

MY ACADEMIC SELF-PORTRAIT

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My Dad was born in Poland in 1899. He lived in a small village that is now long-gone and worked in the bakery there. In World War 1 he fought against the Germans; and as the twenties went by he began to 'feel' and fear their return, so, in a difficult and convoluted way he emigrated to Australia, arriving penniless and without a word of English in 1925. In 1927, as pre-arranged, my mother joined him and they immediately married. My sister was born in 1929, and I came along in 1938. By this time my father had survived the Depression, and had scrambled enough work as a day labourer and occasionally as a baker, to move the family out of the two rooms they originally occupied and into a very small terrace in the poorest part of Newtown – itself one of Sydney's poorest suburbs.

When Australia entered World War II in 1939, Dad rushed to enlist, particularly spurred by the fact that Germany had occupied Poland. However, he was rejected, ostensibly on the grounds that, as a baker (he had put this down as his profession) he belonged to an 'essential service'. This never sat well with us, and although we have neither evidence nor proof, we suspect the Armed Forces were less willing to accept a Jew named Shmuel Herszkowitz who spoke very little English, than they were to deprive the country of just one resident baker.

Dad's rejection was not a blessing for us, but rather a liability. Down a long street in a working class suburb, ours was one of the very few families where the father was not 'serving'. He was also not working; he didn't speak English, and he went to Synagogue on Saturdays. In a time of fear and a place of ignorance, we were branded 'reffos', 'dirty Jews', and many among the locals harboured notions that this non-serving foreigner might be a coward, a deserter, or even a spy. This was not a propitious environment to grow up in, and to make it worse, I had severe sight problems and wore special very prominent glasses. So; when I started school, apart from being the son of a coward and a 'reffo', I was also a Jew-boy with glasses; namely 'four-eyes'. At least by then Dad had changed our name to Harris.

At home we had a ritual whereby we would get up at 5.30 and have breakfast together (I'm sure this had much to do with my lifetime abhorrence and avoidance of early morning activities and engagements). Then Dad would go off with his lunch pail, looking for a job for the day. He would walk the round of the factories, knocking on tin gates, while we waited, hoping he wouldn't come back. Eight o'clock was our 'special' time: if Dad wasn't back by then we knew he had a job! And if he was back, we got on with things while he grabbed a few hours sleep before doing the evening round of bakeries, which potentially offered night work. Sometimes that paid off; and there were periods when jobs lasted weeks or months, and when on Fridays Dad emptied out his weekly brown pay packet on the dining room table. Mum got her housekeeping; my sister and I got some small change as pocket-money, and anything left was spirited off to a special hiding place for 'when we needed it'.

We needed it quite often; but perhaps less often than we might, had I not engaged in two somewhat suspect enterprises.

The first generated small amounts of money pretty regularly. We lived near a big park, and at night I would mentally map out where the 'winos' and those sleeping rough were. Then, to make serious use of our early morning wake-ups, I would hit the park before any of the other kids and do the rounds of the previous night's activities. Rolling a drunk or taking money from a homeless man were considered taboo; but the local lore had somehow ruled that it was OK to glean money that had fallen out of their pockets, just as long as it was not actually 'on them'. There was a fair bit of cash to be made in this. And sometimes you could strike it rich. Stumble across a spot where people had been making love the previous night and the chances increased greatly that a bounty might be lying around close to the obligatory empty wine bottle, which itself was collected and sold to the 'Bottle-O' who came round the lanes in his horse and cart.

I fell into my second enterprise by sheer chance, and I will say no more about it other than, thanks to the American sailors who frequented the park at night, it seems that, at ages five to seven, I was heavily supplementing the family income by unknowingly procuring ladies for immoral purposes, and at ten bob a trick to boot (which was almost what Dad got for a full day's work).

But then, after the night's mapping (and occasional procuring) and the morning's gleaning and waiting to see if Dad was coming straight home, I went off to school, which for 'four-eyes-Jew-boy', was not a pleasant experience.

My abiding memory of school is of getting bashed up regularly. Dad told me to 'fight hard, like a *mensch*' but to protect my glasses (which we could not afford to replace) at all costs. So, I went to school with my satchel and the biggest, strongest glass-case you could imagine. And it became an accepted rule (we kids developed strange codes of honour) that if you picked a fight with four-eyes-Jew-boy, you let him put his glasses in his glass-case before you came out swinging. The teachers were pretty good in stopping the fights quickly; but the kids were even better in staging them in further off in more and more obscure places. Ultimately I suspect I was saved from serious and ongoing injury by the very blood-lust that started the bash-ups: the onlookers just couldn't keep quiet, and no matter how remote the site, the roar of the crowd always alerted the teachers, and they always stopped the fighting. Or at least in junior primary. In secondary school the teachers had a totally different approach.

One other thing saved me from continued bashings. I was good academically in school, and at the beginning of fifth grade, at age nine, I won a place at Summer Hill Opportunity School – a special school that catered to intellectually gifted boys from Sydney's inner western suburbs. I was there for two years, and it was great.

That has to be seen in a wider context. By 1948, when I went to Summer Hill, we had learnt that the Nazis had murdered not only our entire family, but had also wiped out the entire area Mum and Dad had come from. I thus had no family; no relatives; no uncles, aunts or cousins, and there was not a single person in the world who knew my parents from their earlier days. This, of course, affected my parents very deeply, and it left my sister and me in a kind of limbo with no background, history or identity to lock onto. I somehow recognised that I had to make my own identity, and I had to do this caught between two worlds, as a four-eyed Jew-boy reffo wanting to

be accepted as an Aussie larrikin. Even at home there was a clash of worlds, as my parents spoke to me in Yiddish while I answered in English. This had the unintended effect of helping my parents learn English, while leaving me semi-bilingual: I could understand Yiddish perfectly (and still can) but I never learnt to speak it.

Summer Hill helped enormously with the identity issue. It made a virtue of academically challenging work; we were given a large degree of autonomy to work and learn for ourselves; as there were only twenty five of us in the class we were all given our turn in the cricket and football teams; and best of all, there was no discrimination. Rather, the teacher used differences to advantage, such as having me do a project for the class on the Passover. And in contrast to my local school where I was the only four-eyes in the class, a lot of the kids at Summer Hill wore glasses. I stopped carrying my sturdy glass-case: in the entire two years there were no fights or 'bashing up' rituals. But then I had to go to high school.

Like most Summer Hill graduates, I went to the nearest selective high school, Fort St, which at the time was the most prestigious public school in NSW. Each week the Headmaster delivered a 'sermon' on how lucky we were to be there, but in fact it was five years of sheer Hell!

The most abiding Hellish thing was the curriculum. We had to do Latin and French in First year; after which we could drop Latin (and I did) but French remained compulsory for the entire five years. I still don't understand why, and I certainly learnt no French there, probably because we just did written exercises and copied lists of irregular verbs from the blackboard, and never actually got to speak or listen to the language. I did very badly; and as our Form 'ranking' was determined by our results in French, I finished up in the E stream, the fifth out of five each year. This stream did the same Maths and Science as the rest of the grade (and each year I came near-to-top of the whole school in Maths 1 and Maths 2), but otherwise it was regarded as inferior, and so in English – the other compulsory subject – we spent our lessons doing parsing and analysis but never read any literature other than the obligatory Shakespeare play. So today I can still parse and analyse sentences such as 'John, the farmer, bought a tractor from a travelling contractor'; but in five years at that highly selective school for the most intelligent, I never saw a single poem and the only novel we read (over and over and over for three years!) was that major classic of English literature, *We of the Never-Never*.

The high probability of becoming bored shitless was livened up by one thing. For all its prestige and reputation, the school was riddled with bullying and anti-Semitism; which in my case went together. Very early I was taken aside and told (I have this burnt *verbatim* on my brain) 'In this school we look after the Jews that Hitler missed'. Two things are important there. First, the tone clearly implied that 'look after' was not meant to imply pastoral care; and secondly I was being told this by my Form-Master. As a naïve ten year old I rushed off to report this to the Headmaster, who promptly caned me brutally for saying such a thing about a teacher. I thus learnt that not all teachers were worthy of respect; and I started carrying my sturdy glasses-case again as the teachers looked away when the bashings started.

The five years of Hell, punctuated by frequent wagging and one occasion when I ran away for two weeks, had one redeeming moment. In my final year (1954) I submitted a dreadful essay on a Eugene O'Neill radio play. My teacher took me to task over it and demanded an explanation

for the utter rubbish I had written. I told him that I thought the play was not very good, but as it was set for us and we had to write an essay on it, I figured it must be good and so I pretended to find things in it and write about how good they were. To my surprise, instead of caning me, he suggested that I go home and write what I really thought. So, for the first time in my schooling, in my very last term, I read a text carefully and then wrote what I really thought about it.

Two days after I handed it in, my teacher, Ted Dacey (he must be named), told me that he thought the essay had promise; and that he had taken the liberty of showing it to an Executive at one of Sydney's leading radio stations who now wanted to interview me about a job as a cadet writer. This was 1954, when Australia had plenty of radio but as yet no television, and 1956 was to be the year of Australia's Olympic Games in which TV was expected to instantly burst into suburban households. Technicians were preparing; retailers were stocking up; but the 'internal' industry had fallen behind in that there were few programs ready and a serious lack of people trained and experienced in writing for television. 'So', said the man who interviewed me, 'would you like the job?'

Would I what!

But I didn't take it. I passed my Leaving/Matriculation Certificate (with a bad failure in French) and found myself with three options. I could go to University (as all graduates of my fine secondary school were expected to do); I could take up the writing cadetship, or I could go to Teachers College, do a two year course, and become a primary school teacher. University was out, simply because nothing had changed in my family's financial situation and I could not expect Dad to continue supporting me for another three years (there were no such things as part-time jobs at Hoyts, Kmart or MacDonald's then). And the cadetship was out because it offered no assurance of a permanent job two years down the track and I would be going into it with absolutely no form or background to provide any confidence of success at the end). So; it came down to a primary teaching scholarship, to be taken up in March of the following year.

In the meantime I did as my Dad did. The moment I left my last Leaving Certificate exam I began to do the round of factories, and within an hour I had a job. At 1.00pm on my last day of school I began work as a bottle washer at Loy's Soft Drinks, at one pound a day. That carried me over till Teachers College started.

Teachers College had significant advantages. Most immediate was that the Government paid you to go. It didn't pay much, and it was a Faustian bargain in that you sold your soul as a bonded teacher with a huge debt to repay if you quit before completing College and three years' teaching. But I found that if I walked to College, took a packed lunch, and avoided the pubs, I had enough left over from my allowance to finally pay at least some portion of my way at home. But there was more to it than this. In my own schooling I had admired, for different reasons, all of my *primary* school teachers, and, notwithstanding the sadists and bigots at High School (whom I hoped my generation might displace one day) I generally thought teaching would be a good job to have. And behind all of this there was more of Dad's advice.

Dad believed that education was the key to success, and that his own inability to rise in society had everything to do with his lack of formal education and little, if anything, to do with his

religion or his inability to speak English. That is why he sacrificed virtually everything to keep me and my sister at secondary school for the full five years, doggedly refusing to let me leave early and follow my mates into the world of work. He constantly emphasised that these kids were beginning another generational round of exploited workers. 'There goes another wage slave working for the bosses,' he would say. 'If you have education you don't have to live like that'.

This seemed to make sense. I had education, and I had options. So; primary school teaching it was, and primary school teaching with a message. Not only could I help kids but I could also pass on Dad's ideas and make others believe in the power of education: stay at school, work hard, get good results, and you too can rise in the world and be free from the bosses. I was sufficiently enthused, and being constantly faced with the alternative as I worked alongside the other bottle washers, College couldn't start quickly enough.

Teachers college was a good experience. It was academically dull as we learnt to teach but never questioned what we were teaching or why, and socially almost absurd with a septuagenarian Principal running the place like a Reform School where we were compelled to wear the College uniform, have regular hair-length checks (that evil 'crew cut' that the servicemen brought home was forbidden), and answer Roll-call in every class. But my main remembrance is two happy years shared with people much like myself, most from working class backgrounds and trying to move up a little bit in the world. No one flaunted money, only one student owned a car, and we busied ourselves with things like camping, singing in the College choir, and competing at sports with the other Teachers Colleges. There was no anti-Semitism, fighting or 'bashings up', just very simple camaraderie. And at the end there was a teaching job, which almost certainly was going to consist of two years in a difficult outer-Sydney school, followed by at least a year in a remote area where the kids came to school by horse or tractor and in which up to eleven grades would be taught by one person in a single classroom. Thus did the Department keep a tight hold on its pounds of flesh while we were still bonded. Of course by Year 4 you were out of your bond, but getting back to civilisation meant having the Department accept your 'Application for Transfer', and that was by no means guaranteed.

I went out, and came back; but more of that in a moment. There was one further hitch in the process for the men. National Service was compulsory at the time, and all 18 year-olds were drafted into the Army for three months, to be followed by two years of part-time drills, bivouacs and other nation-saving activities. For students, however, 'Nasho' was deferred to the end of your course, which meant that all aspiring male primary teachers went into the Army between the conclusion of their training and the beginning of their professional career.

That was a reality check. There we met up with the early school leavers of our generation. Some were apprentices, most were unskilled labourers, and some were already perennially unemployed. It seemed that Dad was right! Here were the wage earners, the boozers, the brawlers, the gamblers and punters; with a massive display of testosterone and a seemingly major lack of purpose and ambition other than to maybe settle down one day, get married and have kids to kick a ball around with. But I didn't need my glasses case: they only brawled with their own kind in some sort of ritualistic display of manhood, and anti-Semitism was not only absent but in fact never again raised its spectre, at least overtly, in my life.

My bonded teaching years worked out, geographically, better than most. My first posting was to Chester Hill Primary School in Sydney's outer west. It was a hour's train trip, but a pretty good place to go to, and it harboured none of social problems currently present in that area. The main 'problem' was that many of the kids came from Villawood Migrant Centre, a first-stop for some of the migrants – here almost all German – flowing into Australia in the mid 1950s (and destined to become notorious as a Detention Centre later in a period less favourable to certain newcomers to our shores). On my appointment in 1957 I was delighted to see seven other 'first-year-outs' also joining the staff; but the Headmaster was less happy, bemoaning the facts that once again he had lost the majority of his senior staff (who couldn't get out fast enough), and that the large migrant population, with its language and social difficulties, would benefit more from experienced teachers. But this was the Department's way: staff the 'undesirable' schools with the bonded teachers.

I enjoyed my two years there, and passed my mandatory 'Inspections' well enough. At the end of the first year I bought my first car, and my world expanded accordingly; including driving my parents around – the first time they had ever been in a car!

It was always the case that in your third year you were sent to a remote, usually one-teacher school, and everybody dreaded the Telegram that might say 'Tibooburra' or some place north-west of Balranald. My Telegram said 'Monga'! However, before I could even find it on a map another Telegram arrived redirecting me to Lstock; which soon after was flooded to create Lstock Dam, so I was sent to Big Creek, which was neither big nor had a creek. The great advantage of being placed here was that it was within two hour's drive, albeit on goat tracks, from Maitland which was a large, thriving city with an overabundance of pubs and a large Nurses' Home. It was a young man's Nirvana, and soon I had a flat there where I spent my weekends, not necessarily preparing lessons or catching up on my marking.

It was a good time, and a nice introduction to country life. Then, just after the beginning of the second year, a telegram arrived instructing me to report for duty at Gateshead High School. So I packed up my car, headed to the southern suburbs of Newcastle, quickly found somewhere to board, and introduced myself to the Headmaster at Gateshead High within a day. He was less than impressed. He has just lost the Head Teacher of the Needlework Department, and I apparently had been sent as her replacement. It took nearly six weeks for the Department to sort it out, during which time I took the girls' needlework classes and we all improvised as best we could. *'Just keep them busy and quiet'*, I was told.

When they found a real needlework teacher I was bundled off to a vacancy at Cooks Hill Intermediate High, in Newcastle's equivalent of the inner Sydney suburb I came from. The vacancy, however, was for a Geography teacher, and I had never studied Geography and knew absolutely nothing about it. 'Don't worry', said the Master on hearing this; 'the kids know nothing about it either. *Just keep one lesson ahead of them.*' Thus, in a mere six weeks I had been read the two Golden Rules of Teaching. And so for two years I kept the kids busy and quiet, and myself one lesson ahead. I also tried to pass on the message about doing well at school and getting a good job and so on, but to little avail as the vast majority of the pupils left school and headed for the nearest factory as soon as they were legally old enough. But I didn't

care all that much: for me it was more of a wild trip through late adolescence, drinking and whoring through the week, and playing cricket and sleeping it off at the weekends.

This all came to an end when Mum took seriously ill. As my parents still relied on Dad's irregular salary, I applied for a compassionate transfer, which to the Department's credit they granted immediately, and I moved back home and went to work down the road at Newtown Boys Junior High – the very school my primary peers went to, and which I would have attended had I not gone down the selective stream. The only vacancy there was for a Maths teacher, where I could more easily keep one lesson ahead of the kids, and there I stayed for seven years, rising to Senior Assistant, then List 1 and Demonstration Teacher, and finally to Acting Subject Master, while the fact that I had been trained as a primary school teacher sunk further and further down some bureaucratic pile until it reached unrecoverable depths, both for the Department and for me.

As I detailed in the introduction to my *Teachers and Classes*, 'these were the seven hardest working years of my life', and personally they were very formative on a number of levels. Within a year of returning home I married into an extremely wealthy family (don't ask) and set up house in a richer part of Sydney (I still dropped in on my parents daily after school and helped out as needed). In 1965 my first daughter was born, followed in 1968 by my second. The house was extended, the second car was purchased, and plans were readied to submit to Council for the landscaping and pool. Meanwhile, I stuck to my vocation and resisted urgings from my in-laws to join one of the family companies. But I did 'backslide' a little. If primary teaching qualifications were just a little bit passé, perhaps it would be better if I had a University Degree and taught in a real secondary school, not just a Junior Tech. And given that Sydney University was just a mile down the road from school, and that the Department was encouraging its two-year trained teachers to upgrade to graduate status, why not?

And so, from 1964 through 1968 I lived a triple schizophrenic life. By day I taught the poorest of Sydney's poor working class boys, constantly emphasising that education was their means of escape from their circumstances; by night I engaged with University English, History, Psychology, Sociology and Education, in the process completing the equivalent of two Bachelors Honours Degrees: while at weekends and during holidays I mingled with the very smart social set. Clearly, there were a number of crises on the horizon, including two which I neither foresaw nor suspected.

My experience as a teacher taught me one particular thing which I have detailed more carefully elsewhere: namely that my Dad was only partly right. Education was not necessarily the means or path to success, especially for working class boys. As the seven years at Newtown Junior High progressed it became increasingly clear that no matter what we teachers did, and no matter how hard the boys tried, very few would ascend the educational ladder to where the qualifications for the better, professional, non-working-class jobs (and life) lay. It also became clear that this had little, if anything to do with ability as measured on educational and 'Intelligence' type tests, and I began to wonder on what criteria I had twice been picked out for selective schools. As I came to understand that schooling was not necessarily a means of social mobility; I became equally frustrated and confused as to why this was not so.

My University studies initially provided no clues, but instead gave birth to a love of literature, which I passionately devoured, wondering all along how I had reached this stage in my life without having met T.S.Eliot, Donne, Jane Austen, Marvell, Henry James, and a seemingly never-ending list of writers filling the bookshelves. And 'devoured' is the right word: I just read everything I could fit into the day.

It was not the same with Psychology, which was all about stimuli and responses, elementary statistics, and little else; nor with Sociology stuck in tri-partite economic class theory, and the attempt to fit Talcott Parsons and pseudo-Weberism into just about everything. And it was certainly not 'Education', at least initially, which shone any lights or provided any inspiration. It all worked out in a rather strange way.

I went to University as a part-time evening student, seeking just a series of passes for a vanilla BA which would give me higher status within the teaching profession. In my first year I had no idea of the level of my progress. In those days subjects went for a full year, and there was no continuous assessment. You started in March, did your exams in late November, and looked up your results in the newspaper the following January. I recall opening the paper on the given day just hoping I had passed; only to find my name up near the top of the Order of Merit in English; and a few hours later a letter arrived from the Head of the English Department offering congratulations and inviting me to do Honours. In those days, Honours started in second year, and, in addition to the pass course, consisted of nine hours of classes offered only in the day program,. That was a huge ask; especially for a part-time evening student with a full time job which just happened to be teaching *mathematics*. I discussed it with my Headmaster, who saw it as an opportunity not to be missed, and who offered to construct my teaching timetable so that I could attend the required daytime classes. Then I managed to persuade a clerk at the University to leave a Staff Parking Sticker on her desk while she temporarily absented herself, thus making it possible for me to leave school at the end of a lesson at, say eleven, and be parked and present at University for an 11.05 class.

It appeared as if it would all work out well. I finished my first Honours year among the four who were awarded a High Distinction, and repeated this in the second year. All that remained was my thesis year, and I had already chosen to write on the novels of D.H.Lawrence. But something went haywire.

A quota of subjects had to be completed for the Honours Degree, and I made up the last of these with Education 1; a second year subject building on the pre-requisite of Psychology 1. It was just a fill-in, an easy option taken mainly by schoolteachers and offered predominantly at night. And it was boring! In fact it was so boring and mind-numbing that one night a student in my class asked the tutor: 'Do we have to go on talking about this stuff?'. Taken aback, the tutor said 'No', and then suggested that since everybody else in Sydney was talking about the Beatles who were here at the time, why don't we?

I had absolutely no interest in *The Beatles*. I had just come from an Honours class that had been meticulously dissecting Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale'; and the move from that to the writers of 'She loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah' seemed a serious comedown. But then it hit me! The kids at school were fanatical about the Beatles, and I had been assured by the English teachers that I was

highly fortunate to be teaching maths: ‘just you try to get them interested in Keats’ they would say. At that moment, the potential nature of a crucial mis-match hit me. I had always thought that schools, and education, offered the opportunity of social mobility through engagement with the ‘better’ things that were out there: now, for the first time I began to see that as problematic. The trouble was that I didn’t understand the issue or the problem. I didn’t even understand the context. I had much much more to learn.

I therefore suspended my Honours year in English, and although I had sufficient credit to take out my Bachelor’s Degree, I neglected to fill in the ‘Application to Graduate’ Form and re-enrolled the following year in Education 2, and as I wanted to do Honours in that area as well, I convinced the Head of the Faculty to let me, provided that I undertook Education 1 Honours both retrospectively and concurrently with Education 2 Pass and Honours. So; in 1967, instead of finishing an Honours Degree in English, I did three very big subjects in Education.

It was a disaster!

Education 1 Honours was Education 1 ‘tree times full and overflowing’ (apologies Booth Tarkington). That meant triple doses of uncritically tasting the current flavours of the month, namely Erikson, Piaget and Sears; more Weberian theory and Talcott Parsons for the Sociological strand, now augmented by a highly empiricist study of Australian Youth by the Professor and Head of the Faculty. And the major ‘Development of Educational Thought’ strand turned out to be no more than learning to repeat what Curtis and Boulwood had generously and precisely identified as the leading creative ideas produced by the greatest minds of each age, in their seductively titled book, *A short history of educational ideas*.

Education 1 Pass and Honours was worse: an excruciating drag through ‘great thinkers’, starting at Plato and ending in November, in which the Honours class would meet weekly to digest the next character Curtis and Boulwood had laid out for us; give a paper every sixth week, and never get any notion that there may be critical methodology available for evaluating what the ‘greats’ were thinking.

But amidst this gloom I hit onto something. I asked the professor taking the course who Curtis and Boulwood were and what their credentials were to define the great minds behind the production of educational theory. His answer was less than satisfying, so I asked the lecturer assisting the professor, and surprisingly learned that he too was suffering in a morass he had been dropped into. He suggested many good things; the best of which was that I might try to pull out something original and in the meantime wait till a lecturer named Bill Andersen returned from England. I wrote my ‘original’ essay on ‘Ideas and Influence’ mainly because Curtis and Boulwood had never broached the notion of how ideas came to be formed or influence anybody, and bided my time.

Next came my thesis year. It may shock some current or recent students, but back in 1968, to get Honours in Education, apart from the extra Honours courses in years 2 and 3, in Year 4 you had to do two class subjects, write a critical essay of 20 000 words on a leading educationist, and write a thesis of up to 100 000 words.

The thesis choice was easy. Given my background in English, and my realisation that there were influential thinkers missing from the standard histories, I chose *The Educational Influence of D.H. Lawrence*. Lawrence was a wonderful subject. He wrote a lot about education in his novels, thus allowing me to examine the novel's influence on thought. And he had two more strings to his bow. Lawrence had trained and practised as a teacher, and thus his real experiences were embodied in his work. He had also written non-fiction work about education; so even without the novels (and short stories) there was an *oeuvre* to work on, along with the tantalising task of examining how he presented the same idea, theory or insight in both fiction and non-fiction works respectively. I had hit on a winner; but so too had the more famous Raymond Williams, who published his *Lawrence on Education* with Penguin Books while I was re-editing my thesis for possible publication.

For my critical essay, I chose to write on Karl Mannheim, for no reason other than that Curtis and Boulton had diminished the value of his ideas simply because he was not Christian. Mannheim had never been mentioned in any Sociology course I had taken, and I had not studied philosophy; so it was all new to me. I started with his PhD thesis, *The Structural Determinants of Epistemology*, and already had three new terms to learn before I got past the title. And then I had to try and understand this stuff, sufficiently so to write critically about it. I was totally enthralled; and I put on the Frontespiece Mannheim's credo that ideas do not exist in an abstract heaven but rather are formed in and by real material circumstances in the world.

Goodbye, Curtis and Boulton! I knew where I was heading; or at least I thought so. I was now heavily into epistemology, structuralism and the social determinants of knowledge. But it didn't quite turn out that way.

At the end of 1968 I finally took out my BA with First Class Honours in Education; only to find that the NSW Department of Education was not overly excited about having a teacher in its service with such qualifications. No offers of promotion followed: just a lousy transfer to teach History (yes, you read right) at a school I didn't want to go to. But other offers did come: one for a lectureship in English at a country University (and thus out of the question for our rising bourgeois family) and one for a tutorship under a professor who offered to lead me into a 'legitimate area of study' (his words) after my undergraduate flirtation with the looney fringe (Lawrence and Mannheim). No, thank you! A third was for a lectureship in Education at Sydney Teachers College (STC), which clearly offered me a place to (re)start and sort out a future which was steering further away from primary school teaching than it already had. Little did I realise just where I was to end up, or what a strange winding track I would be take.

Staff at STC (and all other Teachers Colleges at the time) were not autonomous like University staff, but rather were Public Servants employed by and answerable to the NSW Department of Education. The staff room was thus hardly a nest of radicals nor a hive of exciting cutting-edge ideas; and what was taught was much the same dreary stuff that I had experienced as a College student fourteen years earlier. I harboured some ideas about changing the place, but in the meantime there was so much I wanted to continue learning. How I was to do this was influenced greatly by the relationship between Sydney University and STC; and at this point some history, and geography, are necessary.

STC was a massive building at the lower western end of the Sydney University campus. It was so placed because of a historical link wherein, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Professor of Education at the University was, *ex officio*, the Principal of the College, and the College was where the University Graduates who wanted to become teachers went for their year of ‘teacher training’, for which the University awarded them a Diploma in Education. By 1969 the first of those links had long been broken, but the second still held. And the College now also trained prospective Junior Secondary teachers (who did not have a Degree) through a two year course which offered no letters after one’s name. Thus the College was *in* the University, but not *of* the University; and so serious was the distinction that the College building had a different Postcode from the rest of the University. And yet the College taught the University’s Graduates, and the University gave a University award to graduate students taught and examined in College courses by College staff. Confusing? Well, for me it got even moreso.

As a first class honours graduate I was qualified, and certainly wanted, to do a PhD. But Sydney University had rules, and Sydney University was unbending. A PhD candidate had to be either a full-time student (I wasn’t) or a full-time member of staff. Was I? I taught on Sydney University’s campus; I taught only Sydney University students for a Sydney University award; and at nights I tutored in the University buildings myself on the very courses I had just completed. So I enrolled in a PhD – and got rejected on the ‘employment’ criterion. So I enrolled in a Master of Education Honours course which required two years’ course work followed by a thesis.

This was not a serious setback. I knew what I didn’t want to study, but I had little idea what direction I really wanted to take. So, for the first year I turned to that sympathetic lecturer and did his ‘History of Education’ course. It was interesting, and as it focussed on nineteenth century education in England, it again afforded me the opportunity to link my English studies to education, as I wrote my major essay on Matthew Arnold, son of Thomas and esteemed educational theorist as well as poet and essayist. It also allowed me to have long talks about the future with someone who recognised the moribund uncritical leaden nature of what was passing for a Faculty of Education.

At this point I learnt from two sources that a thing called ‘philosophy of education’ existed. The sympathetic lecturer introduced me to Bill Andersen who had now returned from England where he had started his PhD in Philosophy of Education at the University of London Institute of Education under the joint supervision of Richard Peters and John White. And early on Bill informed me that my Head of Department at STC, Anna Hogg, had taken a similar sabbatical in London and was now hoping to promote philosophy of education through her department. It was also at this time that Bill, Anna, and Les Brown, Head of the Faculty of Education at the University of New South Wales, were in the early stages of forming the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia (PESA).

Everything happened at once. Bill let me enrol in his upcoming 1970 Masters Course in Philosophy of Education, and agreed to be my thesis supervisor. Anna was ecstatic that one of her staff was now studying philosophy of education, and quickly had me preparing courses to teach (shades of the old Geography days – keeping one step ahead of the students), while Bill,

Anna and Les drafted me onto the planning group of PESA as assistant secretary and Minute taker.

Bill's 1970 course was a revelation. Not only did I do philosophy for the first time, but I did it in exalted company. The class was taught by Bill and Warren Fenley, and included the foundation Professor of Philosophy of Education at the University of London Institute of Education, Louis Arnaud Reid, established academics Brian Hill and John Kleinig, and young up-and-coming people such as Michael Matthews and Jim Walker. Talk about being thrown in the deep end! And loving it. It had taken seven years, but finally I was doing something at University, apart from literature, that really excited me.

To make it even better, Bill's course centred on ethics, with R.S.Peters' *Ethics and Education* as its text. Ethics suited me just fine, because in my days as an English Honours student I was immersed in a School of F.R.Leavis's disciples, where we learnt to approach literature in the way Leavis insisted it be approached. For Leavis, great literature was marked by a moral highlighter. The great writer was a great moralist, and great literature served a moral function. That may be putting it too simply, but clearly I had a research topic crying out for me. Once again I could get my background in English into the act; and so I wrote my research paper for the course on 'Leavis, Literature and Moral Education'. And that was to set up my thesis.

While Richard Peters was working on the criteria for the 'educated man' [sic], his colleague, Paul Hirst, was formulating his famous thesis that liberal education was initiation into seven logically distinct 'forms of knowledge'. Then Hirst and Peters put it all together in their 1970 collaborative volume, *The Logic of Education*; and out of this I had my thesis topic: *An Argument For the Place of Literature in the Production of the Educated Man*. My aim was to show that the (proper) study of literature, being itself an exercise in ethics, was sufficient to produce the educated person. As the work progressed it became apparent that 'sufficiency' was too high a target, so I went for 'necessity'; and when that also proved to be too high I settled, over the course of 300 000 words, to argue that the (proper) study of literature *could be effective* in the production of the educated person. By the end of it I had a far better understanding of Leavis and his background; a near-word-perfect acquaintance with the complete works of Hirst and Peters, an award of First Class Honours, and a University Medal which I shared with Jim Walker. And I was now teaching philosophy of education at STC, I was a member of PESA, and I had already had three papers published in respected Journals. It appeared as though a golden boy was on his way up. How deceptive appearances can be.

Two dramatic things happened in the period between completing Bill's course and starting my thesis. First, my wife took my children on a week's holiday to stay with her parents. Well; at least that's what I was told. The truth, however, was that she took them, and the bankbooks, on a much longer 'holiday' to stay with someone else. And soon after, one night whilst showering, I felt a strange, very hard lump. I showed it to my GP, and she sent me to a specialist who promptly performed a major operation. He then sent me to Radiology, who informed me that I had a one-in-four chance of making it through the next six months. Seven weeks of daily debilitating radiation therapy followed, reducing me to less than seven stone, and after each treatment I returned to an empty house, scrawny, unable to hold any food down, my entire adult past having been taken from me, and with a slim chance of having any future.

Obviously I was one of the lucky one-in-four. But the person who finally reappeared in public, and resumed lecturing at STC in 1972, was not the upwardly mobile bourgeois father-of-two; but rather a single, almost penniless thirty-something lost soul with little hope of even having a future to think about let alone plan for. And I had also lost most of those I had once called my friends. Some whispered about what I could possibly have done to make my wife up and leave; some I no longer fitted in with as I had neither money at hand nor children in tow; and most surprisingly there were those who didn't want to get too close, just in case the cancer was catching. Here was another serious identity crisis in my life; and strangely it was my thesis that anchored the next two years and kept me going, and which, along with my growing involvement with philosophy of education and the formation of PESA, put a foundation under me. I devoted 1972 to completing my thesis, getting fit enough to keep working and to go to the PESA Annual Conference in Christchurch, and to trying to figure out what to do next.

First, with my house having been taken from under me and my bourgeois neighbourhood not wanting to know me, there was the problem of where to live. Initially it was one person's floor after another; then an abandoned flat in North Sydney which was awaiting obliteration, along with half the suburb, to make way for a new Freeway; then more floors and spare rooms; and through all of this I learnt much of 'the kindness of strangers'. 'Strangers'; because the people who took me in and helped me find my way were not friends from my settled adulthood but rather mostly students whom I was either studying with or teaching, and at the beginning I knew nothing of their share-houses, floor-space hospitality or skills in hunting out and occupying a squat. They were not strangers for long. As I regained strength I began to find life without possessions and leveraged assets exciting; I met more and more people who took me for what I was rather than how well the tablecloth matched the crockery at dinner parties, and who talked a language far more exciting than investments, which private schools to earmark for the children, and whether we should go to the Gold Coast or try Noumea for the Xmas holidays this year.

By mid-1973 the 'new' person emerged. As I was earning lecturer's pay the bank provided a home - loan, and I moved into a small terrace – two up and two down – in inner-city Sydney, just five minutes' walk to the University. It was also not far from where I spent my childhood; and so in a number of senses I was back where I started, and where I quickly found a sense of belonging. The wardrobe of endless suits, along with the monogrammed shirts and matching ties, were now of no use to me, and so there was a great day when everything was disposed of, and when I bought my first pair of jeans, my first TShirt with a slogan on it, and my first pair of sneakers; and the next day I walked to work attired in them with my books and things in a tasselled multicoloured cloth shoulder bag.

I felt great. The Principal, however, viewed this with horror, and before lunch I was in his office being directed to dress appropriately. I told him I'd dress any way I bloody well wanted to; so he suggested that I might start looking for a new job. I knew he couldn't fire me; but I had my Degrees and Medal, no little mouths to feed or appearances to keep up, and as yet no assurance that I had beaten the cancer, so I thought, why not? I was about to leave the security and tenure of the Public Service, and at age 35 strike out for myself.

I had never stepped out of line before that. Rather, from 1970 onwards I had built up a friendship, and a professional relationship through the formation of PESA, with Les Brown, Head of the Faculty of Education at the University of New South Wales, who at the time was amassing the world's biggest philosophy of education staff list. Les and I also shared a common background in that his speciality was English Literature; and I had approached him about a job well before I threw away my suits. Somehow, he managed to conjure up yet another 'vacancy', and although it was just a formality, I still had to apply and face a Selection Committee. I turned up in a borrowed suit, behaved as if I was still the person Les had known over the last few years; and a week later a letter came inviting me to take up a three year contract as a Lecturer (probationary) at UNSW from the beginning of 1974. Thus, on signing, I totally cut my ties with job security – I had done what I was afraid and unable to do in 1954 with the radio cadetship, accepting a position with an uncertain future was and from which I could be fired at little notice.

Before I departed the Sydney University campus, being no longer a student or a suit-laden bourgeois married family-man, I hunted out things I had been missing, and quickly found the world of marijuana, sexual freedom, political activism and radical philosophy. I started working on the fringes of the Union movement, joined Socialist groups, took part in protests and demonstrations, and met people who would lead me, via philosophy, to a new understanding of my world.

The philosophy came from two sources. On the one hand, as I was going through my transformation, so too was certain educational literature. The works of Ivan Illich, Paul Goodman, Paulo Freire, John Holt, Jonathan Kozol and many others began circulating in Sydney in 1972, and by 1973 I was reading them voraciously. Here I came to see what had eluded me as a student and then as a teacher; namely that schools were places of alienation for the oppressed and working class, and served to secure social and class stability rather than mobility. That was not easy to accept, having built my professional life on the opposite premise, and I needed further convincing. That came when I met Illich and then Freire, when I became friends with a person who had lived at Illich's commune in Mexico, when my new colleagues at Sydney introduced me to the emerging writings of Sam Bowles and Herb Gintis, and when a wonderful lecturer in philosophy, Alan Chalmers, introduced me to a branch of philosophy of science which questioned empiricism and the very nature of established mainstream epistemology. Two things happened almost simultaneously: I recalled Mannheim; and for the first time I seriously doubted the alleged value-neutral analytic basis on which the philosophy of education I had studied had been constructed. So there I was, near the top of the educational tree with my Degrees, honours and medal, now very seriously doubting – nay, denouncing – all that I had learnt on the way up and which to that point had been sustaining me.

I had to get off. But that meant getting on something else, and again it was Alan Chalmers who lit the way by introducing me to the work of Paul Feyerabend and then Louis Althusser, and especially his famous (or notorious) 'Ideological State Apparatus' essay. By mid 1973 I had many new authors and works to consume, and an intellectual mindset to deconstruct and then reconstruct differently. I spent the rest of that year totally immersed in this new material, trying to make sense of education, philosophy, my life, and the world. But by year's end, when I was to change jobs, I had made little headway: this being best exemplified by the fact that, on joining

UNSW in 1974, I also enrolled as a PhD student with a thesis entitled: ‘Moral Education; From an Analytic Point of View’, with Les Brown as my supervisor.

When I started at UNSW; the person Les Brown was expecting was not quite the person who turned up. We had met a lot previously at PESA planning meetings, at PESA Annual Conference in Christchurch 1972, and at the Hobart Conference in 1973, all before I abandoned my suits. I had remained near to silent at those conferences, largely through fear born of ignorance. But the person who turned up at UNSW was in jeans, and completely uncertain about what philosophy of education to teach. It was a real watershed year. I did teach analytic philosophy of education, I started my thesis on moral education, but I was reading totally different things and exploring completely different areas. And my confidence was growing, sufficiently so to give my first paper (actually a short Response) at the PESA Conference in Canberra. It was a critical response which went over well, and after I had finally spoken up, people came over to talk and started to take me a bit seriously: seriously enough, as it turned out, to appoint me, along with Jim Walker, as the Organisers and Coordinators of the upcoming 1975 Conference to be held in Sydney at Macquarie University. It was also decided that PESA Conferences should now have a theme, and as a number of people were beginning to become critical, to varying degrees, of the prevailing orthodoxy of analytic philosophy of education, it was decided that the 1975 Conference be themed ‘Radical Critiques of Education’. Nobody really knew what that meant at the time, but by August 1975 the phrase was to turn PESA, and a number of its members individually, inside out, upside down and shredded to ribbons.

1974 was a quiet, confused year. I saw more and more of people such as Peter Stevens, Warren Fenley, Michael Matthews, Alan Chalmers and Wal Sutching; and I grappled with a new literature (Marx was now on my agenda) while trying to put a finger on what was wrong with the orthodoxy I was increasingly being regarded as proficient with as two more Journal articles got published. Peter and Warren started an unofficial alternative ‘Society’, and a group of us met weekly at Sydney to thrash out issues and to try and find our way. We also met frequently at my house, which by then had become an ‘open house’ which meant anybody could turn up at any time (burglars included, I found to my chagrin) so you never really knew who would be there or what sort of discussion or activity you might be entering in to. But through all of this, nothing really gelled with me. Perhaps I was a slow learner, or there was just too much to learn and unlearn, but while others seemed to be progressing, I remained confused. The only thing radical about me was my jeans, and my *chutzpah* when, against the advice of Les Brown, I applied for promotion to Senior Lecturer in my first year, and despite Les’s overt opposition, I got it.

The change came about largely by accident. Jim Walker and I had decided the 1975 PESA Conference should start with a series of short papers offering different ‘radical’ critiques, and then be thrown open for general discussion. However, weeks before the Conference was to begin, the new President of PESA wrote to us claiming rights to a Presidential Opening Address. This was totally new to Jim and me, but the President was a Professor and we were two beginning lecturers, so how were we to deny him what he thought to be his right? We rather meekly gave in; but decided that one of us would give a short reply to the President’s Address. We tossed a coin, and I won. We then wrote to the President seeking a copy of his Address so that a Reply could be formulated. Time passed, and with only a few days to go we received his

answer: a blunt refusal to supply the Address. We therefore had to chuck in the idea, or else do a Reply to a paper we hadn't seen and had not a clue as to what it might be about.

Jim and I went for the second option, and I wrote out a very quick thousand word 'first draft'. But then a family issue exploded which required me to go straight from my office to Melbourne. I therefore left the draft with the Departmental Secretary to type and run off a hundred copies, and away I went. My plane back from Melbourne arrived two hours before the Conference was about to start. I thus took a taxi to my office, picked up the bundle the Secretary left for me, and drove across Sydney reaching the Conference room at Macquarie just as the President was acknowledging the applause for his Address. Jim whispered, a bit sharply, that I had cut it rather fine, and then with a couple of helpers distributed my paper along the rows to the audience. I then took to the lectern and gave an unpolished Reply to a Paper I had never seen or heard.

Was it luck; serendipity; or possibly the unconscious coming together of all the points of criticism I had been building up in my mind to the prevailing orthodoxy? Who knows? But somehow I had delivered a crude demolition of both the substance and the theoretic basis of the Presidential Address. When I finished there was a moment of madness in which the President accused Jim and me of setting him up, at which point he stormed out of the room, the Conference and the Society (he was warmly welcomed back when he rejoined PESA some time later). I was left standing at the lectern to take questions for much of the remainder of the Opening Night; and I had no choice but to answer, defend, explain, elaborate, or in short, announce myself. Unwashed, unfed, unkempt; and anything but ready, I had arrived.

From that point on people started telling me that I had things to say, suggesting it was about time I spoke up, gave papers and so on. Most encouraging of all was Jim Walker, to whom I continued to owe a great deal over the coming decade. But one other absolutely crucial thing happened at that Macquarie Conference: Peter Stevens gave a paper on Althusser and ideology which was to prove central to the way I was to go. It was as if the bizarre nature of the Conference Opening Night placed me at the doorstep; Peter Stevens opened the door, and Jim Walker pushed me through.

Things progressed very quickly from there. By the end of the Conference I knew what I *really* wanted to write my PhD on, and I had actually mapped out an outline and filled in a detailed synopsis. It was a work which was to encompass my experience at school both as a pupil and a teacher, embrace the new radical thinking on education emanating mainly from the USA but also from the UK, and find its base in the philosophy Alan Chalmers had taught me, augmented by the insights I had gained from Mannheim and the new things I was learning about ideology from Althusser. It denied the neutrality, and emphasised the political nature of philosophy, knowledge, education and schooling. Its working title was *Education, Schooling, Politics and Knowledge*. Back at UNSW I put in a formal change of title for my PhD and asked Les Brown if he would continue to act as my supervisor. He agreed rather reluctantly after first vehemently attempting to get me to abandon such folly.

Throughout 1975 I worked night and day on this new thesis, and in doing so I constantly re-examined the work of Richard Peters and Paul Hirst, until finally I was game to say out loud to Jim Walker: 'I think Peters has got it all wrong, and I think I can show where, how and why

though a critique of *Ethics and Education*'. Jim heard me out, and then suggested it might be time for me to stand up and give a paper. The first available opportunity would be at PESA's NSW Branch meeting the following March, so I stuck in the title 'Peters on Schooling' (emulating John Kleinig's classic 'Peters on Punishment' from the 1973 Christchurch Conference) and for five months I worked up my first ever paper in what I thought philosophy of education was, or at least ought to be. Jim read drafts and otherwise agonised with me through its construction, and finally I read it at Sydney University.

It was both a big success and a terrible disaster, depending on where you sat. It was denounced from the floor as 'utter bullshit' (possibly the first PESA paper to receive this accolade publicly); and the next day Les Brown, who never spoke at Meetings, hauled me into his office and literally tore shreds off me for bringing disgrace both to the discipline and his School. But on the other side there were a few who thought I had something in there, and who encouraged me to work it through, clear out the rubbish, sort out the argument, and offer it for PESA's Annual Conference in Auckland the following May. I agreed, with some trepidation, greatly magnified when I learnt that Paul Hirst was to be in the Auckland audience.

So; in 1976 I had two major projects going, and this was quickly to become three. At Sydney University there was growing ferment over what passed for, and was taught, as 'Economics'. An informal 'Political Economy Now!' group was formed, which arranged a Conference and invited Herb Gintis and Sam Bowles come over from Harvard as keynote speakers. Well, what with all the 'open houses' and 'share houses' that we were living in, there was hardly any demarcation between the philosophers, economists and the educationists, all of whom were represented in the recently formed 'Radical Education Group', and it became obvious that if Bowles and Gintis were to be in Sydney, then it would be good to keep them over and have an education Conference as well. And so six of us from the Radical Education Group constituted ourselves as an organising committee and planned the 'What to do About Schools' Conference for June. Five of the six – Michael Matthews, Peter Stevens, Bob Mackie, Jim Walker, and myself – were to have some influence in PESA, and philosophy of education more widely, over the coming years.

Thus did 1976 proceed into chaos. I thrashed at my thesis, I gave my paper in Auckland in May (it got a better reception than the Sydney version), and I helped organise the 'Schools' Conference. I also spent much time with Bowles and Gintis, the product of which fed quickly (sometimes too quickly and uncritically) into my thesis. Then, with the Conference's organisers, I had to try to answer a most vexed question: what to do with the money?

When we began organising the Conference we expected very few people to come, so we went begging to left-leaning organisations for donations in order to hire a venue, print papers and cover incidental costs. Little did we realise that over five hundred people would pay up as Registrants, or that the potential donors we approached might hand over hundreds, and in one case, thousands of dollars. So; after it was over and the bills were all paid, we were amazed to find we had seven thousand dollars left in the Conference account. 'What to do About Schools' quickly became 'What to do about this huge amount of money' which technically didn't belong to anybody.

Outside, but related factors, helped us make a decision. At the encouragement of some at the Auckland conference, I had sent my paper to a number of Journals, and had already received rejections from every one of them. One Editor noted that it was ‘a fine article, but it was not in the interests of either her or the Journal to publish a critique of Professor Peters’. I had also completed what I regarded as a near-to-final draft of my thesis, only to be told by my supervisor that he considered it to be of such a poor standard that he was loathe to sign the papers which would enable it to go to examiners. Suddenly it became obvious that education was facing the same sort of problems that had led Sydney University’s Political Economy group to bring its cause to the fore: how could we get heard, and published, when the very people we were criticising stood at the portals of the publishing world?

After an almighty wrangle within the Radical Education Group it was finally decided that the surplus Conference money should go into establishing our own Journal for this very cause. The subsequent establishment of *Radical Education Dossier*, and its survival for close to thirty years, is a story in itself; but of particular interest here is that its founding Collective of six people (we didn’t use the bourgeois term ‘Editorial Board’), contained three who were central to PESA’s development: Bob Mackie, Jim Walker and myself.

And so the second half of 1976 became the most frantic time of my life. I was trying, along with five other totally inexperienced people, to produce the first number of a Journal, literally from scratch: we did the typing, layout, printing – everything – learning it as we went. I was still hawking my Auckland paper (unsuccessfully) to Journals; I was finishing off, at a frenetic pace, a thesis my supervisor looked down upon; but the good news was that I had survived my probationary period and had been given both tenure and my first sabbatical, and was thus preparing to go overseas to Richard Peters and Co. at the Philosophy of Education Department at the University of London Institute of Education. I was also doing one other thing.

I had checked my University’s by-laws, and in learning that I could apply for a change of supervisor, a second alternative also presented itself. The regulations indicated that a PhD candidate could publish a book and then present that book as the ‘thesis’ for examination. This bypassed the ‘supervisor’ problem, but also raised the not-so-minor problem of having a book ready for publication. And of course it hit me! I’m going on sabbatical to London, I have the manuscript of my thesis completed, so what if I took it to Routledge and they published it? It seemed a long and rather stupid shot, but I had nothing to lose by trying; so I went for it.

I dropped the ‘Politics’ and ‘Schooling’ from the title; and headed off for London in December 1976 carrying a manuscript entitled *Education and Knowledge*. I did some tidying up over the London winter, and then walked into Routledge’s offices on Store St and offered them the manuscript. There is a long back-story to this, but the upshot is that they actually took it from me and agreed to a contract on the spot, subject to revisions after it had been sent out to readers.

This may explain why *Education and Knowledge*, completed in 1976 but published in 1979, does not acknowledge Alan Chalmers’ *What Is This Thing Called Science?*, published by University of Queensland Press ostensibly in 1977, some of which it echoes closely since it drew heavily from Alan’s class notes; and why it fails to attend to Paul Willis’s *Learning to Labour* (1977). And as *Education and Knowledge* was an argument for *critical preference* which claimed that, at

the time of writing, Marxism was the most preferable theory for examining certain issues but at any time it might possibly be surpassed by a more preferable theory (see especially p.118), it also explains why I came to be known both as a Marxist and, by hardliners, as a traitor to the cause.

By the first half of 1977 life was a real hoot. Tenured Senior Lecturer; book accepted by Routledge (with first option on my next one); supervisor bypassed on my way to a PhD; a severely modified version of my Auckland paper about to be published in *EPAT*; a major Conference organised and a new Journal launched: now little Mister Mouse felt ready to come out of his hole talking. I started by giving a paper called 'What Philosophy of Education Might Be' to the very Institution that was defining what philosophy of education was, with Richard Peters, Robert Dearden, John and Pat White, Terry Wallace, Helen Freeman and others in the audience; and then gave papers in Denmark and Italy before presenting two others to the Radical Philosophy Conference in Bristol and the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain at Sussex University, thus connecting up with people such as Roy Edgley, Bill Outhwaite, Trevor Pateman, Mike Fielding, Michael Young, Geoff Whitty, Tony Green and a long long cast of radicals. By the time I got back to Australia I was fired up and ready to go. And something else had been rekindled. To my concentration on epistemology, structuralism and politics there came a growing obsession with 'class'.

There were no publications in 1977, 1978 or 1979 and just three papers given to PESA Branches or Annual Conferences; and also by early 1978 I had broken my editorial connection with the Journal I had co-founded. Instead, two major things happened. On the one hand I continued my exploration of 'class' almost fanatically; and on the other hand, at 11.07am on March 9, 1979, I met the person who was, from that moment on, to become my life-partner. I was thus doubly consumed; working my way through class theory while being totally immersed in a relationship and partnership. This was the period in which I finally found myself, and sadly in which I lost some of my friends and colleagues. The latter was my fault, as I gave too little intellectual attention to those who would disagree with me about points of theory and practice, and too little personal attention to those who might deprive me of more time than I was willing to spend away from Maureen. But still it was a productive time; and when I headed off to England on my next sabbatical in 1980, this time to Birmingham to make good my debt to and ignorance of both Paul Willis and the CCCS, I carried the manuscript of *Teachers and Classes*, which Routledge signed up to; and, given that Maureen was unable to make the trip, I delivered eight papers and lectures at various Universities around the UK in a kind of roadshow, which provided a sense of what rock bands must go through on tour. It was the height of both my academic 'stardom' and my private loneliness. By the time I returned to Australia I knew I didn't want to live like that any more.

In 1981 Maureen and I moved away from the open-house Glebe/University scene and bought a dilapidated Californian Bungalow on Sydney's affluent North Shore. We surprised our new neighbours by renovating and restoring the house rather than demolishing it; and by campaigning and leafleting for the Labor Party. Maureen spent the years teaching in Sydney's south-west, trying to do for Lebanese Muslim migrant boys what I had attempted years earlier at Chester Hill and Newtown, and with about the same success rate, while I went very quiet. There was one invited week lecturing in Malaysia, but otherwise I read about 'class' and worked quietly on a new book, *Sex, Ideology and Religion*. Then, with a sabbatical coming up in 1984, Maureen and

I decided to chuck most of it in, add six months long service leave to my sabbatical, and backpack our way around Britain and Europe for a year. So we ‘lent’ our house to a bunch of students, and took off.

It was a brilliant year. It started with Harvester Press signing up *Sex, Ideology and Religion*, then took in the Conference and paper-giving round, and otherwise had us bumming our way around Europe trying to see everything (I finally learnt French – in France) before the money ran out. We returned to Australia totally broke two weeks early, and thankfully the students vacated our house immediately. I returned to UNSW, Maureen went back to her Lebanese boys, and we scratched away at a mortgage which was proving just a little too difficult for us. Then Maureen fell pregnant, and in October David was born, the child of professional parents who were in their forties, flat broke and living on a single income while interest rates hovered around the 17% mark. It was then that Maureen and I came to fully understand the achievement of our parents, in bringing up families and holding onto homes by a slender thread.

And so, as I was about to touch fifty, money was once again short, and this time it was serious. I had to hit the promotion trail, and after one unsuccessful try I managed to get promotion to Associate Professor in 1987. Interestingly, that’s when many things started to kick in. There were invitations to present papers of a philosophical nature far beyond PESA: at the AARE/NZARE Annual Conference in 1987; the SPATE Annual Conference, an ACER International Conference and the Australian Teachers Of Media Annual Conference in 1988, capped off by being awarded the Inaugural Shell Visiting Fellowship at the University of Hong Kong over the summer of 1988-9. Over that period I gave ten papers and public lectures, all in different ways moving me towards class analysis, the mechanics of schooling and the role of teachers and intellectuals in society. I knew the determinism of my 70s and 80s work could not stand up; my problem was what to replace it with whilst still embracing structuralism. As I began to work seriously on that, the best moment of my professional life occurred: Twelve years after mercilessly, and very crudely, savaging virtually everything the Philosophy of Education Society Of Great Britain stood for and produced, I was invited to give the Keynote opening address to their Annual Conference for April 1990. Significantly, my paper was entitled ‘Empowering Teachers’. Also significantly, for me anyway, was that I returned to deliver papers to their Annual Conferences in 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1996; the INPE Conference in London 1990; as well as the IOE Philosophy of Education Department Research Seminar in 1992 and then in 1999 as my final overseas ‘presentation’. I also gave papers to the Annual Conferences of PESA in 1990, 1995 and 1997; as well as to a wider body of professional educational organisations.

Another major change also occurred in the interim. In 1989 I was offered the Chair in Educational Policy Studies at Macquarie University, and thus in 1990 I reached the pinnacle of my academic ambition by becoming a Professor, proudly joining (or preceding) so many of those who started ‘small’ in the early days of PESA: core PESA members such as Jim Walker, Michael Matthews, Brian Hill, Brian Crittenden, Jim Marshall, Ivan Snook, Colin Lankshear, John Codd, Hugh Lauder, Paul Hager, John Kleinig, Fazal Rizvi, David Aspin, Michael Peters; and sympathetic PESA ‘followers’ and regular conference goers and participants such as Rachel Sharp, Judyth Sachs, Lyn Yates, Simon Marginson, and Bob Lingard. In retrospect, as one looks at those names, the PESA years were one wild and exciting ride in highly valued and esteemed

company; and the above two points mark out for me PESA's major achievement: although philosophy of education is rarely taught today, PESA both made it sufficiently respectable as to become part of the mainstream, and also provided many of the next generation of academic leaders across broad areas of Education.

Sadly, Macquarie turned out to be a disappointment. I went there filled with ideas, only to confront a Faculty locked in the past and determined to protect itself and its mediocrity; and a Vice-Chancellor who seemed to have less concern for academic excellence than she had for corporate ambition. I thus left academia fairly much where I started it; on the outer and wanting to change things. But by now I was old and tired; and when, after eleven years, Macquarie threw a retirement package at me, I grabbed it and ran. I kept the entitlements I had earned, gave the 'inducements' to a worthier cause, and decided to fade away.

Before that, however, two significant things had happened. I finally got my ideas together, at least to my satisfaction. *Education and Knowledge* had been too deterministic; *Teachers and Classes* had been too structuralist; and neither had properly recognised the agency of teachers and the good that they can actually bring about – that wild idea that led me to Teachers College back in 1955. The answer came simultaneously through my own experience of working with teachers at many levels, and through my reading of Gramsci where the final t's of my theoretic journey were crossed. Teachers were not necessarily impotent against State Capital; nor were they unproblematically ideological agents; nor, as many were now arguing, were they intellectual and/or cultural imperialists when they professed their values. Gramsci's discussions of the 'organic intellectual' led me to write *Teachers: Constructing the Future*, which enjoyed little commercial success but I believe it is my best work, and hopefully the one I will be remembered for, if I am remembered at all.

The other significant thing to happen was that, in 1995, PESA chose to make me one of its first (of three) Fellows. It is the honour I cherish most; although I wished then, and still do, that the moment could have been shared, as was the University Medal, with Jim Walker to whom my debts remain incalculable.

My first idea upon retiring was that I would use my new-found time to write copiously. But something deeper from the past kept pulling me away from the keyboard. There was so much to do in the Union movement, with the working class, and for State schooling (these were the Howard years, remember). And so I became an old and creaky activist, and spent a lot of my days in schools and a lot of my time working with Unions and pestering politicians; and all I seemed to write were petitions, speeches, and pamphlets. But we all fall apart sometime; and for me it was 2005 when my knees gave out, and then the titanium replacements also decided not to work properly. And when you lose your mobility you gradually lose touch, and as you get further and further out of touch, you see that the torch has gone and is no longer yours to pass on.

In 2007 I decided not to renew my PESA membership when the Society honoured someone who did it considerable continued harm. I watch movies now, and study 'film'; and that's OK because movies have always been the place I wandered off to, paradoxically, to find stillness.