

# BEYOND THE PALE - Growth of a Messiah

JOHN O'LOUGHLIN



# BEYOND THE PALE – Growth of a Messiah

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CDM Philosophy

This edition of *Beyond the Pale* first published 2011 and republished with revisions  
2022 by Centretruths Digital Media

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ISBN: 978-1-4466-5739-3

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## PREFACE

Comprised of several autobiographical sketches, this literary work is divided, unusually, into four sections, the first dating from 1983, the second from 1985, the third from 1993, and the fourth from 1996. All these sketches are written in the supernotational, or loosely aphoristic, vein of my mature philosophy (especially from 1985 onwards), and often overlap with general speculations on a variety of subjects which have played a significant role in my personal life. Thus they are anything but purely autobiographical, although autobiography forms the basis of this project, which is certainly beyond the pale of 1983 so far as three of the four sections are concerned!

John O'Loughlin, London 1996 (Revised 2022)

# *Self-Revelations (1983)*

## 1

Writing a journal is really a sort of madness, though it isn't generally recognized as such – unlike, for instance, a person who talks to himself. The writer of journals, notebooks, diaries, etc., also talks to himself, but on the higher level, as it were, of recorded thought. Often the journal is kept or written without concern for immediate publication; though most famous writers who keep journals doubtless do so with respect to eventual, if posthumous, publication. Thus Baudelaire, Gide, Camus, Nietzsche, amongst others. Had they not also been recognized men-of-letters, with various publications to their names, it is doubtful that any of them would have kept journals in the first place.

Although, from another point of view, it could also be said that a man addicted to writing will be glad of the opportunity a journal affords him to continue writing, if in a relatively relaxed, intermittent, and informal kind of way. When he has nothing else to do, or is unwilling to take on a difficult professional task, he can always take refuge in a journal, passing the time in a lukewarm though, on the whole, intellectually-gratifying, egotistical sort of way.

But if talking to oneself is a sort of madness, then writing to oneself cannot be much else, even if it corresponds, as a rule, to a more intelligent sort of mind!

## 2

I have never much liked the proletariat, especially the lumpen proletariat, of which description the Borough of Haringey and, in particular, the areas of Hornsey and Stroud Green would appear to be well stocked. The man who lives in the room next to mine is a vulgar boor, who can never close a

door without slamming it. He wretches and coughs in a disgusting manner, doubtless due to regular drinking and smoking, and very often mimics 'ahems' for my dubious benefit; though I am so used to such tepid sarcasm by now, after over nine years of bedsitter accommodation in north London, that I tend not to be offended by it. What I most suffer from, where this middle-aged proletarian is concerned, is the volume of his television, which penetrates the thin wall that separates our respective rooms on a nightly basis, obliging me, when I can't bring myself to complain, to seek refuge in wax earplugs. Sometimes one can hear his television blaring away during the afternoon as well, though he is generally more considerate then than at other times, possibly because he is slightly ashamed to be indoors all day (he is unemployed) and doesn't wish to distract me from my writing or, more likely, because the TV is simply less interesting then and/or he doesn't have any sexual commitments to drown out.

But I dislike the man intensely, not only because he is a layabout, but because of his bad language, ugly proletarian looks, cultural philistinism, and tendency, as noted above, to slam his door. Once or twice I thought of asking him to close it quietly; but, on reflection, I supposed that I would merely appear in a humiliating light, as a gentleman prepared or being obliged to live with – and not for the first time – a rough prole! Then again, how can one expect somebody who is so patently *not* a gentleman to behave like one? It would be quite illogical of me, as someone who prides himself on his logic, to require gentle behaviour of a lumpen brute! I have no option, short of changing address, but to persevere with him!

### 3

It was not so long ago that I began to form a distinction, in my mind, between children and kids. Ordinarily, educated people would take the latter term for a vulgar equivalent to the former, a lower-class way, as it were, of referring to children. This is of course the way I see it on one level; though on another level, peculiarly my own, I prefer to regard kids as lower-class children, as creatures for whom the term 'children' would be inappropriate, because suggesting something delicate, well-behaved, pretty, gentle, quiet, well-spoken, shy, respectful, and intellectually curious. These 'kids', on the other hand, are foul-mouthed, dirty, brutish, destructive, and

ugly, being, in Ezra Pound's concise phrase, the 'offspring of the very poor'.

Living in a room which overlooks an alley, I have heard and seen these 'kids' playing there often enough to know that, by no stretch of the poetic imagination, could one reasonably apply the word 'children' to them! One or two of them are notably fiendish, and will doubtless become vandals and thugs in years to come. A 'kid' is not somebody one would wish to pat on the head for being a good boy. On the contrary, he is somebody to avoid contact with, from fear that one might be tempted to knock him on the head for being a brute!

#### 4

It would be difficult to imagine a greater musical distinction than that which exists between the two violin concertos on a Supraphon record I recently had the privilege of borrowing from Hornsey Central Library, and that despite the extraordinary fact of both concertos having been composed or published in the same year (1939), and being performed, on this record, by the same orchestra, viz. the Czech Philharmonic, under the same conductor, viz. Karel Ancerl, with the same violinist, viz. André Gertler.

These two quite remarkable concertos are the Hindemith and the Hartmann, and whereas the former is the epitome of Neo-Classicism, the latter comes straight out of mid-nineteenth-century Romanticism, and therefore isn't even late-Romantic, like, say, the Berg Violin Concerto, but anachronistically Romantic, reminiscent, in a way, of Liszt. This in part doubtless explains why we're not more familiar with Hartmann's name!

Nevertheless, a considerable work in its own right, demanding passionate incisiveness from the soloist over long stretches of the third movement, the *allegro di molto*, which contrasts with the generally lugubrious tone, *de profundis*, of the preceding and succeeding movements, the work itself having been dubbed *Concerto Funebre*. But, typical of Romanticism of this type, one is dragged into the emotional vortex and obliged to identify with the composer's and performers' passion, particularly in the third and longest movement.

How different from the Hindemith, which keeps one outside, a spectator, as it were, of its cool classical poise, sparsely orchestrated with the finest of solo tones, the violin for the most part in the highest register – clear, clean, precise, a dispassionate, though not indifferent, performance. I would have preferred the Romantic work on side one and the Neo-Classical on side two, so that, having plumbed the depths, one could soar to the heights of dispassionate contemplation. Beginning with the latter and ending with the former, however, suggests a kind of Jekyll-and-Hyde transformation on the part of orchestra and soloist alike. Nevertheless, a great record!

## 5

After several years in Hornsey, north London, I am still alone, devoid of friends and acquaintances alike. All I have is my mother and stepfather, whom I visit in Stroud Green on Friday evenings, but whose company I do not relish. My mother is too plebeian and philistine in mentality; my stepfather, a West Indian by origin, too taciturn and lethargic, more inclined to moroseness than good humour. Otherwise, an old woman whom I occasionally visit in Palmers Green, an acquaintance of one of my Galway aunts, whose conversation both bores and oppresses me, particularly when on the subject of Catholicism, about which, like so many older people of Southern Irish origin, she is well-nigh fanatic.

As regards friends or acquaintances of my own generation – not a thing! And it has been like this for so long now that, despite the depression from which I suffer in consequence of living where and how I do, I tend to take it all for granted! Even take my celibacy for granted, resigned to the fact that I shall never find myself a suitable female companion so long as I remain in Hornsey or, for that matter, anywhere else in Haringey, socially isolated from my kind.

At thirty, I am still a virgin, and have not so much as kissed a woman in over ten years. Neither have I been to a party since 1974, the last one, oddly enough, being up in Newcastle with some student friends, whom I briefly visited. I have no prospects of sex or socialization at present; for, without a publisher, I shall remain confined to the dole and the narrow environment in which I languish, like a prisoner, among the unthinking and



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Of all environments, the one I most dream of living in is rural or provincial, like the one in Merstham, Surrey, I was obliged to move out of in December 1973, having spent but two years there with the family of a school friend, Chris, who had invited me to move in with him and the rest of his family (father, mother, sister, two younger brothers) when they were all still living at Wallington, in another part of Surrey, some two-and-a-half years previously. Be that as it may, what I now wanted, in short, was somewhere where one could live in a house of one's own without the constant threat and actual inconvenience of neighbour disturbances, such as uncouth pop or rock music issuing from some fool's over-loud stereo speakers. For it would only be by moving from one extreme to another, as from an urban bedsit to a country house or even cottage, that I figured I could quicken my recovery from depression and acquire such sensuality, both natural and sexual, as I have lacked these past nine years of urban exile.

In this desired environment I would have peace in which to write and read, and would gradually recover from my enforced celibacy with the assistance of a beautiful, intelligent, cultured and pleasant female, with no-one to cynically put in on me or to categorically forbid me from following my sexual instincts. No doubt, I would also take regular country walks, and perhaps drink and smoke a little (sherry in preference to wine or beer, cigars in preference to cigarettes).

7

Interesting how beauty is mostly confined to the bourgeois and aristocratic classes. There is really no such thing as a beautiful proletarian, at least I have never noticed one during all these years of squalid north London life. Women of the people can be attractive, and some of them are even very attractive. But beautiful, no! That demands culture, intelligence, character,

careful breeding, and, above all, soul. It conforms, one might say, to an earlier phase of human evolution, before life becomes, under urban pressures exclusively transcendental and thereupon orientated towards truth.

The aristocratic and bourgeois classes stem from the beauty of nature., in rural or lush suburban settings The proletariat spring-up in the city, at an artificial remove from nature, and consequently have no real contact with beauty. Paradoxical though it may seem, beauty would not become them. They do not, in their utilitarian dispositions, *require* it.

But I, a man of middle-class origin on my father's side, both appreciate and need beauty, and would not settle for a woman who was less than beautiful but ... either attractive or plain. I have no desire, either, to repeat my late-father's mistake and opt for an attractive proletarian. For I know the consequences of their separation only too well ... to wish to inflict, or run the risk of inflicting, something similar on anyone else! Better, if one cannot find an appropriate partner, to remain solitary – and celibate.

## 8

There was one person whom I particularly coveted, even though I was in love with somebody else at the time, and she was both very beautiful and highly intelligent, a rare being of no mean cultural achievement either.

This was back in the early 1970s, and I undoubtedly travelled up to Newcastle, early in 1974, with a view to deepening my acquaintance with her. But nothing came of my visit and that was the last I saw of her, ashamed and disappointed, as I was, by circumstances seemingly beyond my control.

Nevertheless, I still think of her from time to time, and have used a variation on her in one or two of my novels. She was, in my estimation, the complete woman.

I masturbate but infrequently, no more than once a month, and do so not simply for the pleasure – there is little enough of that! – but, more importantly, to preclude my experiencing a wet dream during the night, with all the attendant inconvenience of being woken up, having to clamber out of bed in the dark to mop up the mess on sheets, thighs, stomach, or wherever, with the aid of paper tissues. This prospect disgusts me so much that I prefer to masturbate every once in a while, in an effort to pre-empt nature's tyranny and so save myself worse inconvenience later on!

Generally, I would say that the more one masturbates the less likely is one to suffer from nocturnal emissions. A minimum of once a month is therefore advisable! Naturally, I dislike masturbation from a personal point-of-view, but I don't suffer so much regret these days as I used to do, chiefly because I look upon masturbation over pornography not as a form of perversion, which is what it must seem to the more naturalistic males, whether bourgeois or proletarian, but as a higher level of sexuality, part of evolutionary progress, one might say, towards the supersession of sexual activity in what I like to think of as a Post-human Millennium, when human brains will, in all likelihood, be artificially supported and sustained in communal contexts.

Neither do I associate masturbation with fears of self-abuse, the life-force being turned-in upon itself, as it were, in negation of a two-way give-and-take synchronicity or reciprocity. I have no Lawrentian or Reichian fears, in response, I would argue, to a strongly atomic imagination such as both D.H. Lawrence and Wilhelm Reich may well have possessed. I look at masturbation impartially, objectively, without fear of physical damage, say a hernia, and come to the conclusion that the ejaculation of semen brought about by the friction of palm rubbing against penis will not differ, to any marked extent, from an ejaculation brought about by the friction of penis rubbing against the inner walls of a vagina. In both cases, there is a friction and an ejaculation. That is all! But there is less flesh involved with masturbation than with atomic sex. It would not appeal to an average sensualist, but only to an extreme ascetic type, likely ectomorphic (to use a term denoting thinness borrowed from Aldous Huxley) in build and even character..

In one sense, I suppose I *have* had a variety of girlfriends since moving to north London. For I have admired a number of pin-ups, such as one finds in men's magazines like *Penthouse* and *Oui*. Usually, there is at least one model in each month's *Penthouse* in whom I can take some pleasure, and generally I cut one or two of the more appealing models out of the magazine and either pin them to the wall – having taken care to remove previous ones – or put them in a drawer that I especially reserve for a variety of clippings, photos, postcards, letters, Christmas cards, and other paper mementos, to extract the relevant photos when I feel like admiring any given model anew.

Thus, in a sublimated kind of way, these models become my girlfriends, though on a relatively short-term basis, insofar as one may – and hopefully will – find a different model to admire every month. Is this madness or simply an extreme form of sexual relationship? The private person in me suggests the former, but the philosopher, the man with a sense of evolutionary perspective derived from the cumulative development of so much serious thinking along ...