FAREWELL CSHE—Simon Marginson 24 October 2013

Julia Mottram: Here on the stairs, a minute to say goodbye.

Charles Ryder: (wistfully) So long to say so little.

Julia Mottram: You knew?

Charles Ryder: Since this morning. Since before this morning. All this year.

—Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited* (1945)

I will begin with thank yous. I want to thank everyone here, those came to say good-bye and good luck, and those who came for the reality show!

And I am very grateful to Richard, Field and Fazal for ‘dignifying’ the occasion. Richard has been an outstanding director of CSHE and a model for middle managers everywhere. He has now chosen executive leadership. We know he could do more or less anything at that level. Field, like Richard has been a world-class athlete. Unlike Richard he is still a world-class athlete, in fact a world champion in rowing. Dean of Education is a difficult gig. We serve the public good. No money, little status. I have never seen a better Dean than Field. Fazal has been a wonderful friend for me and my beloved daughter Ana Rosa. Fazal is our best global scholar. He is also the kindest man I know.

My other thank yous are for Sophie Arkoudis and Chi Baik who have been good friends at CSHE, for Mirella Ozols who has organized my work so well, and for Glyn Davis and Ian Marshman. Glyn is not only in a league of his own as Vice-Chancellor, he is a great colleague in higher education studies. Working with him has been a happy experience and I will miss it. As Senior Vice-Principal Ian is the best university administrator in the country. With Glyn and Ian at the same time no wonder the University is going well.

But I am not simply leaving the University, I am leaving the country. This is a big move. Without wanting to be dramatic about it, I may not live here again. Why am I leaving the perfect job and tearing myself away from our landscape, the plants, the beaches and the desert, and the tree-ferns and Nothofagus of Gwondanaland, which is the old heart of Australia? Early this year, different things came together. I came back from an overseas trip to find the CSHE coffee machine had gone. Terrible! Melbourne Football Club was still in the doldrums. Higher education policy was at a low ebb, Australia was ducking the challenge of world-class universities, and an Abbott government was coming in. More to the point, after 13 years as a professor in Melbourne, I knew that I needed to refresh, to learn, to put myself under intellectual pressure in a larger setting. Also I had become too engaged here, I had lost the time to write, which is my central function, and my joy, and where I can contribute. I could see there was no solution to that problem. I twice missed ARC Fellowship funding while others were succeeding. They were the ‘push’ factors. The ‘pull’ factors were my partner and stepson. It is better for us to live in Europe. For family reasons, we need to be close to Moscow and to the Netherlands. I am fortunate that I had choices. I start at the Institute of Education at the University of London on Monday. My daughter is joining me early next year. She wants to study in the UK.

Leaving the country has prompted me to reflect on what is important to me, what has animated my work here, and what I will take to London, to the Clark Kerr lectures next year, into my books and beyond. It is good to see Grahame McCulloch and Jeannie Rea and Peter Noonan here. We were together in the Australian Union of Students. This was formative for me and explains what has happened since: the education activism, the observer interest in national policy, the political philosophy, the coalition building, journalism and public speaking, long monographs, media tarttery, ecology (and the native garden), feminism, Vietnam, Palestine. The frenetic productivity. The unreasoning optimism! The world-wide vision. Cosmopolitan and open, diverse and international. Autonomy and self-determination for all. As Bac Ho said, and it is the modern creed everywhere: ‘Nothing is more important than independence and freedom.’ A more free and more creative individuality, within the framework of collective responsibility and public good, with no discrimination, and with nobody left behind. There were tensions there that we did not acknowledge but we were pointing in the right direction. These values that have animated all my work, they came from the AUS Media and Education Departments, and 24/7 AUS conferences. First I carried those values into the teacher unions and the academic union. But in the rest of the real world, there was another kind of human agency, another kind of individuality, a competitive and possessive individualism, in which the individual was positioned so as to negate his/her social conditions. My doctoral thesis on *Markets in Education* in 1996 was my attempt to understand that idea and why it was becoming ascendant.

The big shift for me was the move from activism and advocacy, to inquiry and explanation. It was a more seamless transition that it might appear. I had done explaining before, and my values, and my active role in public debate, continued into the university. My union work had never been doctrinaire, and I always had a broad curiosity about ideas, and the doctoral work confirmed for me that all truths are partial truths. No theory or method can understand everything by itself. Many theories and methodologies can tell us something about the real, and different facets of the real. Theories and methods are not ends in themselves but tools. What matters is the purpose of the inquiry, the question. This determines what theories and methods we will use. In purpose-driven inquiry, the empirical and the normative become aligned. In the search for understanding, informed by political philosophy.

In the last 12 years, initially with Fazal’s help, I have sought to understand globalization, global relations in higher education and knowledge. Even at school, I wanted to look beyond the nation and the zero-sum conflict between states. Now I was able to work on that problem intellectually. And I started to read other phenomena through the global prism. For me, the position of the university, and the state of the nation, are understood first in global context, and I am surprised when others do not see it that way. Which is unreasonable, I know. But we are carried by our enthusiasms! I am lucky I will now have the opportunity to know better some parts of the world, in particular Europe and Russia. At the same time, my regret about London is that it is further from the Asia-Pacific, especially China, Vietnam and Japan. East Asia is emerging as the third global epicenter and I am engaged by all three countries. It is really good that this week the CSHE Vietnam Reading Group finished our book manuscript on *Higher Education in Vietnam*. I expect though I will travel to the region. And I will be back at CSHE as a Professorial Fellow for a fortnight or so each year.

The challenge for me now is how the free autonomy and collectivity that animates my life and work will play out in this larger setting, where relations between structure and agency; and individual, market, society and state; are arranged in several ways in different parts of the world. There are diverse, overlapping, inter-penetrated and ever-changing assumptions and practices of human society, which at this point seem to have become regionally concentrated to a degree: the Anglo-American, the Germanic, Nordic, Francophobe, Post-Confucian, South Asian, and so on. Perhaps the conversation between the rising Post-Confucian countries of East Asia, and the English speaking world—different practices of state and society, different political cultures, different ideas about self-determination and collective good—is *the* crucial conversation in the formation of the future world society. In which there will be some hybridity, more overlap than before. And in which ways to accommodate diversity will be needed also. There are other traditions and agents. Other conversations. But my gut feeling is that the Anglo-Sinic encounter is strategic. I hope to contribute in a small way to that discussion.

Thank you again for coming. I am grateful and I warmly wish you well.