

You will have received much information on the mature period of Denis's glittering academic career. Let me add a few words about how it began.

Denis Cosgrove was the very first student I picked for St Catherine's College Oxford, when I became a member of the College in 1965. I carried out the interviews with Michael Gearin-Tosh, then a junior Research Fellow in English. Denis shone. He talked to us about 'Luther', John Osborne's new play. Denis explained that Luther achieved Religious Revelation and freedom from constipation at one and the same moment. We awarded him an Open Scholarship, the first in Geography at St Catherine's. Denis was part of a brilliant year: Lester Hicks, the College's first First in Geography (and later a Civil Service Mandarin) and Mike Walker, now a Professor of Geography at the University of Wales, were two of his co-conspirators. After graduating Denis set sail for Canada to do his MA on Dry Goods Stores with Cole Harris in Toronto. But he returned to Oxford to further his graduate career.

Wisely, Denis turned down my suggestion that he work on my kind of topic and research Catholic/Protestant segregation in Belfast. The Troubles effectively started in that year 1969. Instead, Denis swam against the current of the Quantitative Revolution and put the humanities into geography. He turned to culture, landscape and architecture and wrote a magnificent thesis on the Palladian landscape of North Italy. He was fortunate in his external examiner David Lowenthal. Denis thesis had been entered for the degree of B. Litt. (in Oxford you got an MA for letting your BA mature for four years, while you got a Bachelor's degree for research). David Lowenthal said 'we can't pass this thesis - it's worth a doctorate.' After some discussion with the Administration, the thesis was withdrawn and resubmitted triumphantly for the higher degree.

Denis's years at Oxford included the reverberations of Paris 1968 and the student revolution. Jean Gottmann had arrived as professor of Geography and found himself negotiating with Denis as the student leader on student representation on the Departmental committee. He was amazed at Denis's knowledge of the internal discussions of the Committee. Gottmann assumed that I, as his Tutor and sometime supervisor, was the mole. However, when it emerged that Denis's interest in Gottmann's own appointee as Departmental Lecturer, Isobel Thubron, was more than academic (they married) the penny dropped.

Denis, as I said, was the first student that I admitted at St Catherine's. I was so young and naive that I thought they would all be like him. They were not, but he was the first to blaze a course across the geography firmament. It is fitting that he was the Alexander von Humboldt professor of human geography at UCLA, for he opened up new worlds for our subject. He was a shooting star in our universe and we have lost him.

Ceri Peach
Professor of Social Geography
Oxford University