's raw concrete, with many trees retained from the Capability Brown park it partly occupied. I thought Basil Spence's red brick buildings humane if not very exciting, *pace* Pevsner, who admired them excessively.

The chief exception I thought, and continued to think, was the Library. The one at UEA was a quiet and pleasant place to work in. In Sussex the main concourse was open to the bookstacks and work areas, which made it noisy. It was also open up to the glass roof, and when I first went in there was a row of fire buckets to catch the drips, which, filling up at different rates produced different notes in a kind of feeble carillon. I went home and said "I've seen the future - and it leaks". The new History Faculty Library in Cambridge, the Seeley, by James Stirling, is also open in this way and therefore noisy. There, additionally, the rooms under the roof, are subjected, in the lightest Cambridgeshire breeze, to howling like the sound effects of a horror film. Architects between the 'sixties and the 'eighties behaved as though the human race had no experience of putting up four walls and a roof. Everything had to be a new beginning, so inevitably they often made a mess of it. They also turned their backs on a wonderful innovation of the late middle ages and the early modern period, the dividing wall. Like the Law courts held for centuries in Westminster Hall or classes at Winchester and Eton held all in the same room, medieval interiors were largely open-plan. It has been left to twentieth-century architects deliberately to revive the inconveniences of this. I have wandered through publishers' offices with editors, looking desperately for some nook in which to settle ourselves that would not be too noisy for a discussion.

But my Sussex visit had been a success and I was already half seduced when Winch told me that he would like me to take a permanent post, which he had worked hard to create, to teach mainly the course for

which I had lectured. One of the things that irked me about UEA then was the strict demarcation of teaching between Schools. The Schools, as at Sussex, had been established to break down barriers, which they had done, between disciplines, literary, philosophical, historical and social scientific. But at UEA they had created others, geographical ones, between Britain and Europe in particular, which did not suit me at all. An absurd situation had arisen when I, in European Studies, had to lecture on the Eastern Question, of which I knew little, while my friend Dick Shannon, who was an authority on Gladstone and the Eastern Question, being in English and American Studies, had nothing to do with it. Meanwhile Dick ran a course on the Victorian intelligentsia, which I would have loved to contribute to, to which I am sure he would have been agreeable, but for me it was in the wrong School and I could not. I dare say in the long run things could have been ironed out, but I was impatient, and vested interests had been created. I was assured that at Sussex, though the Schools pattern was identical, no such obstacle existed and so it proved. Much later, in the name of 'efficiency', when Schools had become 'cost centres' in an 'internal market', Deans at Sussex seemed to have to waste a lot of time on such issues, but this did not affect me directly.

I stalled Winch for the moment. UEA had been good to me and I felt a little guilty. But when Donald, as he had become, invited me for a second year and renewed the offer I gave in. There was no interview; I just went to Asa Briggs at the Vice-Chancellor's mansion at Ashcombe House for a laying on of hands. One reason for moving makes me ashamed of its triviality. Our rotted garden fence had fallen down and I was told it was my responsibility and it would cost two hundred pounds for a new one. This was a lot of money. Our car had cost only three hundred. To sell the house was a way out. We made no money on it, as we had not on Kimberley Road. For a term, while we house-hunted, we lived in the only temporary accommodation we could find, a seaside chalet on the front at Seaford, from which we could wave to the cross-channel ferry from Newhaven as it passed our bedroom window every afternoon at teatime. I mostly took the train to Falmer, but sometimes I did the lovely autumnal drive to Lewes through Rodmell and Southease.

Then we bought a house in Hove, 7 Ranelagh Villas, which sounds more impressive than it is. It was near Hove station, and parks for the children. I would have preferred Brighton, but Hove offered schools and a place to park a car; Brighton was in any case on the doorstep, and so thanks to Hove station, was Victoria, an hour away. Brighton has suffered some losses since then. The West Pier still stood, bathed in

green floodlighting at night and the Pavilion colours changed every half minute from peach to green to blue, purple and silver. The children loved it and so did I. The big floodlit fountain in the Steyne played music. The worst architectural vandalism had already occurred, the new Bedford Hotel and the big cinema on the seafront. The Grand Hotel was probably saved by the IRA, because the insurance paid for its renovation after the bombing. I was one of the 'ghouls', as the press called us, who went to the beach next day to look at the destruction. It reminded me, of course, of the war, though it seemed anomalous that the roof was on; I had noticed the same oddity in Belfast, on the visit when the cheerful RUC man said as he frisked me "It's all right sir - unless you start to enjoy it". I was struck by the tattered and dirty curtains hanging from the gap and the windows. Our house in Hove was dated 1897, and had first belonged to a grocer and then a clerk; it could have been my great-grandfather and grandfather. It was on the same basic plan as Kimberley Road, but semi-detached, with an extra bedroom. It was about twenty-minutes brisk walk from the sea, from Adelaide Crescent and Brunswick Terrace. Walking along the front (including times, much later, with my grandson on his scooter), with the sea sparkling and the sunlight reflected off the Regency terraces, or out along the Palace Pier to look back at them stretching away both east and west, it was good to be alive. We took advantage of the proximity to London to go sometimes to Shepherd Market, Soho or Covent Garden, to supper, as well as to good Brighton restaurants. We went sometimes to the Royal Opera House with Michael Ratcliffe, where I increased my contacts with the famous by being trodden on in the Crush Bar by Stephen Spender, who was so tall he did not even notice me; I think he may have registered me as an irregularity in the carpet. In the 'seventies we saw a wonderful *Meistersinger*, with Solti conducting and Geraint Evans as a splendidly sly Beckmesser; he was also the best Leporello, in the catalogue aria, I have ever heard. There was also a beautiful, ochre-toned *Cosi Fan Tutte*, an *Onegin* and Verdi's *Macbeth*, which contains the splendid subtitle *Chorus of Scottish Exiles*, which I always think sounds like Burns Night in a London suburb, probably with vomiting. I later became wary of opera productions, because of the vagaries of designers and producers. "Producer's Opera" if for anyone but the producer, is essentially for the jaded, who can scarcely bear to face another "straight" production, just as *cuisine maigre* is for people who eat out expensively so often they have to worry about its effects on their health. For someone like myself, looking for the occasional treat or blow-out they are a menace.

Going to the University at Falmer by the train one goes over the great viaduct joining the two sides of the valley through which Brighton runs to the sea, with the last and finest of its Victorian Gothic churches, Saint Bartholomew's, in the foreground. The county too was exciting: trips in either direction, east to Lewes, Cuckmere, Pevensey, Hastings and Rye, and west to Lancing, Arundel and Chichester, and of course to the Downs at the back of us. We only once, to my regret, got to Glyndebourne, for a *Rosenkavalier* designed by Erté, but Sussex pubs were a revelation after Norfolk ones. I have since tried to do a balance-sheet of our move, unforced this time, from UEA to Sussex, but of course much about the alternative not taken is unknowable. We should certainly have been able to afford a better house in Norfolk. In judging the two universities most people then would have thought Sussex held a clear advantage; now I think there is more like parity. Sussex was then very pleased with itself and though new managed to convey a sense of privilege in being associated with it.

Brighton has certainly been important to my family. All of them except myself competed, and won their classes quite frequently, in the annual Brighton Amateur Music Festival held in the Pavilion, Laurence playing the piano, Diane and Francesca singing. Laurence, now a professional rock musician, began playing in public, first as an amateur and then professionally, in Brighton pubs as a jazz pianist. The band with which he is now keyboardist, The Damned II, is Brighton-based. Francesca has been stimulated as an artist by the Brighton scene. Diane for a while was an amateur danseuse with a seaside concert party, giving charity shows along the coast. My greatly loved mother-in-law, who came to live with us in 1983 after her husband's death, also appreciated Brighton. She loved cocktails and exotic drinks of all kinds, and Brighton hotels and bars gave her scope. Two remarks associated with her, initially made quite unselfconsciously by the children, catch aspects of her character and have passed into family legend. One Christmas, Francesca called up the stairs to her: "Grandma, your absinthe is ready", I wondered how often that sentence had been uttered.

Laurence took her to gigs. She had been a professional musician, both as a piano teacher and playing in a dance band. She came of immigrant Irish stock on Tyneside, which was both strongly Catholic and Communist in sympathies. She told me how as a young woman she had played for meetings both of the IRA and of the Communists: *The Wearing of the Green* and next time *The Red Flag*, she said. She also played for the silent cinema: "I got sick of *The William Tell Overture*". She prided herself, not unreasonably, on being up-to-date in her musical

tastes. When Laurence took her to rock concerts he used in his amateur days to mingle with the band in the interval and buy them drinks. On one occasion when the saxophonist of a rock-jazz band asked him how he had liked the first half he said unselfconsciously, because it was true, "Great, but my grandmother says you're a bit old-fashioned". Laurence says it was correct; they were a bit 'seventies. When later he was organizing a performance at the Zap Club he got her to recite a story she had written, as part of the performance, which he recorded and has incorporated in one of his own albums. I suppose many families have a stock of sayings which form part of their folklore, though largely opaque to others. Julian, Francesca's son, when he was small, was a prolific source. As a candidate for a Chomskian sentence never uttered by a human being before it seems to me one has to rate highly something I heard him say to himself wandering in the garden with an empty matchbox: "I'm sick and tired of not having a woodlouse".

This is, of course, anticipating by a generation. Francesca when we went to Sussex, then a toddler was turning into a charming and affectionate little girl. She gave me, at a very early age, an insight into the experience of being a younger sibling, coming into a world, as Malthus says, "already possessed". Going around a small museum, with porcelain figures in glass cases, just the kind of thing a child would like to play with, she said, held up in my arms to see, "Mustn't touch". I agreed we must not touch. "Laurence's", she explained sadly. "All Laurence's". When she had just begun school we visited the great Tudor house at Parham. At her Catholic primary school the "houses" were named after English martyrs: Campion, Howard, More and Fisher, with the result that insults were sometimes hurled at these sainted figures. Francesca was in Campion. The guide to the house proudly mentioned its connection with Sir Thomas More. Francesca made vomiting noises, saying "More! Ugh! I hate More". The others in the party looked in understandable astonishment at this fanatical infant Erastian.

One less than satisfactory aspect of life in Hove was the comprehensive school, absolutely new in 1972, attended by our children, though perhaps one elsewhere would have been no better. The headmaster and I had acrimonious wrangles, some at parent-teacher meetings, initially about teaching Laurence Latin, on which I had been given an assurance which turned out to be worthless. He also rejected teaching English grammar, saying "They don't need grammar to speak their own language". I said they did not need to learn physics to ride a bicycle but that this was not a reason for not learning physics. I have been told I should not retail this tiny verbal victory, but though certainly

stupid he was not some pathetic minor figure whom I should feel ashamed of bullying, but was in a position to impair the education of eighteen hundred pupils. He subsequently, I believe, became Director of Education for Merseyside. He was in control and we could not face the trauma for Laurence of taking him away. I am left with a lasting bitterness that in times of enormously greater national prosperity my children should have had an education substantially less good than the one I received at public expense when in the late 'forties the country was virtually bankrupt. This was not a matter of private means or because I was in any way exceptional. My father paid nothing towards my education at Exeter School and I was not good enough to sit for a scholarship. It is solely the consequence of changing educational practice and government policy.

At the University I was to experience good times and bad, the latter in common with nearly all British academics at the time. Sussex in the early days was an exciting place, though a little less fashionable than it had been in the early 'sixties. The stiletto heel-prints of the chic Jay twins had faded from the lawns but academically there still seemed plenty of élan. I was impressed when we got a visiting speaker, the Marxist Lucien Goldmann, over from Paris by hovercraft for lunch and a lecture, returning him in the late afternoon. The excitement was only slightly diminished when he proved to be almost wholly unintelligible, in what I think was English. The course I had been particularly hired to teach was compulsory for all third years in the School of Social Sciences. It had two parallel components, both initially compulsory, on the Philosophy of Social Science and its History. I taught for both, the former with a philosopher colleague. We tried to teach the historical part not as the histories of distinct disciplines but as intellectually ambitious and comprehensive projects, like Utilitarianism, which had comprised philosophy, psychology, jurisprudence, penology, and a programme of legislation and institutional reform, as well as having strong links with political economy. The official name of the course was *Concepts, Methods and Values in the Social Sciences*, abbreviated to CMV.

As visiting lecturers we had in the early years the cream of the British academics interested in the subjects we taught. Garry Runciman was already teaching it. Donald Winch himself was an economist from the LSE who had developed strong historical interests and was shortly to write a book on Adam Smith which restored him to his eighteenth-century context. Visitors I remember included Martin Hollis, Alan Ryan, Quentin Skinner, John Dunn, Brian Barry, Anthony Giddens and Duncan Forbes. The chief obstacle, I have to say, was another member

of Faculty recruited to teach the course, Helmut Pappé. Helmut was a German émigré who had spent the war years in New Zealand, and always wore an open-necked shirt as a sign that he was a laid-back antipodean. In fact he was the most unreconstructed kind of Prussian professor, as dogmatic as Walter Ullmann, though more polished in manner and refined in accent. He always asked the first question after a lecture, except that it was not a question. He had a formula we came to dread: "I was surprised that you did not ..." Then he would give, for ten minutes which seemed much longer, the gist of the lecture he would have given had he and not the speaker been invited to give it.

Helmut had strong views about the syllabus. He had adopted wholesale what he regarded as the liberal tradition, in an exclusively British guise. Mainly it was Utilitarianism - he was, perhaps uniquely, an unqualified admirer of James Mill - and the Scottish Enlightenment. In this way he had constructed an alternative intellectual genealogy for himself, in place of the German one he had rejected, or which had rejected him. He would hear of no other. It was understandable, it was even tragic, but it was a nuisance. It was also frustrating, because of course he knew the German tradition better than any of us, but he would not touch it. I, as a newcomer, naturally wanted to have room for my interests made in the syllabus, which included, though I was not sold out to them, aspects of nineteenth and early twentieth-century German social thought and philosophy. Helmut was implacably opposed. The young, it seemed, should be protected from any knowledge of it. I won, but it was tiring. He was even more of a nuisance when we were appointing his successor after his retirement. We appointed Larry Siedentop, who stayed for only a year because he went back to Oxford to a Politics Fellowship at Keble. Larry's liberal credentials are impeccable: he has written on Tocqueville and on the French nineteenth-century liberal minister and historian Guizot. But Helmut made a great fuss because his thesis, under Isaiah Berlin, had been on the right wing thinkers of the French Restoration, including Joseph de Maistre. For Helmut anyone who had kept company with de Maistre was not to be trusted.

After Stefan Collini arrived to replace Larry, he, Donald and I collaborated on a book, T*hat Noble Science of Politics* (I983). It could be described as born of CMV but begotten on it by Counter Suggestibility. In teaching the course we were determined to avoid triumphalist versions of the history of the social sciences, decisively shaped by the modern state of its disciplines. This seemed altogether too parochial. We were more relativist (or historicised) than that. We wanted to stress

what possibilities had seemed attractive in the past, and why they had done so, whether or not they had succeeded in establishing themselves as part of a modern story about progress in the social sciences.

But inevitably as one taught it there were compromises, as we tried to interest students: "You can see this as an anticipation of (whatever it was) that you have already studied". We wrote the book together to be free of such constraints and to be able to set our own agenda, paying as much attention to initiatives which had proved abortive as to those which looked like anticipations of the present. Attending only to the latter, as a method, only ministers to the kind of parochialism and self-satisfaction that the course was intended to challenge. It was a general view that all of us, as historians, were committed to. The present was not the touchstone of relevance, but what had seemed important to the past purveyors of ideas about social science, whether now fashionable or not. As Stefan wrote in our Introduction, the relation of our cast of thinkers to their seed was often more like that of Onan than Abraham. This, though it may have raised a few eyebrows, was a bowdlerization. Our private name for them was blunter: "The Wankers". We referred to ourselves, combining our surnames, as 'Burrinchini': Stefan and Donald once dined in a New York restaurant - I, alas, not being present - where Stefan had booked a table in that name and was accordingly addressed as "Mr Burrinchini". I was dilatory, I know, but I must have made at least one early input, because I remember an evening at an early stage with the three of us at my house when I read out, my handwriting being indescipherable, a paper on mid-Victorian ideas of a Science of Comparative Politics, one of whose practitioners was Edward Freeman, on whom as a historian I had already written. Stefan became our chief organizer and whipper-in. We got on splendidly intellectually, but I know I became dogmatic and splenetic about such matters as abbreviations and footnote conventions.

Writing my second book, several years earlier, had nearly got me arrested. I was stuck; the plan for the next chapter would not form itself in my mind. I went for a walk in Hove Park hoping to clear my head, wandering about with no sense of direction. When writing I admit that I tend to become unkempt, forgetting to shave or comb my hair. I was wearing an old mackintosh because when I wear one that is the kind I wear; I should feel disloyal to my grandfather in anything else. My path was suddenly barred by two policemen. Where was I going? I said I was not going anywhere, which was true in a double sense. Just walking about officer. What was I doing? I decided not to answer that. I could envisage too clearly where it might lead. Writing a book. Oh yes, what

kind of a book then? A history book. What kind of a history book? A book about historians. Why are you writing a history book about historians? A profound question, to which I had no answer ready. Under persistent cross-examination I should probably start helplessly to babble: "Well, I suppose essentially I am arguing that the concept of a Burkean tradition in nineteenth-century English thought is more readily traced in historiography than through the category of formal political- Are you trying to be funny?" I decided I would rather be arrested. Perhaps a court would be more indulgent. Perhaps I might even interest it in the concept of a Burkean tradition. I said again that I was just walking about. The atmosphere, never cordial, became even more hostile. Then one said something interesting: "Have you got any keys? Show us your keys". I had and did. They relaxed considerably. Not a vagrant then. After asking where I lived they let me go, with a warning to be careful in the future. I did not interpret this as a warning to write no more books, which I thought could be left to reviewers.

When I told this story to Bernard Williams I said how fortunate it was I had my keys on me. He said it was still more fortunate I did not have too many. Why write a book about historians? I can at least do a little better than I did with my policemen. Ever since, in Cambridge, I had become aware of the idea of being up to, or out of, date I have been partly sceptical about it. I mean that what seemed to vary over time, as also in philosophy, was not only—or perhaps in philosophy not even—the answers we could give but what questions it seemed important to ask; subsequently these sometimes seemed to become, for reasons equally obscure, unimportant again. If this were so then history itself had a history and there were presumably reasons for it which it seemed interesting to try to trace and explore but which very few historians did. "History" was not only about history, it was also part of it, and I have written two books about it: *A Liberal Descent* (1980) and *A History of Histories* (2007). I remain glad, though, that I did not try to tell my policemen this; they were unsympathetic men. Keys were more effective. But it is the best I can do.

A Sussex institution led to my next book. There was a regular series of public lectures, generally devoted to centenaries of one kind or another. I was asked to contribute one in 1976 on the bicentenary of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which led me to reread it and then led to writing a short book on him, in 1985, in the Oxford Past Master series. It also brought me the most equivocal compliment I have ever received, though it was clearly uttered with the utmost goodwill. I gave a lecture on him in the White Hart Hotel in Lewes to the Lewes

Literary Society, whose president was the doyenne of the historical profession, Dame Veronica Wedgewood. She was gracious, but seemed very old and frail. She came, or rather was brought, to me after my talk, held up between two members of the Society. She was most complimentary. "Thank you", she said "I shall remember that all my life". After which she was virtually carried from the room.

When I arrived at Sussex there was a flourishing MA in The History of Ideas, invented and run by Peter Burke, for which I began immediately to teach. Peter had designed it well, with one term on the history of a genre - I took the history of political thought - and the other on a heterogeneous body of texts in a given period; Peter naturally took the Renaissance. The chief reason it was flourishing, however, was an external one: the Vietnam war. A number of young male Americans had decided that doing an MA in the History of Ideas at the University of Sussex was preferable to the jungles of South-East Asia and the Vietcong. The ending of the war was locally and academically a disaster; enrolments fell considerably. Some of our refugees were exotic. I remember particularly a darkly handsome, Mephistophelian looking one with a pointed beard and a waxed moustache, who looked rather like John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of Lincoln, and smoked thin black cheroots. They had to do a 20,000 word dissertation. He said he wanted to do his on "Jesus, Freud and the Buddha". I think he did it on Freud.

One of the bonuses of Sussex was the amount of joint teaching one was able to do with colleagues, from whom I learnt much. Several of the courses were ones in history and literature, taught as School courses, notably *The English Romantics and their Society*, and *Faith, Doubt and Science in Victorian England*, which I taught with Laurence Lerner, Cedric Watts, Stephen Prickett and Norman Vance. I learnt from all of them. I was able to read, with expert help, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, Shelley, Arnold, Clough, Browning and George Eliot. The other main School course, parallel to CMV in the sense that it was compulsory for all third-year students in the Schools of European and English and American Studies was called *The Modern European Mind* (MEM). Essentially it was a course on the making of European Modernism, in philosophy, literature and social science, so one taught, among others, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Thomas Mann, Joyce and T S. Eliot. One can have a lot of fun teaching bright and well-disposed young people *The Birth of Tragedy*, *Death in Venice* and *The Waste Land*. Then, towards the end of the 'eighties, I was sacked from teaching the course. "Modern" had become "Post-Modern" and I had not. I was still Modern. I was reminded of my mother's amusement when, around

1950, in a furniture shop she heard an assistant say "Oh no Madam, 'Contemporary' is quite out now". The syllabus was revised to incorporate such now fashionable figures as Derrida and Lacan; I did not understand them, which I dare say when I was younger I might have regarded as a challenge, but now it did not seem cost-effective to take it as one.

I had been reading literary criticism with pleasure since my late 'teens, starting with Wilson Knight on Shakespeare and William Empson - who was more difficult. Now, in the 'eighties, it seemed to have wandered into territory where I did not wish to follow. The close reading of texts, which I had admired and learnt from, seemed to have been replaced by something jargon-laden and more predictable. When I was Director of Graduates it was one of my duties to read and approve all research proposals, each of about 5,000 words, by research students in the humanities and social sciences. I thought at one point of circulating research supervisors in English and Modern Languages saying that to save paper and the time of the Director it would be assumed in future that all texts to be studied by research students in these subjects subverted themselves unless specifically otherwise stated. I refrained I think because of a sense that it might be undignified, usually a shoddy reason. Graham would not have entertained it: "But that's balls". Much the same seemed to have happened to my long-standing interest in philosophy. I had been enthusiastic about the zeal for clarity and the intellectually therapeutic promise of "linguistic philosophy" in the nineteen-fifties and sixties to clear up conceptual muddles. I had understood the reaction against positivism, though I knew I retained some residual sympathy with it. But as philosophical fashion moved ever further from its high ambitions, with its most fashionable novelty represented by the work of Richard Rorty, I ceased to see any point. This may well have been more to do with my own reluctance now to learn new tricks than with any exceptional triviality in the way of talking.

In compensation, I found myself happier as an historian than ever before, as I became confident enough to set my own terms of reference, in a discipline which, if not perhaps locally, was itself much more open minded and eclectic than it had been earlier. It is, of course, still often the fate of an intellectual historian to feel at best marginal in the company of "proper" historians, and, when giving talks, to be playing what Donald calls "away matches". This was certainly true of addressing the History Work in Progress seminar, as the graduate colloquium in Sussex was called, where one could always rely on an academic version of cries of "What about the Workers, then?" as though there were only one

valid kind of history. Perhaps, I thought when I went as a visitor to the History of Ideas Unit in Canberra in 1983, for once I shall be playing at home. It was not to be so. In the mind at least of its director, Eugene Kamenka, "ideas" seemed to mean only the biggest ideas thought by the biggest thinkers. As my introductory talk I gave a paper on Walter Bagehot. Had I given it on Rousseau or Hegel all would have been well, but Eugene obviously wondered why I was wasting everyone's time by talking about a journalist, while to me his notion of the history of ideas seemed methodologically primitive. If, in this book, I had been writing a purely intellectual autobiography I should have been tempted to call it "Between Two Stools". But there are advantages in marginality; the paraphernalia of disciplinary professionalism has always depressed me; I have preferred to write essays rather than articles, and have never really sought self-classification, while being resistant to the idea of teaching "methods" if this is thought of as a form of instruction. I am not, that is, opposed to clarificatory selfconsciousness, if it does not become an end in itself and supplant the practice it is supposed to be clarifying. But for a long time now my inclination has been to do something first and decide, or let others decide, what kind of a thing it is afterwards. I have a paper along those lines I have sometimes read to groups interested in intellectual history called "The Poverty of Methodology".

Discussing changes in philosophical fashion and the reaction against positivism reminds me of two conversations with students which seem relevant. One was with a student with whom I had a number of good-natured arguments about the methodology of Intellectual History, about which he was enthusiastic. He was bright, with obviously a good deal of rivalry in his make-up, and I enjoyed the discussions. One day he suddenly said I was not being fair. I asked in what way and he said "You use examples". I remembered how Jack, not caring for qualifications or analysis, would always overwhelm one with a cascade of examples, but I did not think I was doing that. The other, much less bright, had made an error in the dating, I think of Charles I's execution, which he had placed in 1688; he was not a historian. I thought this just a slip and pointed it out. He looked sceptical, so I said that scholarly opinion had converged on a consensus that it had occurred in 1649. He looked at me, man to man, with his head on one side, considering the matter. "Well of course", he said, "I see your point of view". I thought of Walter Ullmann, and felt again that I had lived into strange times, whose mouth piece was before me. It was true, of course, that Walter's grasp of the concept "a point of view" was as shaky as my young man's of that of a fact.

My relations with the historians at Sussex were always slightly difficult, though individually I liked members of the Group very much. There seemed nothing much I could do for them. I thought I could do nineteenth-century British history, but that was already well supplied. There was, as at UEA, a two term Prelim which included a compulsory element of history, one of the options in which was a term studying Burckhardt. In my first term I taught ten hours of this a week. I did not mind. I liked the text, the students were well disposed and they were taught in individual tutorials, instead of East Anglia's classes of eighteen for four hours a week. Later I was able to do less History Prelims. But I never made a niche for myself in Sussex history. After the surge in student numbers from the late 'eighties, this became a problem, and I came under pressure from the historians to redeploy myself as - what? It might have to be something I had never taught and to which I was utterly unsuited, like the Industrial Revolution. It did not happen, but the menace of the History Teaching Convenor, as he was called, hung over my life until I escaped to Oxford.

This seemed to me a consequence of something I deplored anyway. As numbers grew, small classes came to be seen as uneconomical, but we shrank from the obvious remedy of a measure of compulsion to maintain the balance of the degree between early modern and modern (there was no medieval in any case) and between British and European. Pressure of student demand was all towards modern and British history, depressingly I thought. This in turn was likely to be reflected in faculty appointments, so that in effect we allowed the balance of the faculty and the future shape of the degree to be handed over to the generally timid and ill-informed choices made by eighteen-year olds at the start of their course.

In addition to teaching, in a limited way, for history, there was also a small group, five of us in all, teaching an independent syllabus, conducting our own admissions, and setting our own examination papers, in Intellectual History; it was at one time the only undergraduate degree of its kind in the country. It had been invented before I arrived by a philosopher, Michael Moran, who wanted to be able to teach his own choice of philosophers, including Schopenhauer, Dilthey and Bergson. Planning and revising the syllabus among the five of us was always fun; if our student numbers rose above ten or a dozen we thought we were doing well. The group included Peter Burke and Stefan. We enjoyed our autonomy, until, in the grim times, the government having decreed that small departments should be abolished, we had to be hidden in History in order to survive. The only nuisance of

independence was that the chairmanship rotated between only a small number. I used, when I was doing it, to compare it to being chauffeur of a Mini; it brought no prestige, but there were still an engine, a steering column, four wheels and so on to need maintenance and give trouble. But we were for the most part agreeably invisible. I do not think we abused this; we just concentrated on the things that mattered: teaching, discussing the syllabus, getting on with each other.

When I was chairman,which happened several times, I remember demonstrating the bureaucratic truth that what is recorded is real, even if it never happened, while what happened is not unless it is recorded. We virtually never had a meeting of all five of us. We were generally of like mind, and there were no serious disputes, though I remember a discussion of whether we should be called the History of Ideas or Intellectual History; I prefer the latter as referring to human activity. Any business usually concerned only two people, who sorted it out themselves. The Administration, however, insisted that there should be meetings, or rather, as I discovered, that there should be minutes of meetings, which had to be sent in at regular and specified intervals as the administrative calendar required. My Group was highly resistant to meetings, however brief. But it would not do to cancel too many for lack of business, which would draw attention to us. I decided that there should be minutes but not meetings. I sent them in regularly, even though no meeting had in fact taken place. I was particularly pleased with the artistic touch of including apologies for absence. I circulated them, of course, before sending them off. They were much admired.

Our best chairman I think though, in the sense of keeping the Administration at a distance, was an Irish classicist, James Shiel, a pupil at Oxford of E. R. Dodds. I once heard James dealing with a phone call, clearly from an administrator who was in some agitation because some form had not been returned. I was proud of James. Hearing him say "Ah! Now what bit of paper might that have been then?" I felt that our affairs were in a safe pair of hands. As a hobby he was a stone-carver, of the school of Eric Gill, which had flourished in the village of Ditchling, under the Downs, and still had a presence there. He designed for the Group our own letterhead, a rather fin de siecle picture of a mermaid with a legend beneath which James said was a Greek version of "Dolce fa niente" On one occasion he received, as chairman, a floridly rhetorical letter professing interest in enrolling in our course from an author who described himself as a Knight of Malta and who concluded with a Latin tag, I forget what. James replied entirely in Latin. I do not think he was popular in Sussex House, as the Administration was called locally; it was

an unpopularity we as a Group were content to share. We had perhaps an irritatingly exalted idea of our true function, which is better than not having one. I remember saying to James that I did not think that much papyrus had circulated in the "In" and "Out" trays in the Schools of Athens. I suggested to him that he might like to send his own memos in the form of engraved stone tablets, which would ensure brevity, and suggested some traditional formulae as suitable: *Et in Arcadia Ego*, for example, as a report on academic leave. I think he thought it would be too labour-intensive.

In other contexts, chairing an Exam Board and as Director of Graduate Studies, I worked harmoniously with individual administrators and found them both able and cooperative. I enjoyed exam board business. There was a considerable amount of case law, which I liked keeping up to date, while students' excuses for missing deadlines or an examination were often fascinatingly bizarre and lurid. The best, and briefest, excuse was provided by one in whose flat a murder had been committed the night before the examination. Student life in their letters seemed to assume the character of Villon's Latin Quarter. Sometimes life in Brighton provided an incongruous backdrop to our rather rare academic solemnities. Summer Graduation came to be held in the Brighton Centre, on the seafront, where Party conferences take place. Latterly the Chancellor has been Lord Attenborough, in proper recognition of his long association with the town, in *Brighton Rock* and *O What a Lovely War*. After bowing to him - on the last such occasion I attended three young women and one young man kissed him - the new graduates would naturally go with their proud relatives to be photographed in cap, hood and gown, with the sea as a background. In high summer the beach and promenade are crowded. I used to wonder how many of the photographs would be found inadvertently to contain an almost naked passer-by.

13
Sussex: Insurgency, Bureaucracy, and Huddled Masses

The student revolts were not only continuing but intensifying when I arrived in Sussex in 1969. Events in the universities were moving to a crescendo, and nowhere more than in Sussex, along with the LSE and Essex. The composition of the student body at LSE was exceptionally cosmopolitan and it was in the heart of the capital, but it was noticeable that Essex and Sussex were the most liberal and democratic of the new universities. The founding fathers had left us no sops to throw to militancy. In dealing with people who wanted confrontation but did not much care what it was about, for whom victories were essentially symbolic, this was a severe disadvantage. Nowhere, of course, did the storm rage louder than in the School of Social Sciences. Donald, as Dean, had at that point what must have been one of the two or three worst academic jobs in the country, and not all his colleagues were helpful. I remember thinking that one could categorise bodies by the kind of reason they found for rejecting something. In Downing, stuffed with lawyers, most desirable measures seemed to be contrary to the statutes. At East Anglia, where the School contained several textual editors and many linguists it was difficult to draft a regulation because of what often seemed the unattainability of a consensus on such matters as punctuation, subjunctives and future conditionals; to set up a working party was only to defer the discussion until it produced its proposals. The School of Social Sciences in the University of Sussex, by this test, was not surprisingly a blend of hardnosed scientism and 'sixties sentimentality; proposals and arguments seemed invariably to be either statistically meaningless or undemocratic.

I wish that I had kept some of the ill-spelled, ungrammatical flysheets - Laurence's headmaster would have been proud of them - that were

regularly pressed into one's hand as one came in to the campus in the morning. These often contained a "non-negotiable"'(a favourite word of the period) demand that the Vietnam war should be ended and international capitalism and imperialism liquidated by, say, next Thursday, or the group issuing the flysheet would occupy various university buildings to enforce its legitimate demands. Memory now supplies, of course, only isolated vignettes, like the time the Library doors were padlocked in support of some such demand and I congratulated the students guarding them on their symbolically appropriate action. Then there was the memorable occasion when we came in and found all the lavatories locked. I thought they had at last shown some intelligence and found our truly vulnerable spot. Within a couple of hours the university would be at a standstill, with Rowlandsonian scenes in the court and secretaries scurrying home in droves until the University could manage to bring in lorry-loads of Portaloos. It turned out to be the work of an officious and unimaginative porter, who had heard that an occupation was contemplated and that the buildings need to be made "secure". My own seminar was only once disrupted. I had, of course, had plenty of time to think of a response, so I looked up, trying to look like Jack Plumb looking up from a book when one had interrupted him, and said "Have you come to do the occupying?".

The Administration, rather cleverly, when a new building was opened for it, seemed to have left an empty room on the ground floor solely for the purpose of being occupied. There was even a coffee machine to keep the occupiers content. My own seminars were not always docile. I remember one which tiresomely insisted that the seminar should be preceded by a discussion whether, in the current state of the world, we were justified in having a seminar, rather than being on the streets demonstrating. The argument was the very silly Sartrean one that whatever one is not actively opposing one is supporting, so by having a seminar we were giving aid to warmongers and imperialists. This happened several times and what bored me about it was that while I had gone to some trouble to see that each seminar topic was different, the discussion about whether to have a seminar was always the same. There were times when the nineteen-seventies seemed like an old gramophone record with the needle stuck in a groove. I said that I would come half an hour late in future and then they could tell me their decision, It turned out, however, that my presence, although non-participant, was indispensable to the meta-academic discussion, so I had found a way of stopping it. Another class, of social scientists not

historians, initially put me to shame by objecting to my use of terms like "Renaissance", "Reformation", "Enlightenment". I was abashed, as I think any historian would be, and said hastily that of course these were merely labels, just provisional gestures of no real value until broken down, refined and qualified. They said no, I had not understood; they objected because it was all "bourgeois society" anyway. I said that there were certain minor nuances I wanted to continue to convey by these terms, and would it be all right provided they understood them to mean 'Bourgeois Society I, II and III.' They went into a huddle and announced that that would be acceptable. I thought of M3 in Christ's First Court, perhaps Milton's room, and Quentin on the other side of the fireplace reading his essay to me. O tempora O mores. But one must not, of course, ignore the genius loci. I find some difficulty in judging the pace of cultural change in the 'sixties and 'seventies because it coincided with my move from Cambridge. Certainly in Cambridge there had been one or two harbingers, like the pupil who, unthinkably a few years earlier, came to supervision in motorcycle leathers, with a gown over the top, and a crash helmet which he removed at the door. The leather was new, and creaked when he moved, drowning some of the essay he was reading out, so I had to ask him to keep as still as possible while he read.

Another Sussex vignette: on one of the day-long student strikes I was accosted as I came in by a picket. He said did I know it was a "day of action" (meaning inaction). Again I had had plenty of time to prepare. I said that pending a decision of my union on the taking of sympathetic action, I was helping to keep essential plant moving (Intellectual History). He seemed puzzled, and I like to think that, like my examiners in Economic History, if he found something odd in the content of what I had said he was impressed by my command of the authentic idiom. The nearest I came to an inadvertent role in these events was through a pupil I had interviewed and admitted. He made me feel like the people who had read *Mein Kampf* in the 'thirties but had not realized that Hitler meant what he said; he had given me fair warning, which I had not heeded. At the interview he had said he was an anarchist. I naturally asked him what he meant. He said he was against "structures". I, displaying "repressive tolerance" – another catchphrase of the period – said I supposed he would be, as an anarchist. Eighteen months later he became president of the Students' Union. Six months after that he was sent down, the only student to be so during the disturbances, pursued by a number of writs for criminal damage. It seemed that what he meant by structures included things like doors and windows, to which, at the head

of a mob, he had proved a formidable enemy. I had not taken him literally enough.

I felt throughout this period that I had experienced an unwelcome regression. When I went from school to university it seemed that I had left a society in which low-level violence was endemic for one in which it was exceptional: the boat club on the rampage, and one kept out of the way. Now again it seemed to be part of a way of life and sometimes even to be a deciding factor. The attitude of the police was disillusioning. They were not interested in what happened on private property until after someone had been hurt. Government also was unhelpful. It would sometimes undoubtedly have been salutary for universities to close for the rest of a term, but we were given a strong sense that, far from our being supported in our firm action, this would be interpreted as a sign that we were unable to keep our house in order, and we would probably suffer financial penalties as well as loss of reputation. We were therefore condemned to play games, making attempts at conciliation with little or nothing to bargain with.

Mention of the role of government leads on to the next phase of our troubles, this time at the hands of the Thatcher government from the early 'eighties, which left a legacy which continues. It has been marked by greatly increased pressure from government and from the research councils doing its bidding, and implemented locally by university administrations, towards hyper-accountability, with form-filling of every kind on an almost Habsburg or Soviet scale as a way of life. The savage financial cuts of the early 'eighties and then the massive and rapid increase in student numbers, accompanied by the fashionability of what is supposed to be a "business culture", have decisively tilted the balance within universities between Administration and Faculty. At one time the former was habitually regarded by the latter, though I dare say not by itself, as auxiliary to the purpose of universities, which was teaching and research, mainly organized by academic self-government. Now Administrations have become to a large extent the Management in firms whose workforce is the Faculty. The assumption, stemming from government, that no one can be trusted to do anything unless they have said so many times in triplicate and in an approved jargon, becomes, as historians know as well as anyone, self-defeating, because the mechanisms of surveillance become a clog on the activity they are supposed to ensure. This is a truth well known to all students of totalitarian societies; it is highly odd that it should have become exemplified in educational strongholds of the "free world", promoted by aggressive free-marketeers posing as liberals, just when totalitarianism

was being dismantled in its former heartlands in Central Europe.

Bureaucracy, powerful as it is, has, of course, difficulty in distinguishing between form and substance, which makes it vulnerable if one is prepared to parody its formulae while doing something else, so that initiative, flexibility and intelligent improvisation can sometimes continue to exist in un-regarded corners of the system, protected by an outward conformity. It is, however, very time and energy consuming. Academics are in any case unhappy with this because they are on the whole not cynical; they prefer to be truthful and lucid. A particularly notorious form from a research council required us to distinguish between the "aims" and "objectives" of a taught course. Since all statements of the objectives - or possibly the aims - of open-ended teaching as distinct from skills-instruction, which is presumably the model, is bound to be almost vacuous, all that matters in the answer is that it shall be the right kind of nonsense. Truth is irrelevant. Nothing practical turns on it; it is simply form filling as an art, for its own sake. I took comfort from reading the doyen of Victorian constitutional historians, Bishop Stubbs. According to Stubbs, English "freedom", in the sense of the possibility of spontaneous initiative, survived the Norman Conquest at the humblest and most obscure levels of local self-government, because they were beneath the notice of the Norman lawyers and officials who were attempting to impose a system. But he does not mention the importance of camouflage. Perhaps the use of the Saxon vernacular was enough.

I became in a small way part of the machinery when I became Director of Graduate Studies. It was my chief task, which I could not carry out because there were no effective sanctions, to ensure that research students submitted their theses within a required time. Whether they were successful or not was not relevant; completion according to the timetable was what mattered. Since I could not make this happen, all I could do was to ensure that the right memos were sent, the right (empty) warnings issued at the right intervals. I had not actually done anything, but I had been seen to be doing it. I could also grant intermissions on medical grounds to those who clearly were unlikely to make the deadline; it was in our interest to be as permissive about the grounds as possible. This made, so far as I could see, no substantial difference to anyone's behaviour, but it kept the record looking better. Hypocrisy applies at both ends of the bureaucratic chain, to the enforcer as well as the supposedly enforced. But I did not find it congenial. The building in which the graduate offices were housed was virtually the only tower block. I came to think of it as "the Dark Tower".

Financial stringency greatly increased the power of bureaucracy; that was presumably its main point, since it was difficult to see any other. The cuts in university funding by the Thatcher government were very severe, and Sussex fared twice as badly as most: a cut of over twenty per cent in a year is severe. As a new institution, with no endowments, it was crucially dependent on government funding for the élan which had marked its early years, "Fight the Cuts" (how?) became a slogan. Student revolts, which had been subsiding, were given a new lease of life by it, though fighting the cuts seemed locally to mean fighting the university which was suffering them. The steward of higher education under Mrs Thatcher was initially Sir Keith Joseph, a Fellow of All Souls. I did not meet him, though there were several other ministers about when I was there, but after his death I suggested that a room in College should be set aside and designated as the Keith Joseph Memorial Library, because no books would be kept in it; this was, I am afraid, regarded as in poor taste.

In Sussex some Faculty had played a part in the student disturbances that was at least equivocal. They were the same as those who now said that we should not "recognise" the cuts. I asked what this meant. A number of posts had been advertised and it was now apparent that we did not have the money for them. Not recognizing the cuts apparently included not withdrawing the advertisements. I remember asking who was volunteering to tell the new appointees when they arrived that they were not going to be paid a salary. This was thought poor-spirited. The effect of sudden cuts like those we were experiencing is rather like that of a foreign invasion: the natives divide into collaborators and *resistants*. I was a collaborator, on the usual grounds that it was better that we should implement the cuts than have some gauleiter imposed on us to do it. The *resistants* preferred the idea of a heroic if doomed last stand by the Sons of Liberty. The government should be forced to reveal its full wickedness by being obliged to clear the Odessa steps, perambulator and all. Pressed, they would admit that this meant the University going bankrupt. After this the scenario seemed to become vague. Would a white-faced civil servant interrupt a Cabinet meeting? "Dreadful news, Prime Minister; the University of Sussex has gone bankrupt". On this she would see the error of her ways and realize that something must be done. Alternatively it would be "The Workers" who would rise up and cause mayhem in the streets until the government agreed to reconsider funding for the universities.

I did not find this convincing, but clearly apocalyptic visions could provide consolation for present suffering. All or nothing. The same

attitude was apparent in our rather anguished discussions of the "league tables"' produced periodically showing the proportion of each university's graduates still unemployed within a year of graduation. Sussex always did badly in these. The *resistants*' explanation was that we had effectually unfitted them for work in "bourgeois society" (my seminar, made discriminating by my instruction, would have said "Mark III"). My own was that it was because Brighton is a nice place to live and a lot of former students preferred to stay there without a job than to move somewhere less attractive to get one. My grounds for my view were partly observations conducted among my daughter's friends which had given me an insight into the attitudes of the underclass. They were educative in other ways too. I remember once picking Francesca up in the car outside the Royal Pavilion. She had a companion, whose appearance I found very reassuring. Francesca was then in her purple hair and green eye-shadow period, or it may have been the other way round. The companion was a pretty, rather feminine and decidedly wholesome looking girl of about fifteen, with a light frock, only discreet make-up and freckles. She looked like Doris Day's younger sister. Francesca said "You can give Gareth a lift too, can't you?" I looked at Gareth. Doris Day's younger sister looked back at me. I said "Right. Hullo ... Gareth". Brighton had won another victory over Bramdean and Exeter School.

I have spoken as though, as a collaborator, I was invariably docile. Psychologically this was not so; I was outraged. This came out, rather unfortunately, at a dinner party given by Larry Siedentop, where I sat next to George Walden, then the Minister for Higher Education. He said, tactlessly I still think, that I had presumably been pleased by the latest round of university funding, in which Sussex had been treated no worse than the average. I said that I was not so far gone in servility as to express gratitude for having been assaulted less brutally than I might have expected. Fair enough. But then I swore at him. I wish I had not done that. He took it, I have to say, well, though we did not speak again, which I was glad of because he had irritated me intensely. I felt obliged to write him a subsequent short note of apology, and received a courteous reply. Finally there was to be the sudden, rapid increase in student numbers, with little or no extra provision. This was an improvement on the cuts, because it was at least a policy, which we could try to implement, rather than just passive suffering. "Old" Sussex soon became a memory. Unfortunately we drifted into the new situation rather than planned for it, retaining old systems even though the new situation had made them irrelevant or unworkable. Because Sussex had

been founded so recently and in a spirit of self-conscious innovation, it was a feature of it in the 'eighties and 'nineties that the most educationally and politically radical members of Faculty were the most locally conservative. I heard from radical colleagues praises of our ancient constitution that Edmund Burke would have regarded as unrealistically inflexible. The founding fathers had bequeathed to us a sacred trust, "the Sussex way". I came to dread the phrase. In an ideal or even just an earlier world by all means, but also in a pig's eye.

So we drifted. Small tutorials became, with no acknowledgement or rethinking, substantial classes. Old customs, particularly of a pastoral kind, were retained beyond their viable life. It was, as at Oxford and Cambridge, the practice to send in detailed reports at the end of term on students' performances and intellectual characteristics. Some of these could be very precise and subtle. With a seminar of a dozen, some of whom remained wholly silent, I found it difficult after nine weeks even to match the names and faces of the more anonymous. Reports in some cases became burdensome exercises in padding and platitude: more hypocrisy, but here avoidable if we had been willing to acknowledge it. I learnt not to write, as I was inclined to do, "satisfactory attendance and written work"; it left an embarrassingly large space and left the student's unfortunate personal tutor at their end of term meeting nothing to read out if asked. I would write redundant sentences, which filled the box and looked conscientious: "Susan is a quiet student who has attended classes regularly and produced acceptable written work without contributing very much to classroom discussion (and I presume she must have been one of the three silent ones at the end of the table but what the hell does it matter since I am going to say the same, in different words, about all of them). Known, no doubt, to God, but not to me". The only real solution, which has perhaps now been applied, was more lectures, and preferably some help with marking, as in the United States, from graduate students, but that was not the Sussex way either. We were expected to do everything, and also produce more research, where again quality was irrelevant; productivity was what mattered.

Towards the end of the 'eighties I felt that my life was in a cul-de-sac. At the University we were all growing old together. The financial cuts had been a blight in many ways. They had meant there were few new appointments to enliven us or opportunities to find a new challenge elsewhere, since other universities were suffering the same constraints. One welcome new addition had been the New Testament scholar John Drury, who was very happy to return to academic life after a Canonry at Norwich, but who became almost immediately a victim of the

government's decree that small departments must be closed, which included Religious Studies at Sussex in which he was located. He found a congenial new position as Dean of King's Chapel in Cambridge, which proved a step to the Deanery of Christ Church Oxford, but for us it was nothing but loss, and it was typical. The programme of accelerated retirements to save money meant, inevitably, that that they were taken by colleagues whose reputations allowed them to continue their careers elsewhere or who had an intense scholarly life they wished to dedicate themselves to: these were precisely those we least wanted to lose, while those with no alternatives clung on. This was called, in the rhetoric of the time, producing a "leaner and fitter" system; actually it simply meant the appearance of random holes in the teaching capability of the faculty. Those who were left knew each other's intellectual positions all too well. I was flirted with in these years by Harvard and Princeton, which led to nothing but agreeable trips for discussions, through which I saw Boston Common in the Fall and Princeton's great magnolias. I later became thankful that neither had tempted me with an offer, because of an event at the end of the decade that transformed our lives: the birth of our first grandson. If we had gone to the States we should have missed much of his childhood, of which in fact we saw a great deal, because they lived nearby and Francesca's marriage had broken up. It was almost like having a son of our own again. I feel fortunate to have been a young grandfather, being only fifty-four when he was born. I could do energetic things with him which had become beyond me when his considerably younger brother Ryan was of an age to be played with, which I regret, though there was still chess, at which he is better than I am. Julian and I had a (very simple) wrestling game that I had played with my father, who told me he had learnt it from his grandfather, so it has spanned five generations at least. We also discovered a common taste for making up rhymes and limericks, and cannot now remember who contributed what. He is, in a sense, the begetter of this memoir, since I was stimulated to begin it by his presence, which gave me a renewed sense of connection with my own childhood and a desire to recreate it as far as I could. Julian and I walked by the sea as my grandfather and I had walked to Tremarton and Forder.

My own parents had come to live in an old peoples' home in Brighton, and using the car to get them out, with Julian, seemed a worthwhile thing to be doing; they both died in Oxford in 2004, with characteristic stoicism and a desire not to be a nuisance, within six months of each other; they had celebrated their seventieth wedding anniversary the previous year. On one of our outings to the seafront in

Hove, my father, then eighty five, very sportingly offered to play football with Julian while my mother and I had coffee at an outdoor cafe. He was apparently not competitive enough. As we sat there we heard a reproachful cry: "Great-grandad you're not trying". I remembered Aunt Bess, at the same age, playing blow-football with me in Grendon Lodge in 1940.

I wrote an epilogue to the draft of this memoir then, up to the end of my schooldays, which shows that I thought of my future as essentially fixed, and expected to die in Hove, preferably, like Thomas Mann's Aschenbach, though without his homoerotic obsession, in a deckchair facing the sea. Not bad if one could manage it. Actually there was to be another large and unexpected change, as well as some diversions to be recounted here shortly.

14
Sussex: Foreign Escapades

I have so far said nothing about the academic visits which, brief or prolonged, are one of the bonuses of academic life. My first trip of this kind had been some lectures at the Institut Britannique in Paris, which was in the Place des Invalides, so that I walked there each morning along the Seine and across the Pont Alexandre. I should mention here, in order to pay tribute, the conferences sponsored by the Liberty Fund which provide admirably open-ended and wide-ranging discussions with scholars from all over the world. In the autumn of 1980 I went for four months to Berkeley, California, thanks to my friend Sheldon Rothblatt, who arranged it and to whom I am lastingly indebted and grateful. I taught his course while he was on leave; I was also attached as a Fellow to the Institute for Studies in Higher Education, which, being small, provided an agreeable social focus. It was my first visit to the US Later I was to have shorter spells in Princeton and Harvard, and, by attending conferences, to see, at least briefly, Chicago, Oklahoma and Savannah, Georgia. Through Diane's brother Damien, who is a biochemist, and who had gone to live in Philadelphia, we were able to take our elder grandson Julian to Baltimore, the Shenandoah Valley and Tennessee. I was to teach another semester in Berkeley at the end of the 'eighties. The first time we took the children with us. It was, of course, a revelation, as it has been to many British academics. To step outside the Sather Gate from the campus into Bancroft Avenue and look down to Alcatraz in the blue water of the Bay, with Mount Tamalpais beyond, or to drive in the evening into the Berkeley Hills to see the astonishing sunsets behind the Golden Gate Bridge, was indeed to feel out of one's rut. San Francisco across the Bay was of course another seduction, and the children loved, in particular, the tourist attractions of Chinatown and Fisherman's Wharf. Sometimes, from Berkeley, the city seems like a Valhalla, with the skyscrapers rising out of the fog. We also took my

mother-in-law. Predictably she took to the city and to Berkeley and to the drive down the coast to Monterey and Carmel. Then we took her to Yosemite, which, being high, has quite a different climate. She was not very responsive to sublime landscape and detested wintry weather, which she always associated with the North of England from which she had gladly emigrated. I remember her sitting in our hired cabin looking disapprovingly at the large snowflakes falling on to the valley floor, with raccoons playing among the trees; she said it reminded her of South Shields. I like best to remember her sitting in the revolving rooftop bar of the Hyatt in San Francisco, drinking an elaborate cocktail, with a paper parasol, through a straw, looking down at the lights of the city and at those of Berkeley and Oakland across the Bay, and wearing an expression of complete ecstasy.

Teaching at Berkeley was another kind of revelation. I had one class of over a hundred; it was not only lectures; there were plenty of questions and exchanges but it was an enormous relief to realise that I was not held responsible for their individual progress or lack of it, or expected to remember their names or worry if they dropped out; in that case they would just not get a credit for the course. I certainly was not expected to write sensitive profiles of them at the end of it. It troubled me at first that I might never get to know any of them but this was a misplaced fear. They were self-selective, even topographically. The front two rows always attended, asked questions, often walked back with me to my office afterwards and came to see me there to discuss their papers (and not only to dispute grades, of which there was relatively little). I got to know them better than some of my Sussex classes. They took me out for a drink after the last session. The middle of the lecture theatre housed solid citizens. They came, took notes, wrote their papers and got their credits. They never, or very seldom, asked anything. The back contained a shifting Lumpenproletariat. No one expected me to know them or do anything other than mark their papers, with ample assistance from my very able research student Teaching Assistant. If they submitted them they got a credit with a modest grade; if not they did not. Successful paternalism, I reflected, depends on people being willing to be filial and to be noticed.

I found American or at any rate Californian students, as many British academics have found them, more open and curious than English ones on the whole. The latter's historical imaginations, in the 'seventies and 'eighties, seemed too depressingly circumscribed not only by their time but also by their resentful perceptions of social class; they were sometimes resistant to, say, Jane Austen, because her characters were

drawn from the gentry, whose position they often exaggerated; much of English history too seemed regrettably to have been made by nobs. I had the impression that for American students English society was so exotic that they could approach it with the same dispassionateness as if they were looking at Trobriand islanders. They seemed ready, in principle, to be interested in anything. I remember one student who in appearance was an archetype of the Californian counter-culture, complete with dreadlocks. He had previously done a course on Late Antiquity with the very distinguished English historian Peter Brown. I was curious as to how these two very different characters could have got on, and asked him about it. His face lit up "Boy, those Frankish bishops were interesting", he said. A tribute to Peter Brown, of course, but also surely to him.

In the summer - but actually, alas! - winter of 1983 we went to Australia for four months. I had known relatively few Australians. There had been a friendly Catholic priest whom I taught at Downing called Edmund Campion, always known as Ed. He would sometime ring me up with query about an essay, always ringing off with "Thanks Doc". At Sussex there had been several agreeable and able graduate students, with one of whom, Barbara Caine, we stayed in Sydney. I had met a middle-aged Australian in the rather exotic surroundings of a Lambeth Palace garden party, in the mid-sixties, given for participants in the Anglo-American Historical Conference. My Australian looked like a boxer ruined by alcohol. He had a cauliflower ear and a face which was a sequence of deepening reds, from eyes to cheeks and cheeks to nose, and at three in the afternoon he was swaying gently, though the archbishop, as far as I had been able to discover, had maintained the traditional association between English Christianity and tea. I was told that he was the Australian Cultural Attaché. For all I know this was a prejudiced slander on the well-conducted public servant who actually held that post. Or was he - could it have been that I had met the original of Sir Les Patterson? I have to leave this to experts in Australian cultural history.

On the way to Australia we stopped in Bali. It is as beautiful as its reputation claims but I was bothered by several things. I came to long for a cool fresh breeze; breathing seemed like inhaling the steam from a Christmas. pudding, clove-infused cigarettes being partly responsible. I deplored the tendency to hypertrophy in reptiles; one of the gekko lizards, quite harmless but looking like an aspirant dinosaur, almost frightened Francesca into a fit by stretching its two foot or more along the wall of the bathroom in our wooden chalet with a coconut matting roof. I was troubled by its smaller siblings that wandered around inside

the roof above one's head as one lay in bed, and was woken each morning by the clatter of jungle noises outside. Obviously I would never have had the makings of an anthropologist. We made a visit to a temple, Hindu but with a Balinese eclecticism. Evidence of animistic beliefs was the cup cakes of rice or flowers left in some profusion by the roadside; one had to be rather careful not to tread on them. Animism and polytheism fit the facts of life much better than monotheism; the gods are not consistently benevolent or malign but are creatures of mood. The part of Bali we were in, the quiet Sanur beach and not the noisy and populous Kuta, seemed to be run entirely by family networks, which included taxi drivers and shop owners. To take a taxi did not ensure being taken to one's requested destination but often included an unsolicited visit to a shop belonging to a cousin en route, or not even en route. To take one or to enter a shop seemed to make one temporarily a piece of family property. When at the airport as we left I saw a man in a peaked cap stamping our passports I realized this was the first time for five days I had seen evidence of the State. He was not doing anything useful but simply performing a ritual, but he was a symbol. I decided, not very originally, that polytheism fitted well a society of overlapping family networks while monotheism and the State were two sides of the same coin, both stamped "sovereignty". After this exoticism the snack bar at Sydney airport seemed like a fragment of old England: the stout ladies behind the counter, the pink and green iced sponge cakes under sweating plastic domes, and customers reading Rupert Murdoch's newspapers. Later, of course, we discovered some of the amenities of Sydney, including the iron lacework balconies and, my favourite experience, sitting in the foyer of the opera for the price of a cup of coffee, looking at the Harbour while the rehearsal in the auditorium was piped through as wonderful sounds. Unfortunately we did not manage to get to a performance. What we did go to was the most successful updated Shakespearean production I have ever seen, of *As You Like It.* Rosalind and Celia were 1920's hiking girls with tiny white ankle socks and bobbed hair; Charles the wrestler was an all-Australian okker, and Jacques the kind of Anglophile Australian Australians particularly dislike, with a fastidious disdain for his fellow forest dwellers. Orlando was a brainless athlete, the shepherds were, of course, sheep-shearers, and the bad duke was clearly Rupert Murdoch in a fur collar with an entourage of courtiers with briefcases; his implausible conversion was made more acceptable by being announced through a 'twenties wireless set instead of by an embarrassed messenger. It was witty and fitted wonderfully well. The other piece of Australian wit I enjoyed most was a graffito in

the Gents in the Captain Cook Park in Canberra. Every development in Canberra was identified as the next stage of the National Capital Development Plan (NCDP). On the wall of the Gents was a tiny circle in pencil and underneath in equally small letters "NCDP site of proposed coat-hook".

I was attached in Canberra to the History of Ideas Unit of the Research School of Social Sciences. I have already spoken of the imperfect academic sympathy between myself and the Director, and I hasten to say that there were other members of the Unit with whom I got on very well, including my eventual successor at Sussex, Knud Haakonssen. Canberra is a planned town, a government company town. Among the academics there seemed to be an understandable wistfulness for Sydney, where I gave a lecture, as I also did in Melbourne and Geelong. We were near the centre, Civic, but in Canberra the centre seemed indistinguishable from the suburbs: just one more suburb, centrally placed. I told Diane on one or two evenings that I was going downtown to see the nightlife by watching the janitor from the Ministry of Agriculture take his dog for a walk; it may not have been Agriculture. We were in Turner, a suburb on the edge of Civic. Suburbs in Canberra were named, with a few aboriginal exceptions, after relatively eminent politicians, and roads after the less eminent. It occurred to me that this could add an extra dimension to the vocabulary of political abuse. I imagined a veteran member saying to a colleague after a nervous maiden speech "He doesn't have the makings of a cul-de-sac in Narrabunda, does he?" Not that, when I attended a session of Parliament, it seemed that the members needed any assistance with abuse, which was inventive enough already. While I was there someone called the Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, a "boudoir bandicoot". I forget if this was ruled un-parliamentary.

Canberrra, being quite high, has a winter - we had three in a row that year - without snow but with morning frost. My abiding visual memory is of the brilliantly coloured parrots on frosty grass, moving dabs of red on white, like a Matisse made into a mobile. They made exactly the noise one would expect from low-slung creatures moving about on frosty grass: "oo ..oo ... ooh!" Three of the larger kind, in pastel shades of pink and grey, sat regularly on the balcony of my room in the Research School, looking in at me. The office belonged to the philosopher, John Passmore, who was on leave, and I wondered if he fed them. After a while they made me self-conscious and I began to make up dialogue for them: "Who is he?", "Pom historian", "Doesn't work as hard as Passmore, does he?"

My next trip, the following year, was a British Council sponsored lecture tour of Austria, organized by my Norwich friend and colleague Franz Kuna, with whom I had taught a course, in which, I remember, he introduced me to the work of Hoffmansthal. I stayed part of the time with him in Klagenfurt and he drove me one day through the mountains to Ljubljana in Slovenia, then, just, in the Eastern Bloc. It was all very enjoyable. Austria seemed to be trying to parody itself when my host in Graz turned out to be called Professor Dr Stanzel and that in Salzburg Professor Dr Sturzl. The former took me to the opera, a comic one I did not know by Donizetti, which contained a very funny parody of opera seria entitled Ramulus and Daris. In Vienna I received proof I hardly needed that snobbery is invincible, in me at any rate. My Pension, in Grillparzer Strasse - I remember the name because we had read a play by Grillparzer at school- was on the sixth floor of an old building and the central, iron lift was out of order. I was out of condition and as I reached the top of the many stone steps I had a momentary fainting fit. I thought I was quite probably going to die. I remember that even in extremis, as I thought, it passed through my mind that it would look better to have died in Vienna than in Hove.

Other trips included Israel, as Visiting Professor at the Ben Gurion University of the Negev, with plenty of opportunities for tourism in Jerusalem, Galilee and Tel Aviv and bathing in the Dead Sea. There were also lectures in Freiburg im Breisgau, and summer schools in Bologna and Vancouver. In Bologna, as well as teaching a summer school, I received an honorary degree, which involved wearing a stove pipe hat and a good deal of purple satin and making a speech which had at least to begin in Italian: "Magnifico Rettore, Chiarissimi Professori ... " The walls of the hall were covered with the coats of arms of the Magnificent Rector's predecessors. I turned the speech into a reflection on the contrast between the thousandth anniversary of the University of Bologna and the twenty-fifth of the University of Sussex. In Vancouver I was given an office overlooking the bay. I found that if I stayed still at my desk it took a super-tanker an average of twelve minutes to progress from one side of my window to the other. That, and the constantly changing play of light on the water and the snow-topped mountains opposite were a considerable distraction.

The highlight of the early 'nineties was a three-week tour of Japan, funded by the Japan Foundation, which proved a most generous and considerate host, during which I gave lectures and papers in Tokyo and Kyoto. Our hosts - Diane accompanied me - were immensely thoughtful and hospitable, laying on chauffeur-driven trips to the foothills of

Mount Fuji and to the great temple complex at Nara where the earliest emperors are buried in big grass mounds, and to Kabuki and puppet theatre performances. The temples, and in Kyoto the wooden side streets, and a monastery made mysterious by mountain mist and a bamboo forest eerily creaking in the breeze, made a profound impression. The aesthetic experience was so novel and striking that it was almost like acquiring an extra sense. The temples impressed me quite as much as the great mosques in Istanbul seen on holiday the previous year, but they were much further outside my previous range of experience. It was a bonus that the Japanese maples were out and coated the temple and palace gardens with wonderful tones of red and copper. Our two main guides in the respective cities both defied stereotyping. My academic host in Tokyo, surrounded by politeness, was agreeably forthright and even sardonic. I learned that he had been a leading student radical; the effects in his case seemed entirely beneficial. In Kyoto Mrs Sugai was a large, well-built woman who towered over Diane and adopted towards her a touching and tactful protectiveness, seeing that she was not overtired. She had a robust sense of humour and, in a land of feminine tittering, what can only be described as a hearty laugh. We both liked her very much.

I learnt to distinguish between popular Buddhist, red and gold and jolly, almost like a fairground and the black and white timbered austerity of Zen Buddhist and Shinto, calm and conducive to meditation. I liked both; the contrast reminded me of that between popular and monastic Catholicism. In the former there were stands of wooden tablets on which, after making an offering, one could write a petition. A few were in English. One said touchingly, "may I become a better teacher of English". I was then Director of Graduate Studies. I rather hoped to find one "May I be accepted for graduate study at the University of Sussex", which it would have been impossible not to annotate "Done". In Nara there was a fundraising arrangement by which one could for a fee have one's visit to each temple commemorated in a booklet to take away by a monk skilled in calligraphy. Wanting to contribute, I bought one. At the last temple I was the last client and the afternoon was getting dim; the temple was lit only by a red sanctuary light, as we should call it. The monk was listening on a portable radio, as he worked, to what sounded like a chat show, with the volume low. There was a woman in front of me kneeling on the temple steps, not, I think, in devotion but simply as the Japanese way of waiting, so I did the same. Diane, who was not participating, looked disapproving. I did ask myself what I was doing kneeling in a dimly lit Buddhist temple in front of a monk who was

listening to a chat show. In Kyoto we went to a tea ceremony, a cut down version lasting little more than an hour, though we were the only westerners, the rest of the group of around twenty being all Japanese. As we knelt in a circle, as though for prayers, someone said, presumably for our benefit, because it was in English, "The tea lady is coming". A vision of a stout form in a white overall and hair-curlers, wheeling in a vast tea urn on a metal trolley, flooded into my mind. The vision that actually materialized, of course, was one of teetering, painted and kimonoed loveliness, who, accompanied by two similar acolytes, took tiny steps towards us before kneeling in front of each of us in turn to pour green frothy tea into dainty porcelain bowls. Before drinking one bowed to each of one's neighbours, as with drinking from a loving cup at a college feast, though one did not pass on the vessel - a custom which has become unpopular in college since the advent of AIDS.

Our stay in Kyoto, fascinating as it was, was haunted for me by an odd fear. On arrival we had been met, as usual, by a student. He was tiny. Diane can pack a suitcase that would daunt Hercules, and there were two, which he insisted on seizing. I could not bear to watch him dragging them along the platform. He must get a hernia, at the very least. I tried to grab one but he resisted. I was afraid that if I succeeded he would be shamed and would have to commit hara kiri. Since it seemed his bowels were destined to come out either way I decided to let him die honourably, but I dreaded his reappearance at the hotel when we left. I do not know if he was incapacitated, but what turned up, to my relief, was a stalwart young man who told us, in conversation, that in Australia he had cycled the two thousand miles from Darwin to Sydney. He was debonair as well as athletic and I began to see him, in unhappier times, as a possible kamikaze pilot. He told us his favourite book was *Winnie the Pooh*, and I wondered if any of them had been fans of A. A. Milne; perhaps the translation history makes this impossible. He also said he had a great desire, so far unfulfilled, to eat chips; I am sure he has satisfied it since. He asked for a description of them; I was inclined in return to inquire about the "sea slugs" which I had seen on, surprisingly to us, a breakfast menu. Were they perhaps the indefinable purple things, like whelks, which I had seen carried to tables? My chief misadventure with Japanese food occurred when I drank the table decoration. It was a colourless liquid in a tiny glass which I had taken for sake. It was surprisingly nasty, so it cannot have been just water. When I looked closely I saw it contained a small blue flower. I wondered if I should start sprouting m some way.

On the way back we stayed in Hong Kong; it was, of course, before

the handover, though it seemed to me an entirely Chinese city in a way that made the Anglo-Scottish street names seem bizarre. The rapid cultural transition from Japan was interesting in several ways. Tokyo airport, like everything in Japan, had seemed a model of orderliness, just as, in the subway in rush hour, immense numbers of people seemed to avoid ever jostling each other as though infallibly guided by an inner radar. Hong Kong airport reminded me of Naples, with much jostling, shouting and garlic. Impressions of Hong Kong, like those in Japan, are recorded in a diary:

"Found flying into Hong Kong on the way over exciting: plane's wings almost brushing the mountains and the high buildings climbing their sides. Tremendous sense of concentration, like a sub-tropical Manhattan ringed by mountains. This time there was a thick mist. Mountains seemed almost unbelievably close to the city on the taxi ride from the airport. Dramatic squalor: high-rise blocks. Some spanking new but many so old they look derelict and it would be hard to believe them inhabited but for festoons of washing as evidence of countless families. Many with metal grilles across windows look like rows of birdcages. Many cultivated plants make buildings seem to sprout vegetation, as in a Piranesi. Forecourt of our hotel garnished with a big Sikh as decorative as a maharajah. Realise I am back in a land of tipping and do quick sums. One of the things so restful about Japan was not to have to. Standard of courtesy by Chinese reception staff in the hotel Excelsior much below Japanese. From our window a narrow view of the harbour between buildings. Wander out. People everywhere; vast number of people. Saturday night. Narrow shopping streets, very lively, very dirty; high buildings rising from shop level. Numerous narrow, dark alleyways and doorways in which Chinese sit, eat, cook, stack merchandise and appear to conduct a variety of mostly insanitary trades. Splendid garishly painted buses. Looks, sounds, feels and smells like a Third World city. Ironic that the street names are so imperially Scottish in this very foreign place: Lockhart, Gordon, then Hennessy. Hardly see a western face. Feel pressured by the number of people. Need drink. Hotel bar on third floor, overlooking the harbour. Latter deceptive, since long and narrow like a wide river. The opposite bank is the mainland. Immediately below us is the noonday gun referred to by Noel Coward. And a small harbour with a breakwater known as the typhoon shelter. To the left the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club, which sounds more impressive than it looks. Water very green. Covered sampans jostle with expensive yachts, while larger ships pass up and down further out. We sit in window and drink cocktails, looking down at the sampans.

Caricature scene: the rich looking down on the poor. Lights come on gradually as mist gives way to darkness. Music plays nineteen-thirties tunes. Realise that the last two hours is the first time for two weeks that I have seen poor people; where do the Japanese put them? There one can be glad not to see them; here one can only be very glad not to be poor oneself. Undeniably part of the excitement of the place is the sense that in the blocks between the hotel and the mountains are tens of thousands of people leading lives unimaginable to me: like the jungle noises in Bali, testimony to vast amounts of vivid, opaque life. Walk for half an hour after supper; Diane too tired. Balmy, sub-tropical night covers squalor, apart from smells. Edge of Wan Chai, the entertainment district. Dazzlingly lit, narrow streets, teeming with people, strolling, chatting, shopping, cooking, eating. Just above street level, tiny rabbit warrens of dwellings climb up countless stories. Deprivation, but what life at the bottom of the greasy stairway. Exhilarating but also claustrophobic. Must be worse in hot season. Back to hotel and write this in bed, drinking vodka with lots of ice from minibar. Have had little alcohol in Japan so feel owed.

Breakfast overlooking the harbour. Decide to take subway to Central district - we are in Causeway - with a view to getting ferry. Have to remember we want the Sheung Wa not the Ch en Wa end of the line. Central reminded us both of Embarcadero in San Francisco. Piers like Circular Quay at Sydney but nicer. Lovely day. Take ferry to Kowloon. Notice on the ferry requests no spitting. Set foot on Chinese mainland (the airport is there too, of course.) Lot of people in China so return immediately. Decide to get bus to Aberdeen, the fishing harbour on the other side of the island, over the mountain. British tennis court country up there. At Aberdeen poor person in a sampan offers to take us around the harbour to look at poor people living on sampans. Floating village. Contrast of high rises and families cooking on sampans photogenically irresistible. Back later in canal book boat trip around main harbour. Pier area now amazingly crowded. Little encampments everywhere, like nomads. Lots of Chinese together sound like an aviary, though we are told some are Phillipino workers. In the harbour pass RN station, HMS Tamar. Odd to find this name so familiar from my childhood. Usual inane boat commentary. Successful day on the whole, though rather battered from encounter with what seems like a substantial part of the world's Chinese population. Hotel like an ocean liner surrounded by a vast, choppy sea of people. Have to wait an hour for transport to the airport so go to bar again and have cocktails and look at the lights while bar pipes schmaltzy music and Chinese girl in a long slit skirt flits about

with drinks. Transport efficient. Writing this on plane. Very glad to have been here and not altogether sorry to be leaving. And so, as it were, to bed."

It had been a change from Graduate Studies and sitting in the Dark Tower writing letters of ineffectual admonition to dilatory research students and their supervisors to please the Research Councils and the government. It was with that, as it turned out, that my Sussex career concluded, which had begun a quarter of a century before with the laying on of hands by Asa, himself then a fledgling Vice-Chancellor. The children had grown up and we had a talkative grandson; my mother-in-law had lived and died with us, and my parents lived now in an old people's home in Brighton. The lights had gone out on the West Pier and the fountain in the Steyne no longer played music, or even, for the moment, water. I had already begun to count the years to retirement when I had a call from Bernard Williams, who was one of the electors to the new Oxford chair of European Thought, on behalf of the committee. Would I like it? I had not applied, thinking myself not European enough. I already knew Oxford, and was due to go soon to a Visiting Fellowship for two terms at All Souls College. After reflection I accepted. I thought at that point we might return to Sussex after I retired. I said to Diane, "Well, at all events it will have been an adventure". But before going on to it I need to record my first academic visit to Oxford, eight years before.

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Oxford

At the beginning of the Michaelmas Term 1986, carrying a suitcase, I pushed open the door of Beechwood House, the All Souls annexe at Iffley, two miles from the main College in the High Street. I was to spend the term as a visitor at All Souls while giving the Carlyle Lectures in Political Thought in the Schools. So far I had spoken to no one but the porter in the High street who had given me my keys. Having got the door open I dragged my case inside. From a door in the hall emerged a large, elderly figure in shirt and trousers, with braces dangling. He looked at me interrogatively over heavy-rimmed spectacles and I introduced myself. His own self-introduction was more memorable: "I'm Sparrow. I used to be Warden". I said I knew. "They threw me out" he went on. I murmured something about retirement. It did not go down well. "They could have altered the Statutes", he said. "Nothing easier. You petition the Privy Council. I offered to draft it for them. They wouldn't. Threw me out". This introduction, I learnt later, was something like a standard speech. It was the preamble to the closest relationship I was to form that term. After that, when we returned after dinner, I spent many evenings with him in his library, which occupied much of the ground floor, drinking Jameson's - never, for some reason, anything else. I found it interesting and not at all burdensome, though I soon came to realize that one of the duties of a visitor in Beechwood was to put the former Warden to bed. I came to the conclusion that he got drunk easily. I am not particularly hard-headed but I had no difficulty in drinking level with him with no notable effects. I am not even sure that drunk is the right word. He did not become strident or difficult; just gradually comatose and incapable. I did not try to undress him but just took off his coat, tie and shoes and pushed him into bed. He must have been used to wakening in his clothes. On one occasion he fell over. He was a large and heavy man and I am a puny one. I did not like to leave

him and the nearest porter was two miles away. I solved the problem in a fashion I am proud of. He was not unconscious, just unable to get up, like a turtle on its back. I rolled him over to the wall, where he was able to put one arm against it while I levered him up under the other armpit. Some of my contemporaries had got National Service commissions, by all accounts, for showing no more ingenuity than that to their Selection Boards.

I find it hard to say if I knew him well. Certainly in the course of an evening he would be very frank and open as he reminisced. Provided the contact was continuous he knew who I was and could remember things I had said earlier, but once it was broken overnight he had no recollection. Next evening as I went into the Common Room around six o'clock he would look inquiringly over the spectacles as usual and say, a little hesitantly, "Do I know you?" It was clearly perfectly genuine. There was some recollection he felt he could not place. I regretted this because I became quite fond of him, but as my knowledge of him increased his of me did not. Why did I like him? A genial manner helped. Generosity, in words, about people, and also with his books, was one answer. Also he had a characteristic virtually unique in my experience: as he got drunker he got nicer. At six he was not unpleasant, but sharp, even needling. One sensed the former Chancery barrister. One evening I had said something foolish, I forget what. He would not let it go, but pursued it until eventually I said "You seem to have me pinned down, don't you?" He grinned mischievously and said "I rather think I have, don't you?" But after dinner, back at Beechwood, he became steadily sweeter, gentler, more modest; until the light flickered and went out, which happened quite quickly. He was delightful to be with. Most of the people he reminisced about, much more often generously or affectionately than maliciously, I knew of. I once drew a comparison between himself, Isaiah Berlin and Maurice Bowra. He repudiated it immediately. He could never be compared with them, he said. Isaiah he revered, and he became, for an audience of one, one of the many talented people, including Richard Cobb and Isaiah himself, who have failed to explain what was so wonderful about Bowra. Specimens of his conversation always sound merely boorish. There was clearly something about the personality, but what it was, to those like myself who did not know him, remains a mystery. The College, of course, was the focus of his devotion. He had a trick which might have been irritating but which amused me, in speaking of everywhere but All Souls and Winchester, where he had been a Scholar, of saying "very respectable". He liked to know one's provenance, but I never felt it affected his attitude. Exeter School. "Very

respectable". I would have got the same response had I said Eton. He liked to give one the run of his library, which was indeed remarkable, and trusted one completely when he lent books, since he could never have remembered he had lent them. I remember borrowing the early Pre-Raphaelite magazine, *The Germ*, which is actually remarkably feeble. He said "If you find something inscribed on the flyleaf 'To Mr W S. from W H' you will tell me, won't you?" There if anywhere, I felt. He did have a copy of Yeats poems, 1908 I think, inscribed "To Maud Gonne from her friend W B. Yeats". Why he signed himself like that I cannot think but the handwriting seemed right. Remarkably the pages were uncut and John had sensibly left them like that; charitably one might think she had another copy. I speak of him as John because that is how I had come to think of him, though I had no license to do so, and he never called me by name. He was both charming and formal, though certainly not reticent. He had the elaborate, old-world courtesy possessed also by my father, much in evidence when asking for some trivial service: "I wonder if you would be so very kind as to…" The occasion became famous when, stopped by the police for drunken driving, they said they were going to take him to the station. "That's most kind of you but I'm not going anywhere", he had said. He did not drive again.

In addition to my bedroom in Beechwood I also had a room in College, in the right hand one (as you look at it) of Hawksmoor's two towers, facing Radcliffe Square. There was a superb view, which for some days that term was deep in snow, but it was cold. My scout found an electric fire for me which he disclosed he had purloined from Lord Hailsham. Porters and scouts called one by name as soon as one arrived. My scout at Beechwood had the habit of reading visitor's books. He said to Donald Winch, who also had a term there, "Mr Burrow wrote *Evolution and Society*. That was a good book - in its day". Everyone at All Souls apart from the Warden and the titled was called "Mr" by the staff, who were addressed in the same way in return. Berkeley too had this habit, which I liked. Membership mattered more than eminence in the outside world. I found the open fires in Hall and Common Room very seductive, especially after the brisk chilly walk in from Iffley. The panelled Common Room where dessert is taken is very beautiful and the view from the table straight towards Hawksmoor's gate and to the Radcliffe Camera, with the spire of Saint Mary's flanking it, is, when floodlit at night, one of the great sights of England, with port, claret or Sauternes as a bonus. The Hall at All Souls is unusual in being neither timber nor Georgian stucco but Mannerist, with a stone-vaulted roof.

There were two major occasions that term, one concerning the university and the other the College. The first was the rejection of the proposal of an honorary degree for Mrs Thatcher. As a visitor I could not get into the Sheldonian for the debate, but I hung on the outcome. I saw it from the perspective of a member of a provincial university. I understood the anxieties that benefactions might be lost, but I could not think it in Oxford's interests in the long run that it should apparently separate itself publicly from the rest of the university system which was suffering so badly from the government's policies, so I was glad for Oxford's sake when the proposal was rejected. The Warden of All Souls had been involved in it. That night as we sat down after he had said the grace a Fellow whispered, using a cliché much favoured at the time by losing football managers, "Look at Pat Neill. Sick as a parrot".

The second was the visit to the College, I forget why, of the former Prime Minister Harold Macmillan. It was very good of the College to have included me, because I was only a visitor, not, at that time, a Visiting Fellow. Macmillan made an elegant speech: "My mother, who was an American, told me when I was a boy, that there were only three worthwhile objects of ambition. One was to be President of the United States. Another was to be Prime Minister of Great Britain. The third (of course) was to be a Fellow of All Souls. I seem unaccountably to have managed only one of these". In the Warden's drawing room he was still holding court when, about one o'clock, I decided that bed was the more attractive option. His conversation, in his well-known moth-eaten drawl, was studied but effective, relying much on timing and long pauses; I suppose as a former Prime Minister he could count on not being interrupted. He seemed to like triads. On Harold Wilson's resignation, for example, which had been the subject of speculation: "Could have been health (pause). Could have been a woman (Lady Faulkender) (pause). Could have been that what he told the House of Commons was the truth (very long pause). But that would have been uncharacteristic". I could not help admiring the bravura of the performance, and the stamina, though I had never forgiven him for his weasel part in the Suez affair nor for his philistine refusal to intervene, as he as he easily could have done, to save the Euston Arch.

The next time I went to All Souls, in 1994, was as a Visiting Fellow for two terms, when the friendliness and hospitality were as generous as ever. It was after I had been elected but before I had been able to take the Fellowship up that I accepted the Chair of European Thought, with a Professorial Fellowship at Balliol. Oxford chairs are tied to particular colleges, unlike Cambridge ones, where the professor's college is a

matter for private arrangement. I was afraid that my decision to accept the chair, though I would not be taking it up yet, might affect my place at All Souls first, but no objection was made, so, in the spring of 1995 I summoned up the energy to cross Broad Street to Balliol. Soon after leaving All Souls I was passing it with Julian, now five, who had just started school. He had visited me there and asked why I now had another college. Deciding not to explain about visiting fellowships I said rather lamely that I had been there while I was waiting to go to my own college. He looked at the cloister around Great Quad, at the Codrington Library and Hawksmoor's twin towers, and said decisively "That was your play group then". Remembering how much I had found to enjoy there I did not quibble. On another occasion I happened to take him into Keble Chapel. He was not taken to church but had been baptized at three in order to qualify for his Catholic primary school, so he remembered the occasion and the church. He looked around the High Church splendours of Keble and said "This reminds me of where I had my head done". He had obviously conflated the sacrament of baptism with the treatment for head lice. Later he would consciously have enjoyed the analogy, having an apparently inborn taste for irony, parody and bathos. When he was small, for example, he would take his toy Batman to the table's edge, shout "Up, Up and Away!" and, laughing inordinately, push him off so that he plummeted to the carpet. Sitting in the car of a Ferris Wheel, waiting for it to start, he looked down at me, grinned, and crossed himself.

He came in, of course, to Balliol. My room was wonderfully quiet, with a view across Trinity garden to the Sheldonian and the Clarendon Building - Wren and Hawksmoor. He was clearly disappointed. In Sussex as Director of Graduates I had an outer as well as an inner office, with people coming in and out, telephones ringing and two secretaries in the outer office, who made a fuss of him with paper and coloured pencils; my only administrative achievement had been to swell the bureaucracy by doubling the number of secretaries. What to me had been servitude had apparently to him been something like grandeur and my present peace obviously seemed to him a demotion. I did teach Balliol undergraduates, which I should not have done. As a professor my energies should have been devoted to postgraduates, in all colleges. I did do some of this but the Balliol undergraduates were so good that when offered the opportunity to teach them, in both History and Politics, I could not resist it. None of them said they felt sorry for Louis XVI, though they may have done, or apparently regarded the date of Charles I's execution as a matter of opinion and if they spoke of "bourgeois

society" it was in inverted commas. It is a feature of Oxford that the undergraduates are generally very good and the postgraduates more variable. In admitting the former, solely on grounds of ability, though under pressure from politicians to do otherwise, we know what we are doing. Postgraduates are recruited from all over the world and the value of their first degrees and references is often necessarily a matter of guesswork. The result is inevitably a wide range of ability and even, despite tests, of competence in English.

With one notable exception, to be considered shortly, I have been tranquilly happy in Oxford and in Balliol. Perhaps for the benefit of those - policy makers, administrators, journalists, politicians - who seem to feel that academics have no right to be either tranquil or happy and that something had better be done about it if they are, I should say that I wrote a book during this time, published in 2000 (*The Crisis of Reason. European Thought 1848-1914).* There are no old men now to torment or amuse me, because I am one myself. The last among those I knew who was clearly of a different generation was Hugh Trevor-Roper (Lord Dacre), who interested me because his trajectory seemed the opposite of that of Jack Plumb, who had first introduced me to him. Jack, at one time convivial and generous, became a monster in old age. Trevor-Roper, famously aggressive and feline when young, at least in print, was now, in my experience, gracious and winning. He was almost blind and dealt with his disability, and the dependence it produced, not only stoically but gracefully, with a kind of gentle amusement at human frailty as he asked one to fill his glass for him, which he could no longer see to do. I liked him. Whether I would have done so earlier is perhaps doubtful.

We had gone to live at Witney, twelve miles west of Oxford. The choice of location needs a little explanation. In the early 'nineties, just as the housing bubble was about to burst, I had taken out a large second mortgage on our house in Hove, a decision which will affect us adversely for the rest of our lives. As prices dropped the new mortgage was soon a much larger proportion of the house's value than it had been at first. We had taken it partly to put down a deposit on a flat for Francesca, who was living with us with her husband and Julian. The flat was soon worth less than the mortgage they had taken out to buy it. Accordingly, when we came to live in Oxfordshire we needed to reduce our obligations. Witney is an old blanket-making town and our house, in a terrace at the bottom of the High Street, formerly owned by the blanket company, was built around, I think, 1840, to house one of its workforce. It has been described by kind visitors as having "character". During these years

Diane, who has always written poetry intermittently, began to do so more copiously and with greater authority. One year we went to a hotel in Peterborough for her to receive a Poetry Prize from Forward Press. Our house, 22 Bridge St, was cheaper than one of its size in Oxford would have been, and Witney has a good bus service to Oxford. Balliol has no car parking. Before I arrived I was told that there were spaces reserved only for the Master, the Bursar, the College nurse and the Head Chef. I calculated my chances of achieving any of these offices and decided they were poor, so we did our house-hunting with an Oxfordshire bus map in hand. It was a wrench leaving Sussex, the sea and the Downs. Many of my friends had left already, but Donald and some others remained and that was a wrench too, as was leaving our children and Julian, though Francesca and he, and our younger grandson Ryan, have since come to live near us. The relations between the College and myself were soon to be severely tested. My chair was newly founded. I knew that I had not been the elector's first choice; he had set his price too high. They were therefore wielding the barrel scraper in a fairly wide arc by the time they came to me. When I arrived at All Souls Isaiah Berlin, who had been one of them, said he was pleased I was coming. I said, genuinely, that I was pleased that he was. "Oh yes", he said in his characteristic staccato gobble, "I wanted you from the beginning. The others didn't. I did" - which wonderfully managed to be simultaneously tactless, indiscreet and kind. He also wrote me a charming note after my inaugural lecture. But by that time the sky had fallen in.

In the autumn of 1995 an article appeared in *The Times* under the heading "Why Does Oxford Honour a War Criminal?" It was about my Chair. It also incorporated an inaccuracy which I was to come to regard as typical. The chair was named to honour the donor of the endowment, not his grandfather, with the same surname, who had been found guilty at Nuremberg of employing slave labour. Headlines, as I was to learn, did not have to be fastidious about truth, just as photographs of Hitler and his entourage embellishing an article on the ethics of the funding of a university chair were good journalism. The issue was taken up by the other "quality" papers - it was never of any interest to the tabloids - and weeks, not days, of controversy followed. The obvious arguments were rehearsed a number of times; *The Telegraph* was much the fairest, *The Guardian* the least. There were rejoinders to the claim that the chair was funded in effect by the proceeds of crime. One did not inherit guilt. Universities had always had dubious sources of funding. What of All Souls' Codrington Library? Christopher Codrington in the eighteenth

century had possessed what were spoken of as "West Indian interests" i.e. in slave-cultivated plantations. The connection of the money funding the chair and that made during the war, which I tried to look into, was rather complex. It had been confiscated but then, in the effort to revitalize German industry in the post-war period a small proportion had been returned to provide initial capital to restart the business. Compensation for the victims also became an issue, and was also complex; its administration had been taken over a good many years before by the Deutsche Bank.

The donor wrote a dignified letter to *The Times*. The phrase "money laundering" had been used. He replied that he would indeed like his name to be associated with something other than the crimes of his grandfather. He also pointed out that he had made large donation to Hammersmith Childrens' Hospital and no one had disapproved. The partiality of the latter angered me. An academic chair, it seemed, was fair game; sick children were off limits. One could see why. The papers were relentless. There must have been too little going on in the world to fill their columns, and they piggy-backed on each other day after day. There seemed to be something in it for everyone. The donor was a rich man and the chair was at Oxford, so the left could happily denounce it. It had "European" in the title and the donor was a German, so xenophobes of all kinds, and especially Thatcherites could detest it, while the name "Chair of European Thought" did not seem likely to have much to do with wealth creation. It was to be held, in a fashion no one seemed to understand, at Balliol, which still in some minds connoted its left-wing past, though now it has no more specific political orientation than the general liberal consensus in British academic communities, so the right could hate it. I was surprised that it seemed to be assumed that I would be a passionate enthusiast for the EC, and even expert about it. I remembered Graham Hough, who comfortably inhabited literatures in four modern European languages, when on our accession someone had said "Well, we're in Europe", saying disdainfully "I've never not been". At a lower level of accomplishment I felt the same. The extent of journalistic incorrigibility startled me. It was constantly repeated that Balliol had accepted the money. It had not. The money had been given to Oxford University. Colleges do not fund chairs or employ professors. As a professorial Fellow at Balliol I must have represented a small net cost for my privileges. But Balliol has a physical presence and the university does not. Many photographs of Balliol were printed; no one wanted (understandably) to take a photograph of the university offices in Wellington Square. The Vice-Chancellor, Peter

North and the Master of Balliol, Colin Lucas, issued a number of highly explicit corrections stating the true position. The journalists simply ignored them and went on repeating the falsehood. While all this was going on I emerged one day from Balliol gate and found the part of Broad Street outside it empty. An agitated young woman came up to me, "Could you move away as quickly as you can please. We're filming". Had I revealed my identity I should have felt like a flasher.

I had numerous calls from newspapers, of which I was extremely wary. Even simple incompetence, on the evidence so far, if one discounted the possibility of malicious distortion, would ensure that anything I said would be misquoted or in some way misrepresented. Actually they would begin quite cleverly with innocuous questions about what I hoped to achieve in the chair. One cannot say "No comment" to that, but I tried to be as platitudinous as possible and when nothing appeared I regarded it as a victory. Only one, *The Jewish Chronicle*, asked what seemed to me the crucial question about my own position. Did I know the source of the funding when I accepted the chair? No, I did not. Then, if I had known would I still have accepted it? I had had plenty of time to prepare for this. I said "Well, you have to remember that I am a coward, and being a coward probably not. But if I had not been I think I would". They did not use it. I did, of course, very much want to state my position, but in a way which could not be misreported or misrepresented and in my own words. I drafted several letters to papers, but I felt bound to accept the advice of the Master, because it was the College which was chiefly suffering, most unfairly. He and Peter North always advised holding off on the grounds that it was bound to subside in a day or two and we did not want to add fuel to keep it alive. I entirely saw the point and it was a surprise to all of us that it just continued day after day.

I had resolved that I would not resign the chair. There were things I thought I could do in it. I intended, for example to give, as I later did, a course of lectures on the sources of racialist ideas in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. My immediate superior in the European Institute, Jack Hayward, who was Jewish - many of the victims had of course been Jews - dismissed the idea of resignation as nonsense, saying "We need you". I took the view in any case that little money is entirely clean and once it has been made what matters is what is done with it; money is no more beyond redemption than individuals. I did, however, tell the Master that my resignation from my Fellowship was at his disposal if he felt it would be helpful. A chair is a job, with responsibilities to colleagues and pupils as well as to the institution. A

professorial Fellowship, however, (unlike a teaching Fellowship, which is hard work) is a pleasure, as membership of an agreeable society to which one has essentially no duties, and one I greatly valued, but there was no doubt the College was being damaged by my presence. He refused it very firmly, and could not have been kinder or more supportive. The same was true of the Fellowship, though they must have been wishing that the College had never had anything to do with me. The only exception was an Honorary Fellow, who was not about much, and whom I knew slightly from Cambridge, who "insisted" that the College must repudiate its connection with the chair and me. It made no difference to my attitude to him; I disliked him anyway. One day *The Times* appeared with its letter columns headed "The Shame of Balliol"; I was the shame of Balliol. An old member had written in to denounce my presence in the College and to say that unless it repudiated its connection with the chair (which he, like everyone, misrepresented) he would ... he would ... he would NOT come to the next College gaudy. A few days later another old member, presumably a contemporary, wrote to enquire whether this abstention was to be permanent, explaining that it was of interest to him as someone who in that case would be inclined to come himself.

The donor, very understandably, had had enough and the funding was withdrawn (not rejected by the University, which became another repeated falsehood). He had tried to do something worthwhile and had been pilloried for it. My inaugural lecture was due to be delivered in a few days time. I decided to give it even though there was no longer a chair. I had given my inaugural lecture at Sussex fifteen years before in the well-recognised form of an academic credo: reflections on the nature of Intellectual History, which was therefore, I felt, not usable now. It had subsequently been published after being given as a public lecture in London, by the Athlone Press, as "The History of Ideas in Theory and Practice. The Languages of the Past and the Language of the Historian". It was partly a restatement of the anti-whig ideas considered earlier here, and also a rejection of the assumption that intellectual history or the history of ideas requires a specialized vocabulary and explanatory framework, as in Michel Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, and a plea for common language in the interpretation of the ideas of the past; an earlier, unpublished version had been called "The Poverty of Methodology". But it did not seem appropriate to the present occasion, which had thrown up matters of more immediately pressing concern.

There is, of course, no such thing as (entirely) bad publicity. The hall

in the Schools was packed instead of, as it would probably otherwise have been, half-empty. Roy Jenkins, the Chancellor, came to show support and headed the procession, so we filed in behind his six macebearers rather than the Vice-Chancellor's two. Six maces surely justify a certain amount of swagger, but of course when I began it was to acknowledge a defeat. I reproduce the introductory sentences about this here, because they catch the mood of the moment. Or mine at all events. The hopes expressed have not been realized and the chair is for the moment at least extinct. The full lecture has been recently published in the journal *The History of European Ideas*, which I edited for ten years. The new editors gracefully decided that publishing it would be a fitting way of commemorating my retirement from the editorship. Called "A Common Culture? Nationalist Ideas in Europe in the Nineteenth Century" it traced a theme through the century, from the fraternal nationalism of the eighteen-thirties and forties to exaltation of *Realpolitik* in the generation before the First World War. I intended this as a contribution to understanding the origins of the ruthless nationalist and racist ideas for which the twentieth century is notorious and offered it as something to which the holder of a chair of European thought might have something to say. I find it perversely paradoxical that blocking such an academic initiative should have seemed to some people an appropriate way of condemning the atrocious consequences of those ideas. I began the lecture with a reference to the exceptional circumstances: "When I announced this lecture I thought of it as inaugurating not so much my tenure - a relatively small matter - of the new Chair of European Thought as the Chair itself, a matter of much greater importance for the future in Oxford of the study of European Ideas. This has unhappily now become problematic because the Chair and my tenure of it have become co-terminous. What, you are entitled to ask, is there now of sufficient importance for formal inauguration? The ritual bottle of champagne across the ship's bows has necessarily an ironic aspect if her maiden voyage is also scheduled as her trip to the breaker's yard. I am very grateful to the university for my continued employment, filed, I understand, under "contingencies", but I should not have sought to advertise my gratitude and my new status so publicly if I had not wanted to insist that this occasion has still, despite everything, a more than personal significance. It is the privilege and obligation of universities and those who work in them to take a long view. An endowed chair is certainly a greater matter than its temporary incumbent, but more important still is the subject, the recognizable practice and tradition of collective inquiry, exploration and transmission

which the chair supports. An inaugural lecture is we know an opportunity to advertise one's subject, and mine is now in greater, not less, need of advertisement in Oxford. The University, in accepting a chair of European Thought, took an important step of principle, even if it must for the moment fall short of its intended destination. May the idea of such a chair prove like an unquiet ghost and a portent. Like Banquo's 'let it shake its gory locks at whom it may'.

The funding of the chair was taken over for the period of my tenure thanks to the generosity of the late Bob Johnson, to whom the book I published at the end of my tenure of it is therefore appropriately dedicated. He had not been solicited. He explained that he had read about the outcome of the controversy and had felt sorry about it; he had picked up the telephone and spoken to the Vice-Chancellor and offered the money. It was a splendid gesture. He made it clear from the outset that it could be only for a limited period. He was not, I think, ultra-rich and he had family. But though it is a serious disappointment that the chair is extinct, I am very grateful to him. The University had made it clear that it would continue my employment, but it was much more comfortable for me to feel that my post was properly funded, rather than that I was un-anticipatedly and un-welcomely dependent on the charity of the University's contingency fund. But something positive had been attempted and been aborted.

I retired in 2000, saying that the second millennium had been good enough for me. Before retirement, in Balliol, I had achieved an office I regarded as both an honour and a pleasure, becoming Steward of Common Room. Plymstock, I reflected, had I stayed there, could surely have offered no such gratification to ambition. It is a responsible position, whose chief duty is draw up the seating plans for Guest Nights, a task calling for the nicest tact, combining a sense of hierarchy with a restrained taste for the unexpected. Seating plans, I am accustomed to say, wheezing slightly like Sidney Grose at Christ's when he was about to be particularly statesmanlike, are the difference between civilization and barbarism. When the first thegn or warrior chieftain began to feel that evenings in the mead-hall would pass more pleasantly, with fewer deaths, if there were a seating plan, the age of chivalry was about to dawn. Arthur's knights were fussy about their seating plan.

It will, I know, seem indecently complacent and win me no friends to say that I am on the whole content with what I have done with my life. We have charming, interesting and talented children and grandchildren, though I fear the family curse, operative for four generations now, in the matter of making, or rather not making, money is not relaxing its grip. I

have kind and congenial colleagues, a very agreeable Common Room, and friends whose unselfish thoughtfulness and loyalty has been tested many times. Given the genetic hand I was dealt - extreme manual, mathematical and technical incompetence, unimpressive physique, an inability to think in three dimensions - I feel I have done as well as could be expected with it, aided, of course, by immense amounts of help from many quarters. I would naturally like to think that I have falsified the judgements of the Intelligence Testers who in the mid-nineteen forties found me epsilon double minus, or however Intelligence Testers measure people, and of the successive appointments committees of the Cambridge History Faculty which found that I did not quite have the qualities for an assistant lectureship. But no matter now. I remember reading somewhere the alleged last words of some eighteenth-century grande dame, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu I think, who said "It has all been most interesting". Well, not perhaps all, but quite a lot of it and if I have failed to convey the interest the blame lies not with the times and places I have passed through or the people I have shared them with, but only with myself.

It must never be wholly appropriate to end an account of a life on a note of complacency. Only a strict limitation of time and a covert self-censorship can ever lead one to ignore the circumstances in which it habitually ends: the loss of friends, the generalised impotencies and indignities imposed by the body in its own long farewell performances. Amid these unpleasantnesses, building a home for my migrant memories has been a constructive and welcome exercise. Words remain malleable when all else revolts. My gratitude is all the greater to its sponsors named earlier. For this and much else I name, Patricia Williams, John Thompson, and the colleagues I still allow myself to call with pride and undiminished affection, '(Burr)inchini'.