STUDENT ACTIVISTS AT SYDNEY UNIVERSITY 1960-1967: A PROBLEM OF INTERPRETATION

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The student revolt of 1967 to 1974, which finally expired about 1978, retains its fascination and much of its significance in the twenty-first century. But the seven or so years which preceded it are often passed over as simply a precursor, the incubation of a subsequent explosion; they deserve a higher status.

The concentration of interest on the late 1960s and early 1970s arises from the driving role of students in the cultural revolution whose traumatic impact still echoes with us. As late as 2005 some commentators saw federal legislation introducing Voluntary Student Unionism as the culmination of struggles in the 1970s when Deputy Prime Minister Costello and Health Minister Abbott battled their radical enemies. Interest in these turbulent years at a popular, non-academic level has produced a succession of nostalgic reminiscences. In the *Sydney Morning Herald's* 'Good Weekend' for 13 December 2003 Mark Dapin pondered whether the Melbourne Maoists had changed their world views ('Living by the Little Red book'.) In the *Sydney University Gazette* of October 1995 Andrew West asserted that the campus radicals of the 1960s and '70s had remained true to their basic beliefs ('Not finished fighting'.) Some years later, in April 2003, the editor of that journal invited me to discuss 'Where have all the rebels gone?' My answer treated this as a twofold question: What has happened to the former rebels? Why have the students of today abandoned radicalism?

Very properly, the student revolt's key role in what was in many respects a disastrous turn in western civilisation should ensure its place in academic studies. But the early and mid-1960s, often treated as a prelude, had a distinctive rationale. I myself possibly under-estimated the distinctive features of 1960-67 in my 2002 book on radical students and the old left at Sydney University. Perhaps I was too anxious to reach my terminus, 1967!

The following re-examination considers varying interpretations of the student movement at Sydney from about 1960 to about 1967 advanced by different investigators. A background sketch of the University context then leads on to an analysis of the contribution made by student clubs and by student publications to the revival of activism. This permits some closing generalisations about the interpretation of this period.

A neglected and misunderstood topic

'Rudimentary' was how Donald Beer, a lecturer at the University of New England, categorised the historiography of Australian university student life in the third quarter of the twentieth century. He was writing in 1996. Despite some new work in this field, seven years later Graham Hastings, Education Research Co-ordinator for the National Union of Students, also remarked on the neglect of the history of Australian student activism.

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Indeed, he said, American student activism was better known.¹

Beer complained that discussion of student activities was often relegated to an isolated chapter in a broader context. Many writers saw the same motivations governing the whole ten years 1960-1970. Others saw 1960 to 1967 as a unity but characterised it as 'a period of transition in Australian universities generally'. Yet others saw these seven years as bifurcated about 1964-65. The accepted view, then and now, was that Australian universities were quiescent during the 1950s for several reasons: the Cold War discouraged political enthusiasm, undergraduates had become more interested in personal and religious matters, and an inadequate secondary education forced them to concentrate on their studies. Political clubs were out of favour, religious societies flourished. According to Beer, this explains why in the early 1960s most socially-conscious students took a moral rather than directly political view of public life. The most obvious moral issues were racial, though liberal views like opposition to censorship also attracted support.

Hastings does not explain the passivity of 'the silent generation' of the 1950s. He attributes the radicalism of the sixties to the fact that students were no longer solely middle class. Their mixed social origins introduced ideological confusion. 'Contradictions between the dominant ideologies students are expected to transmit in their professional careers and their own experiences can become rarefied and students can react with moral indignation'.²

Most writers recognised that the dynamics of revolt varied according to location. Some analysts concentrated on the demonstrations and neglected the controversies in student journals and magazines. Some underestimated the impact of individuals. Some neglected the role of clubs and societies. Some accounts of the student revolt came from participants writing as protagonists, others wrote as academics or journalists. Some shared the interpretative approach of one or more of these categories. I will examine the views of six authors who refer specifically to activists at Sydney University between 1960 and 1967.

The Australian New Left: Critical Essays and Strategy, edited by Richard Gordon and published in 1970, devotes two chapters to students in the 1960s. The more valuable, Chapter 1, 'An Overview of the Australian New Left' by Richard Gordon and Warren Osmond, concentrates on Sydney University and identifies three phases of development, 1961-65, 1965-67, and 1967-70. Gordon was a former student activist, and teaching fellow at Monash University; Osmond, a tutor at Sydney University, formerly attended Monash and Adelaide universities. In Chapter 6, 'Toward Self-awareness', Osmond attempts a sociological explanation of the student movement in Australia, but refers also to the background crisis in liberalism and education. He reiterated his views in a *Current Affairs Bulletin* of September 1970, again identifying three periods: 1960-64, 1965-66,

1 D. Beer, 'Doing a Van Winkle? student activism and attitudes at the University of New England, 1964-69', *History of Education Review*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1996, pp. 34-36; G. Hastings, *It Can't Happen Here: a political history of Australian student activism*, Adelaide, The Students' Association of Flinders University, 2003, p. 4.

2 Hastings, *It Can't Happen Here*, pp. 9, 11.

and 1966-70.³

There is a long silence till 1995, when W. F. Connell, former professor of education at Sydney and a foremost advocate of progressive, child-centred, education, wrote the chapter on 'The University Communities in the 1960s and 1970s' in *Australia's First*, the commemorative history of Sydney University. He gives only nine paragraphs to 1960-67, remarking on the slow development of serious protest amongst students, which 'had simmered in a general atmosphere of increased but sporadic social awareness and criticism since the beginnings of the 1960s'.⁴

Anne Coombs' *Sex and Anarchy: The life and death of the Sydney Push*, was published a year later. Coombes, a journalist turned full-time writer, concentrates on individuals and ideas in the Libertarian Society and the Push, the group of bohemians for whom the Libertarians provided an intellectual core. Chapter 10, 'The Times They Are a Changing', concerned with the period 1958-67, sees a melding of overseas and Australian features, with the western world inundated by a human tidal wave, the 'baby boomers' then reaching adulthood. Post-war prosperity and security made them affluent, carefree and ready to be rebellious. (But were the 1960s secure? And why did prosperity not engender conservatism?) She sees the early 1960s as a hopeful era, the years of the civil rights movement and the end of colonialism on Africa. But it was also the time of the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa and the Cold War. In Australia by the mid-1960s 40 per cent of the population was under twenty years of age. Change started only in 1964, when the visit of the Beatles initiated 'youth culture'. In advocating free love and opposition to authority The Push and the Libertarians anticipated the new post-1968 morality. But the adoption of many of their ideas by society undermined their *raison d'être*. The book has little to say on student politics - most Libertarians preferred parties to politics.⁵

In *Greer, Untamed Shrew* (1997) Christine Wallace, a journalist, gave some attention to individuals associated with student journalism, literary ideas and the Push. Germaine Greer was a postgraduate student and then, in 1963 and 1964, a senior tutor at Sydney University. Wallace recognises that 'friction between the seeming moral homogeneity of the 1950s and the heterogeneity of the later 1960s began earlier than is generally understood'.⁶

My own *Radical Students: The Old Left at Sydney University* (2002) concentrated on the forty years 1921-1961. My driving motive was to chronicle the glories of the 1941-1948 renaissance in student life, (in abeyance in the dark war years of 1942 and 1943.) I was heavily involved in this upsurge as secretary of the Labour Club, co-editor of *Honi Soit*, and general secretary of the National Union of Australian University Students

3 R. Gordon (ed.), *The Australian New Left: critical essays and strategy*, Melbourne, William Heinemann, 1970, pp. 3-39, 166-216; 'The state of student protest -- Morgan/Osmond', *Current Affairs Bulletin*, 7 September 1970, pp. 122-8.

4 W.F. Connell, G.E. Sherington, B.H. Fletcher, C. Turney, and U. Bygott, *Australia's First: a history of the University of Sydney Volume 2, 1940-1990*, Sydney, The University of Sydney/Hale & Iremonger, 1995, p. 352.

5 A. Coombes, *Sex and Anarchy: the life and death of the Sydney Push*, Melbourne, Viking, 1996, pp. 176-9.

6 C. Wallace, *Greer, Untamed Shrew*, Sydney, Pan Macmillan, 1997, Picador, 1998, p. 97.

(NUAUS). I disposed of the 1960s at the tail end of my book, in five or six pages, interposing the sub-head 'Harbingers of a Second New Left' between four long paragraphs on the Libertarian Society and two short ones on changes in the communist movement relevant to changes in student political clubs. I saw the revived student activity of 1960-67 as 'focusing more on social rather than socialist causes.'⁷

Ann Curthoys wrote both as a former participant and an academic researcher in her 2002 book *Freedom Ride: A freedom rider remembers*. This account of the freedom ride by twenty-nine students from Sydney University in February 1965 names many individuals, while its index contains frequent references to the ALP Club, the Labour Club and the Student Christian Movement. In her overview of 1961-1964 Curthoys discusses the anti-racist orientation of the dawning discontent. She contrasts the speed with which Australian students took up the cause of South African and even American negroes with their rather belated concern for Australian Aborigines. She sees the Freedom Ride both as a turning point in race relations in Australia and as a precursor of the second, post-1967, New Left. It marked the transition from the quietude of the Cold War years to the new activism of the 1960s, which was cultural as much as political.⁸

A second group of five books or articles makes only passing reference to Sydney University in the early and mid-1960s in the course of a broader sweep of student politics. But some of them illuminate these years by their stimulating analyses of the educational, social or political background.

It is Right to Rebel gives a 'Maoist' view of events at Monash University. Published in 1972 and edited by Michael Hyde, its very title echoes Mao's ideology. The first few pages sketch the 1961-66 scene, particularly in Victoria, suggesting that 'academic liberalism', encouraged by events in America and England, had produced 'a tame form of activism' in Australian universities.⁹

Christopher Rootes, an academic sociologist, was less committed to the radical position. He wrote on student radicalism in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* in 1978, in *Theory and Society* in 1980, and in *Social Alternatives* in 1981. His most considered analysis, 'The Development of Radical Student Movements and their Sequelae', appeared in the *Australian Journal of Politics and History* in 1988. Rootes sketches activism in its four main centres, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide. He challenges two popular stereotypes: that the movement was purely imitative of overseas (American) examples and that it was the product of a nation-wide network of radical (presumably Marxist) student groups. Although he encapsulates 1961-67 under the sub-head 'precursors', he emphasises the distinctive religious and moral elements of the early 1960s. He concludes that, 'contrary to Gordon and Osmond', the developments of 1967-70 were 'in large part a parallel to overseas developments rather than products of any continuous local tradition'.¹⁰

7 A. Barcan, *Radical Students: the old Left at Sydney University*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2002, pp. 313-6, 322-4.

8 A. Curthoys, *Freedom Ride: a freedom rider remembers*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2002, pp. 1-34, 292.

9 M. Hyde (ed.), *It is Right to Rebel*, The Diplomat Series, Free Association Press, Sydney, 1972, p. 6.

10 C.A. Rootes, 'The development of radical student movements and their sequelae', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1988, p. 183.

Rivalling Rootes in importance is Barry York, whose *Student Revolt: La Trobe University 1967 to 1973* was published in 1989. York, a former Maoist, prefaces his examination of events at La Trobe with three background chapters, valuable despite a blurring of the early and mid-1960s with later developments. York distinguishes between revolutionary and reformist currents, and between in-campus and off-campus protests. He remarks that both behavioural scientists and Marxists were confounded by these movements; nobody predicted the sixties' upsurge, when 'youth as a whole seemed to be in rebellion against the ways of the old'. He identifies two main types of analysts - the Sympathizers, who discerned the sources of dissent in the circumstances surrounding students (Vietnam, the generation gap, alienation, civil rights, etc.) and the Critics, 'who sought to blame' the students themselves (permissiveness, irresponsibility, excessive affluence, family pathology, and so on). York sees many differences between the Australian and American situations, but recognises one frequently overlooked common phenomenon -- the crisis in educational philosophy. The classical notion of educating the whole man was redundant: 'not only did universities expand enormously, their direction moved away from traditional liberal models to technocratic managerial ones'.¹¹

Donald Beer's concern was to challenge the view that campus life at the University of New England between 1964 and 1969 was conservative and sleepy. His 1996 article in the *History of Education Review* starts in 1963, when the University Council 'attempted to re-assert the crumbling sexual standards of the 1950s'.¹² The Australia-wide rebellion finally erupted at New England in 1969. Beer concedes that geographical and political isolation encouraged New Englanders to concentrate on local and immediate issues, such as room-visiting in the residential colleges. He also notes that the absence of extremist clubs meant that leadership fell to the Students' Representative Council, which adopted a cautious stance. While aware of questions of social conscience, such as race and underdeveloped countries, Armidale activists were mainly concerned with three major issues in rather different rank-order than elsewhere: the University's role *in loco parentis*; conscription and Vietnam; and the University's teaching and government.¹³

Both unexpected and distinctive is Mick Armstrong's *1,2,3, What We Fighting For: The Australian student movement from its origins to the 1970s*, published in 2001 by a Marxist-Leninist-Trotskyist splinter group in Melbourne. Like Rootes and Hastings, he takes an Australia-wide span. His book is scrupulously researched, utilising both primary and secondary sources, properly acknowledged in endnotes. His brief reference to the early 1960s sees discontent as arising from inadequate material resources within universities and rejection of an education often boring, irrelevant and stifling 'creative and critical intelligence'. In the early 1960s the only anti-Stalinist revolutionary socialists on campus were a handful of Trotskyists in the Sydney University Labour Club. The predominant politics were 'small-l' liberal: students bearing moral witness, concerned about the state of society beyond the campus gate. 'In part, this was a moral revolution'. Yet the period

11 B. York, *Student Revolt!: La Trobe University 1967 to 1973*, Canberra, Nicholas Press, 1989, pp. 13-14, 17.

12 Beer, 'Doing a Van Winkle?', p. 37.

13 Beer, 'Doing a Van Winkle?', pp. 46-7

up to 1965 was a significant break from 'the conformism and careerism' of the fifties. A new contingent of activists was challenging the conservative consensus of both Liberal and Labor on issues such as the White Australia Policy.¹⁴

In *It Can't Happen Here* (2003) Graham Hastings, like many other writers, retained a radical, semi-Marxian, functional or utilitarian purpose, taking as models New Left humanist Marxists like E.P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm. Hastings was a member of the expanded student bureaucracy and much of his massive 325-page book is a history of that bureaucracy from 1971 onwards. He has almost nothing to say on Sydney University before 1968, but does throw light on the sources of student rebellion in the 1960s. He sees two major sources of the world-wide wave of student protest: the rapid growth of the higher education and the changing role of education and the universities in society. He notes York's point that the unexpected rejection of the old came from a generation 'which was arguably the most affluent and healthy of all time'.¹⁵

Hastings argues that the mixed origins and status of students made them a transitional group. Their sense of alienation could produce an escapist culture (alcohol and drugs) but also sparked protest movements. The transitional relationship between students and different classes could produce ideological confusion. The post-war baby boom had produced a teenage market in the 1950s and 60s. 'The counter-culture aspect of the youth market began to move tangentially away from the political left with which it had once been blurred . . . A number of campuses began to manipulate this split to divert serious student protest into a "fun" revolution'. Nevertheless the brief marriage between the political left and the counter culture had an explosive impact on the youth of most Western societies.¹⁶

Donald Horne's *Time of Hope: Australia 1966-72* (1980) addresses essential aspects of social change: the permissive society, youth power, the protest movement, and 'affluence - the rise of the new middle class'. But he adheres strictly to his period, the years prior to 1966 are neglected.

From Monash came Robin Gerster and Jan Bassett's *Seizures of Youth: The Sixties and Australia* (1991). Like Horne they present vivid word-pictures of disobedient youth. Unlike Horne they focus on the whole decade, but move frequently to and fro in time and place, though limiting themselves to Sydney, Melbourne and Monash universities. They agree that the 1960s generation was a lucky one. Post-war prosperity, the boom in education, and healthy employment prospects made political activism a comfortable indulgence. They see the disturbance of the Coral Sea Week at the Cenotaph in Martin Place, Sydney, in March 1960 as foreshadowing future struggles. They note the incensed public reaction when in 1960 *Honi Soit* attacked Anzac Day as an 'annual ritual of national narcissism-cum-Bacchanalian revel', and that *Honi Soit* had published a similar article, bringing a similar reaction, two years before. They see the role of Student Action in the

14 M. Armstrong, 1,2,3, *What are we fighting For? The Australian student movement from its origins to the 1970s*, Melbourne, Socialist Alternative, 2001, pp. 36, 55-6.

15 G. Hastings, *It Can't Happen Here*, pp. 4, 6, 8-9, 10-11.

16 Hastings, *It Can't Happen Here*, pp. 11-12

1961 election campaign as a watershed.¹⁷

An examination of the new activism at Sydney University requires a glance at the situation there about 1960.

Sydney University on the eve

In 1960 enrolments at Sydney University reached 11,869, exceeding the post-war peak of 1948. Arts, the faculty most likely to nurture socially-conscious radicals, had 3433 students; 40 per cent attended at night, 49 per cent were women.¹⁸ Evening students, and perhaps women, were less likely to be activists. While numerous student clubs existed in 1960, only a few, predominantly religious and political, demanded ideological commitment. The Newman Society, catering for some five or six hundred Catholics, was the largest, followed by the Evangelical Union, a fundamentalist Bible-oriented body, with almost as large a membership. The more liberal Student Christian Movement was smaller.

Apart from the ALP Club with more than a hundred members, the political clubs were small. The Labour and Democratic Labor clubs had about 30 members each. The Labour Club had a strong communist presence, the DLP Club had a Catholic character. The ALP Club supported the doctrines of the New Left. *Honi Soit* summed up the new era in its March 1962 headline 'Carnival spirit fades, religion surges'.¹⁹

A New Left had appeared after 1956, the year in which the communist leadership in the USSR exposed the crimes of Stalin. Coupled with the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian Revolution later in the same year, this led to an exodus of intellectuals, including some students, from the Communist Party. Originating in England, this first New Left, though disillusioned with the Soviet Union, retained the hope that, under militant leadership, the working class might establish a more humanist socialism based on workers' control of factories. In Australia it produced a new magazine, *Outlook*, and won support amongst university ALP Clubs. The Labour Clubs, still under communist control, did not welcome these dissidents. At Sydney University other refugees from the Communist Party turned either to the Trotskyists or the Libertarian Society.²⁰ The Libertarian Society, formed in 1951, was active both on campus and downtown. Their off-campus gatherings in pubs and elsewhere attracted a retinue of bohemians and hangers-on, this broader group being known as 'The Push'.

In the early 1960s the University was still dedicated to the transmission of the cultural heritage, though qualified by an emphasis on the encouragement of critical thinking. Welcoming freshers in 1962 the vice-chancellor S. H. Roberts, himself a historian, told them that Sydney University was willing 'to lead and assist you in your

17 R. Gerster and J. Bassett, *Seizures of Youth: the sixties and Australia*, Melbourne, Hyland House, 1991, pp. 41-2, 48, 84; editorial, "The Spirit of Anzac", *Honi Soit*, 21 April 1960; summarised Farrago, University of Melbourne, 29 April 1960.

18 Connell et al., *Australia's First*, pp. 454-5 (Appendix 1 Enrolments).

19 Barcan, *Radical Students*, pp. 313-15; 'Action and apathy at our Universities', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 March 1963; *Honi Soit* 6 March 1962, reporting record enrolments in all religious societies during Orientation Week.

20 Barcan, *Radical Students*, p. 305.

quest for knowledge and culture', urged them to 'abandon your subjective opinions and prejudices in exchange for dispassionate thought and critical enquiry', and welcomed them to a society 'which devotes itself to a search after knowledge and to passing on to the next generation the learning and culture it has inherited'.²¹

The liberal humanist curriculum in the Faculty of Arts remained, in essence, what it had been for almost 50 years. The literary and historical studies formed its heart. Yet some English lecturers were a little disturbed at tendencies in America and elsewhere to make the discipline more contemporary, thus weakening its role in transmitting the liberal humanist heritage. But for the moment the main change to English and history at Sydney was a proliferation of courses: the English Department had grown from 7 lecturers in 1950 offering 11 pass courses to 17 lecturers, 6 tutors and 24 courses in 1961, the History Department increased from 6 staff to 16 plus a tutor, the pass courses from 3 or 4 to 8.²²

The character of the student intake was changing. In July 1962 the professor of chemical engineering publicly attacked the illiteracy of students in his department. Professor Hunter complained of bad grammar and spelling and said the situation was getting worse.²³ In the schools the liberal-humanist curriculum had started to decline in the mid-1950s. This was evidenced by changes in the content of English, history, French and similar subjects. The drift from humanism was also expressed in a fall in the proportion of students taking such subjects, though English remained compulsory at the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate exams. Geography and economics, however, were attracting more candidates. Yet the humanities retained a residual strength till the early 1970s.²⁴

In the mid-1960s the Department of English became engrossed in a debate about its purpose. When Don Anderson joined the Department of English in 1963 he found it 'dull but liberal and pluralist'. He co-edited *Hermes* in his inaugural year at Sydney. He found that *Honi Soit*, *Hermes* and *Arna* were discussing literary matters which the Department would not have considered suitable for formal study. (But surely that had always been the case!) However, in 1963 complacency was shaken by the arrival from Melbourne of Sam Goldberg as Challis Professor of English Literature. Goldberg remained for five tumultuous years.

Goldberg had introduced to Australia the ideas of Frank Leavis, the English literary critic dedicated to maintaining standards in English literature and criticism. Leavis required literature to have moral value and to be concerned with the health of society. In Issue 3, 1960, of *The Melbourne Critical Review*, which he had helped found, Goldberg wrote: 'These days few of us think that literature will save us, but we may well wonder if we can save literature'. The discerning appreciation of art and literature, he said, lay

21 'A Message for the 1962 Orientation Handbook', *Orientation Handbook* 1962, p. 5.

22 *Calendar of the University of Sydney* 1950; 1961.

23 *The Sun*, Sydney, 23 July 1962, reported in *Honi Soit* 31 July 1965.

24 A. Barcan, *Sociological Theory and Educational Reality: education and society in Australia since 1949*, Sydney, NSW University Press, 1993, pp. 69-70; A. Barcan, 'Salvaging the humanist curriculum', *The Australian Quarterly*, December 1975, pp. 108-15.

in the hands of a very small minority, upon whom depended the implicit standards that order the finer living of an age.²⁵

Don Anderson welcomed Goldberg's arrival. 'He brought a breath of life which some of us inhaled and then rejected'. The controversy enlivened and split the Department, which resolved matters by offering students 'A' and 'B' courses. Nearly 30 years later, reviewing an American book, *The Death of Literature*, Anderson recalled Goldberg's warnings. Perhaps, he suggested, this was not a natural death but murder; Departments of Literature were becoming Departments of Cultural Studies or Schools of Communication. And perhaps people no longer had the leisure to read good literature.²⁶

Ideological changes were dissolving apathy. Important norms were collapsing. The Bishop of Woolwich challenged traditional religious and moral beliefs of Protestants in *Honest to God*, published by the SCM Press in England in 1963. Speaking in the University's Great Hall, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Michael Ramsay, told students: "It is possible to be both a Christian and a humanist, giving the full and genuine meaning to both adjectives."²⁷ Catholic beliefs were also scrutinised at the second Vatican Council of 1962-65. *Time* magazine spread awareness of the discussion with its 8 April 1966 front cover, 'Is God Dead?' The division between the *mores* of students and their parents was growing. A shift of emphasis in popular music from adult audiences and performers to a younger generation was confirmed by the visit to Australia in 1964 of the Beatles. In 1965 young men began to adopt unorthodox long hairstyles. In 1966 young women started to wear miniskirts and panty hose.

Political change also had resonance amongst students. At an ALP conference in 1960 the federal leader of the ALP, A.A. Calwell, made derogatory comments on intellectuals in the Labor movement. Yet this was the year that Gough Whitlam, the epitome of the new middle-class laborites, became deputy leader. In 1965 the ALP removed the White Australia Policy from its platform. The Australian Communist Party split in 1964, when a small pro-Chinese rival, the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) emerged in Melbourne. A new, more sophisticated leadership took over the parent body in 1965. It jettisoned the *Communist Review*, replacing it with the *Australian Left Review*, aimed at a broader audience. The Party now sought 'a Coalition of the Left'.²⁸

A prescient analysis of 'The Next Wave' of the new-style intellectuals in the August 1960 *Outlook* remarked that a million young Australians were in training, whether they knew it or not, to take over the future. Kemp Fowler, ex-communist and scientist, forecast an 'Incoherent Rebellion'. Earlier radical generations of students, he said, were few and penurious. They demonstrated against authority when it flouted liberties. They were

25 Connell et al., *Australia's First*, p. 141; I. Lennie, 'English studies in Australia', *Arena*, no. 20, 1969, p. 45; Wallace, *Greer*, p. 117; 'columns of institutionalised doubt: The rise and fall of Dr Goldberg', *Orientation Handbook* 1971, p. 24.

26 Wallace, *Greer*, p. 118. Alvin Kernan, whose book Anderson reviewed in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 February 1991, attributed the death of literature to ideology, the inability of academics to define literature, the new morality, and the growth of technology.

27 *Honi Soit*, 17 March 1965.

28 'New Look C.P.A.', *Current Affairs Bulletin*, Department of Adult Education, University of Sydney, vol 40, no. 9, 25 September 1967, pp. 131-4; E. Aarons, *What's Left?*, Melbourne, Penguin Books, 1993, pp. 131, 157.

both humanist and anti-authoritarian. Now students were neither few nor penurious; 80 per cent of full-time students were exempt from fees and some even had small living allowances. They no longer needed to campaign about the right to education. In a society where the worse-paid members lived as well as a skilled tradesman in the 1930s many other causes had evaporated. 'The issues that excited the students of the thirties have been won, and the victory seems to have created no more than an extension of the authoritarian machine they fought'.²⁹

New clubs and a new activism

In the early 1960s several clubs challenged the Libertarian Society's hegemony: the Liberal Club, the Labour Club, the ALP Club, the Democratic Labor Party Society, the Conservative Association, and FARICA (World Government Club). The DLP Society, inspired by B. A. Santamaria's National Civic Council, was very active, as was its national body, the Australian Democratic Labor Student Federation.³⁰

New religious clubs included an Anglican Society, a Seventh-Day Adventist Society (mainly medical students), and the Baha'i Society. The new societies did not greatly weaken the three older religious clubs, the Evangelical Society, the Newman Society and the Student Christian Movement. Some clubs, such as the Jewish Students Union, the Greek Society and the Chinese Students' Society, straddled both religious and ethnic categories. Religious belief could generate commitment to social and political causes. The few ethnic clubs were sometimes mildly political, but their Australian-born members usually accepted the principle of assimilation while trying to maintain a distinctive identity.³¹

Political activity grew in the early 1960s. A new mode of organisation appeared: joint sponsorship by both political and non-political student clubs of meetings, petitions, and demonstrations. In March 1960, immediately following the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa, over 1000 students demonstrated in Sydney against the apartheid system. They were dispersed by the police. A week later at another student-organised demonstration nine students were arrested - the first occasion for many years. This second anti-apartheid demonstration was sponsored by leading members, mostly the secretaries, of twelve University clubs - the Anglican Society, ALP Club, Speleological Club, Labour Club, Jewish Students' Union, Liberal Club, Medical Society, the Trainee Teachers' Association, the Sydney University Dramatic Society, the Australian Student Labour Federation, and the Newman Society.

Similarly, a diverse range of political and religious clubs joined together in September 1962 in the Students' Hanging Committee to protest against the death sentence on the Victorian murderer Robert Tait, motivated largely by opposition to capital punishment. This was part of a new ethic. In fact, Tait's sentence was commuted to life imprisonment

29 K.T. Fowler, 'The incoherent rebellion', *Outlook*, August 1960, pp. 8-9.

30 'The university Right wing - flapping', *Honi Soit*, 17 March 1964.

31 W. Osmond, Part II of 'The state of student protest', *Current Affairs Bulletin*, vol. 46, no. 8, 7 September 1970, pp. 122-8; Gordon and Osmond, 'An Overview of the Australian New Left', R. Gordon (ed.), *The Australian New Left*, chapter 1.

in November.³²

A similar broad spectrum also supported Student Action for Aborigines. In 1964 its secretary was Jim Spigelman (Arts III); its president was Charles Perkins, who became Australia's first Aboriginal university graduate. In February 1965 Perkins led Student Action on a 'freedom ride' into northern New South Wales, ending at Moree. Two-thirds of the 29 student participants came from the Faculty of Arts and just over one-third from the organised Left. They included 8 members of the communist-controlled Labour Club, 3 members of the ALP Club, 2 from the Humanist Society, 1 SCMer, 1 Liberal Club member and 1, Jim Spigelman, from the Fabian Society, a breakaway from the ALP Club.³³

Some 40 years later Ann Curthoys, a communist participant in the Freedom Ride, assessed it as 'a brief episode in the long history of Aboriginal people fighting for their rights', but a turning point in race relations in Australia.

More clearly than any other event, the Freedom Ride signified the shift from Cold War to the 'Sixties' . . . With their willingness to confront authorities . . . the SAFA students were a harbinger of the New Left and the student revolts of the second half of the 1960s. They brought to Australia a sense of politics as informed by folk songs, visual displays and theatricality. There was something very modern and media-savvy about the Freedom Ride . . .³⁴

For many of the participants it was their introduction to politics. After he graduated in 1966 Charles Perkins went on to the national stage of Aboriginal politics. Jim Spigelman became Gough Whitlam's principal private secretary 1972-75 and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of New South Wales in 1998. Ann Curthoys, the daughter of prominent communists, started the Women's Studies program at the Australian National University in 1976, returning to Sydney in 1978 to teach history and social theory at the NSW Institute of Technology. She took the chair of history at the Australian National University in 1995. John Powles, founder of the Sydney University Humanist Society, participated in the demonstrations against the visit of US President L. B. Johnston in October 1966 and against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. He taught at Monash Medical School for 16 years. Hall Greenland became editor of *Honi Soit* in 1966, then briefly a teacher, a journalist, and finally an activist in inner city local politics.³⁵

The Libertarians remained aloof from this. Once the most intellectually vigorous of the moribund student bodies, they were 'by the middle sixties so paralysed in fixed positions as to be incapable of recognising the independent validity of the new liberation movements'. They had crumbled into anti-intellectualism, believing in infallible social and natural laws, certain that their anti-authoritarianism, permanent opposition, and free sexuality were alone morally respectable for dissident groups.³⁶

In the same year as the Freedom Ride, 1965, a large demonstration in Sydney

32 "Student Action on Hanging", *Honi Soit*, 18 September 1962.

33 Curthoys, *Freedom Ride*, pp. x-xi, 60-63; cf. Andrew West, 'Not finished fighting', *SU Gazette*, October 1995.

34 Curthoys, *Freedom Ride*, p. 292.

35 Curthoys, *Freedom Ride*, 'Epilogue',

in support of the US civil rights movement resulted in some arrests. But the unity of socially-committed students faded as political divisions emerged.³⁷

Conscription, announced late in 1964, and the Vietnam War injected new tensions into Australian and student politics. Hostility to American policy was a sub-text. The first outbreak of militancy was a demonstration by a few dozen students during the May 1965 Australian Student Labour Federation conference in Canberra. In 1966 the visit of President Lyndon Johnson provoked violent clashes between students and police which received world-wide publicity. Warren Osmond, a tutor in the Department of Government and a leading theorist and participant in New Left politics, described how 'the "peace movement", both in its middle-aged, Communist-oriented wing and its youth wing, newly activated, closed its ranks behind the militant and spirited, if chauvinistic and subtly racist, election campaign of Arthur Calwell'.³⁸

Students in Melbourne and Sydney, the major new element working in Labor Party campaigns, exuded an air of great optimism. The massive defeat of Labor in the federal election of late 1966, together with the bitter confrontations with police and the visit of the premier of South Vietnam, Marshal Ky, to Australia early in January 1967, produced an escalation of protest. The peace movement split in 1967, largely along generational lines, leaving student-based groups free to repudiate the moderate tactics of their older fellow-protesters. They took their new political concepts into the universities.³⁹

Yet few observers or participants discerned any mass revolt. In September 1966 the SRC conducted a poll of 5,547 students on their attitude to the Vietnam War: 68 per cent favoured sending troops to Vietnam and 59 per cent supported conscription in Australia. But only 34 per cent supported the presence of Australian conscripts in Vietnam.⁴⁰ As the 1967 academic year opened Rowan Cahill (Arts III) argued in the *Students' Handbook '67* that if anything happened in undergraduate life it was not because it was willed by the student body as a whole. 'It is rather the work of "a minority", the term the newspaper editorials use, or "an elite", which is the term I use. Left or Right wing politically, Catholic or Anglican religiously; atheist, free thinker, libertarian, etc., etc. - it all boils down to a fraction of the student population'.

Undergraduates anxious to express social or political views or display their literary talents found four main publications available. The most important, *Honi Soit*, the weekly student journal whose editor was appointed by the Students' Representative Council, was usually dominated by a liberal-cultural-literary clique which was occasionally challenged by radical-progressive activists. *The Union Recorder*, published weekly by the male-only Sydney University Union (which only amalgamated with the Women's Union in 1972), was quite formal. Its masthead promised 'a record of events, past and to come'. Edited by the Union secretary (i.e. general manager) until 1968, it was slowly becoming more

36 J. Docker, *Australian Cultural Elites: intellectual traditions in Sydney and Melbourne*, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1974, p. 159.

37 *Honi Soit*, 13 March 1962; Gordon and Osmond, 'An overview', ch. 1 in Gordon (ed.). *The Australian New Left*, pp. 21-2.

38 Osmond, 'The state of student protest, II', *Current Affairs Bulletin*, p. 125.

39 Osmond, 'The state of student protest, II', *Current Affairs Bulletin*, p. 125.

40 *Honi Soit*, 7 September 1966, cited in Connell et al., *Australia's First*, Vol. 2, p. 353.

adventurous. The clubs welcomed the generous space accorded their reports of addresses at their meetings. But from 1960 *The Union Recorder* reduced its attention to student societies; it also started to print cartoons. Next in importance was *Hermes*, the annual student magazine published, like *Honi Soit*, by the Students' Representative Council under the nominal supervision of a Director of Student Publications. *Arna*, published annually by the Arts Society, was another vehicle for political and literary views. *Hermes* and *Arna* would soon become victims of the changing cultural climate. *Arna* failed to appear in seven of the ten years 1950-60, though in 1961 it resumed publication in some strength. A fifth publication, whose editors were appointed by the SRC, was the *Student Handbook*, from 1960 known as the *Orientation Handbook*. It provided in-coming students with a formal description of university facilities. The editor or editors wrote a brief welcome, the vice-chancellor and the president of the SRC welcomed new students more expansively. The SRC published, intermittently, a *Student Songbook*; while it throws some oblique light on the University scene this hardly deserves discussion here. Originally these publications were free, but by 1961 *Hermes*, the *Songbook* and *Arna* were being sold, at two shillings each.⁴¹

***Honi Soit*, a disputed arena**

At the beginning of the '60s *Honi Soit* was the predominant student journal in Australia, setting the model of a highly literary, witty paper. It provided a vehicle for Robert Hughes (the future art critic), Bruce Beresford (already making films), Clive James, and a string of poets.⁴² It was more interested in culture than politics.⁴³ But in 1960 *Honi Soit* displayed a rarely seen radicalism. David Ferraro, the editor, was a 'Push' person and was assisted by a prominent Libertarian, George Molnar. The paper criticised apartheid in South Africa, bureaucracy at the Teachers' College, the police, Anzac Day, and Australia's immigration policy. In June Professor John Anderson, writing on 'The Place of Academies in Modern Society', delivered a characteristically intransigent message: 'The work of the academic, *qua* academic, is criticism'. Ferraro encountered hostility from the literary groups and the Engineers. He survived a no confidence motion in July, recruited one of the literary critics, Richard Walsh (Arts), as news editor, and resigned in September, three weeks before the end of his term of office. For the next seven years *Honi Soit* was an arena of struggle between radical activists, the exponents of literary culture, and sceptical opponents of both.⁴⁴

The 1961 journal was uncontroversial. Its editors adopted an extremely low profile, ultimately being identified as Michael Newman and David Solomon in an obscure notice in June. Richard Walsh had been revealed as news editor in March, while the final issue unveiled the names and photos of all staff. Mike Newman, an Arts student, later went to Britain where he was long active in education. David Solomon had edited *Honi Soit* in 1958

41 *Honi Soit*, 3 August 1961.

42 Wallace, Greer, p. 105; B. Ellis, 'Sidere Mens Eadem Mutato: Sydney University 1959-64', in *Letters to the Future*, Sydney, Methuen Haynes, 1987, p. 16.

43 'The university student '67', *Current Affairs Bulletin*, 13 March 1967, p. 125.

44 *Honi Soit*, 31 March 1960; 31 March 1960; 7 April 1960; 16 June 1960; 7 July 1960; 21 July 1960; 15 September 1960.

and in 1960 had helped David Ferraro with technical matters. He subsequently became a postgraduate student at the Australian National University and then a journalist, moving to the Brisbane *Courier-Mail*.⁴⁵ In 1961 *The Mirror*, the afternoon paper published by Consolidated Press, who printed *Honi Soit*, offered an annual scholarship of £100 (\$200) to the editor or editors of the student journal. This seems to have lapsed after a few years. From 1966 the SRC gave each editor an expense allowance of \$10 per issue, amounting to about \$200 a year. Thus ended a thirty-year tradition of honorary editors.⁴⁶

In 1962 Richard Walsh was co-editor with Peter Grose. Walsh later became president of the SRC, in 1965-6, by which time he had graduated in Arts and was in Fifth Year Medicine. He was also co-founder and co-editor of *Oz* the satirical monthly magazine, and later still chief of Kerry Packer's publishing empire, Grose was a future journalist. In May the SRC sacked the two editors on a variety of unconvincing charges, such as 'complete lack of responsibility and taste' and failure to give adequate publicity to SRC activities. The editors were reinstated, and then resigned. The SRC then appointed Laurie Oakes and Bob Ellis co-editors. 'Oakes went on to become the doyen of the Canberra press gallery, Ellis to be the polemical gadfly of his generation'.⁴⁷

Ellis recounts how in the following year, 1963, he and Jim Coombes, son of 'Nugget' Coombes, a leading creator of the post-war welfare state, took over 'and in chaos and hysteria wrecked *honi soit* for a generation by letting in the earnest lefties, Hall Greenland for one, and ending its literary ebullience'. Forty years on Coombes considered that Ellis's remarks about 'chaos and hysteria' applied mostly to his own bizarre behaviour. He decamped to the Blue Mountains, believing that the Cuban Bay of Pigs episode presaged the nuclear holocaust. Oakes took over for the last few issues. Hall Greenland was not much in evidence.⁴⁸

Ellis may have been thinking of another politically-adventurous editor, Michael McDermott, a second year Arts student appointed by the SRC in June 1964. Like Ferraro, he had Libertarian affinities. While the paper printed articles mildly critical of Catholics and the Soviet Union, its main offensive was elsewhere. On 30 June it published an article by the British Nazi, Colin Jordan, disputing the facts of the Holocaust, alongside an interview with Arthur Smith, leader of the National Socialist Party of Australia. In an editorial McDermott announced that while having 'no sympathy whatsoever' with the aims of the Australian Nazis, he found the 'standover tactics' of Jewish groups offensive and defended 'the freedom to openly express opinions on even the most sacrosanct of subjects'. It was not irrelevant that local Nazis occasionally attended Push gatherings. Heated controversy followed, and the SRC, at a meeting attended by 'leading Liberationists', suspended McDermott as editor for two weeks, by 14 votes to 2. Bob Ellis, a member of the SRC, was one of the opponents, viewing the move as a dangerous threat to free speech.⁴⁹

In retrospect 40 years on, Michael McDermott emphasised that he took on the editorship as an individual, not on behalf of any group or interest. 'My agenda was

45 *Honi Soit*, 15 September 1960; Les Murray, letter, 1 June 2006; A. J. Baker, letter, 24 May 2006.

46 *Honi Soit*, 13 April 1961; Keith Windschuttle, email 31 October 2002.

47 *Honi Soit*, 5 June 1962; Wallace, *Greer*, p. 105.

48 Ellis, *Letters to the Future*, p. 16; Jim Coombes, emails, 14 August 2003, 19 August 2003.

simply journalism - of a rather low, sensationalist sort. It just happened that my Push contacts proved an abundant source of ideas and material. The Libertarian Society had no significant following among undergraduates'.⁵⁰

After graduating in Arts, McDermott completed a PhD and lectured for a year or two at the NSW Institute of Technology, before joining the staff of Sydney University in 1974 in David Armstrong's Department of Traditional and Modern Philosophy.

The 1965 *Honi Soit*, like its 1961 predecessor, was quiet and its editors invisible. They were finally revealed in the June issue to be Roderick Macdonald and Richard Nichols.

In 1966 the Trotskyist Hall Greenland, edited *Honi Soit*. Those who believed that a literary-cultural clique had dominated the journal for too long welcomed the change. Reporting at the end of the year that the Socialist and Labor clubs were to amalgamate, Greenland castigated much of the activity of the Left as 'habitually aimless, utterly conventional in its own way and astonishingly limited'. Accompanying this judgement were inspirational pictures of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky.⁵¹

After Hall Greenland's rather explosive tenure the SRC choose a non-political editor for 1967. Robert Trebor, who enrolled in Arts in 1963 and Medicine in 1967, told freshers he had no policy. They would not get an intellectual paper, if that meant "crits on crits on crits." *Honi Soit* would just happen. If it turned out to be rubbish, he accepted the blame. Trebor lasted one term. Later in life he became an author under the name Robert Treborlang, which was probably his real name. Keith Windschuttle, then 'a left-wing Whitlamite', took over in Terms 2 and 3. He had in the second half of 1966 been news editor in Greenland's *Honi*. Windschuttle, of course, later became prominent as a defender of traditional history against theory-driven revisionists and as a critic of widely-propounded views about Aboriginal-European contact.⁵²

Hermes in search of a purpose

In 1960 *Hermes* was dominated by the literary-cultural group which had become entrenched in *Honi Soit*. The editor, John J. Howard, celebrated the stirrings of 'an urban revolution in Australian writing', something which could only happen in Sydney, for there was no other Australian city like it. Many of the articles, stories and poems were by graduates, such as Edgar Waters, a long-time leftist, John Douglas Pringle, former editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and author of *Australian Accent*, and David Macmillan, the University archivist. Clive James and Robert Hughes wrote two of the six stories, and Clive James and Les Murray were amongst the eleven poets. The latter two were destined to become internationally known, James as a broadcaster, cultural commentator and writer, Murray as a poet, critic and editor.

Despite the literary renaissance hailed by Howard, Brian Sommers' 1961 *Hermes* was disappointing, quantitatively if not in quality. It was remarkably thin, its 29 pages

49 *Honi Soit*, 30 June 1964; cf Wallace, Greer, pp. 123-6.

50 Michael McDermott, letter, 9 November 2002

51 R. Cahill, telephone interview, 16 June 2003; 'Socialists Unite', *Honi Soit*, 21 December 1966.

52 R. Cahill and C. Roulet (eds.), *Students Handbook '67*, p. 10; R. Cahill, phone interview, 2 November 2002; Windschuttle, emails, 11 May 2006, 31 October 2002.

offering only one article, three stories and eight poems. The article, on 'The Roman Theory of Historical Degeneration', was by Edwin Judge of the History Department, solicited the more easily because Sommers had just completed history honours! The fiction and verse were the domain a literary constellation - Les Murray, Ron Blair, Clive James, Richard Appleton, Chester (Phillip Graham), and Geoffrey Lehmann.

Les Murray (Arts) and Geoff Lehmann (Arts/Law), moving on from jointly editing *Arna* the previous year, brought renewed vigour in 1962. Richard Appleton solicited contributions for the editors. Appleton had progressed from the Communist Party to Trotskyism, to the ALP; he was described by Anne Coombs as an old-style bohemian, part of the literary Push rather than a Libertarian.⁵³ His efforts for *Hermes* resulted in a batch of Andersonian/Push contributors. The eclectic cluster of poets included Appleton himself, Geoffrey Lehmann, Les Murray, John Croyston, Mungo MacCallum and Ron Blair, a future editor of *Hermes*.

The 1963 *Hermes*, edited by Don Anderson and Neil McPherson, an Arts graduate, was equally strong. Anderson, recently appointed to the English Department, was on the fringe of the Push. Complaints that the University magazine was a vehicle for Arts students had been endemic for decades. The editors now announced that they would return *Hermes* to its proper role, leaving the bulk of the literary material to *Arna* and *Honi Soit*. Yet, finding the quality of material from students outside Arts 'atrocious', they again risked the accusation of pandering to a literary clique of Arts students. McPherson asserted that many of the items submitted to them reflected on the state's educational system. Would-be poets had been indoctrinated into admiring the technique of free association. 'As for politics: it seems that no-one is really angry any more, but many are confused'. Ninety per cent of the articles they printed had been solicited.⁵⁴

Hermes did not appear in 1964, but *Honi Soit* acclaimed Ron Blair's 1965 issue. Its 1500 copies were almost sold out by April.⁵⁵ Blair attended the University from 1960 to 1968. He later expressed his hatred of his Catholic schooling in a 1975 play, 'The Christian Brothers'. His *Hermes* included articles on the colourful NSW lawyer and left-wing Labor politician Clive Evatt and the Marxist archaeologist Vere Gordon Childe. Richard Walsh, co-editor of *Oz*, wrote celebrating its second birthday; he feared it was in danger of becoming part of the Establishment. Old hands like Mungo MacCallum and Geoffrey Lehmann also contributed.⁵⁶

Hermes went into recess in 1966, 1967 and 1968. Its final issue (at least for many years) appeared in 1969. The editors, Brian Freeman and Albert Moran, with Rowan Cahill as 'Advisor', dated it 1969-70, revealing a justified premonition. Freeman, a Science student majoring in mathematics and physiology, won the University Medal in mathematics in 1971. He was the editor and/or co-editor of the *Orientation Handbook* for

53 Coombs, *Sex and Anarchy*, pp. 43, 139; R. Appleton, 'And then to the Lincoln', *Heraclitus*, Sydney, No. 99, September 2002, p. 13.

54 'A somewhat subdued scream . . .', Neil A. McPherson; ' . . . in the ash-heap', Don Anderson, *Hermes* 1963, pp. 4-5.

55 *Honi Soit*, 31 March 1965, 9 March 1965.

56 Ron Blair later became head of the writing department of the Film, Television and Radio School in Sydney.

two years, and edited *The Union Recorder* for a year. Here he created some controversy, because the *Recorder* was perceived to be in opposition to *Honi Soit*, especially when it ran a literature competition. Moran was an Arts graduate now studying Fine Arts. Both were associated with the off-campus Free University.⁵⁷

They announced that *Hermes* was not to be literary in content: 'a magazine of that kind would be fairly irrelevant to Sydney University in 1969 and would also have only a minority appeal'. They sought 'more aggressive' material which would perhaps lead to action, not liberal, intellectual, humanist products. In fact, contributors were a melange of radicals, dissident activists, and others, such as Bob Connell, Don Anderson (and a few other academics) Jim Spigelman (and a few other legal identities), and Dany Humphreys (radical/feminist and NUAUS travel officer.)⁵⁸

Arna: a crisis of identity

Arna reappeared in 1961 after an intermittent life in the 1950s. It was edited by Geoff Lehmann (Law III) and Les Murray (Arts II). This was a 'National Arts Issue' produced by the SU Arts Society for the Australian Arts Faculty Association. Most contributors were graduates. The six articles came from New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria and the ACT, and the two stories from Victoria and South Australia. Twelve of the 18 poems were from NSW, the others from South Australia, Queensland, and Victoria. The articles were politically balanced: George Molnar gave 'A Libertarian Viewpoint' on Zamyatin's *We* while T.L. Suttor, then writing his doctoral thesis at the ANU, presented 'Catholicism and the Open Society' as 'An attack on current trends by a prominent Catholic intellectual'. The verse came from Ian Bedford, Les Murray, Clive James, Geoffrey Lehmann, Lex Banning, and others. One of the editors of *Honi Soit*, Mike Newman, wrote a disparaging review: despite the wider range of contributors the material was 'surprisingly poor'. Molnar's was the best article. Three weeks later *Honi Soit* printed a second, more positive review.⁵⁹

The 1962 issue, edited by Francis Evers, was also less local, though this time the bias was to Europe, with contributors from Ireland, France, Denmark and England. Evers scored a coup with an extract from Samuel Beckett's most recent novel, translated from the French. Evers and Beckett were both Dublin-expatriates! Many other contributors were staff-members of the Faculty of Arts. Evers rejected the view that only the proven-best should be printed and that these were necessarily European. 'Yet, we still have affiliations with the European conscience which we will ignore at our peril'. There is talent in Australia, he said, though he complained that contributions were difficult to obtain. Nonetheless, his *Arna* was larger than the 1961 one, 145 pages as against 60, though more costly at three shillings.⁶⁰

The 1963 issue, edited by Ron Blair, reverted to the slimmed down model, sustained by the usual run of writers, such as Clive James, Mungo MacCallum, Les Murray, and Geoffrey Lehmann. Like *Hermes*, *Arna* was not published in 1964. Indeed, the magazine next appeared in 1967, under Richard Murphy, who himself contributed three of the seven

57 Dr Brian Freeman, School of Anatomy, University of New South Wales, email letter, 4 November 2002.

58 editorial, "Who, How and What", *Hermes* 1969-70.

59 *Honi Soit*, 15 June 1961, 6 July 1961.

60 *Arna*, 1962, Foreword, p. 13.

poems. An effort was made to provide each contribution with a photograph, illustration, or special design. The magazine's disorientation became even more obvious. In 1973 it adopted a new tack, a specialised theme of interest to several Arts Departments, and written largely by staff. In 1973 it examined 'Directions in Linguistics', in 1974, history. The end came with a change in name to *New Literature Review* 1975 (*Incorporating Arna*). And that was that!

***The Union Recorder* thawing, *The Students' Handbook* frozen**

The Union Recorder was slowly thawing. It began to publish columnists, even cartoons. By 1965 the Liberal Club was the only political society submitting notices of future meetings or reports of past meetings to *The Union Recorder*. From June 1968 it ceased to be a record of events, past and future, becoming, the editor said, 'A magazine of opinion rather than a weekly newspaper. We are setting out to attract a diversity of contributions from students and staff alike'. He invited literary efforts in the form of poetry and short stories.⁶¹

The Orientation Handbook remained a formal register of institutions and activities. Renamed the *Students' Handbook*, edited by T.M. Burvill and N.T. Rowe, it had an introductory article by A. K. Stout, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, on 'Academic Freedom'. Yet the editors were unaware of possible 'winds of change'. 'The most engaging feature of our University's existence', they wrote, 'seems to be its stability'. In the 1967 *Handbook*, edited by Rowan Cahill, all this changed!

Interpretations, old and new

The ideological fluctuations and intermittent life of *Hermes* and *Arna* suggest that a cultural tradition was dying. The two magazines found difficulty in locating contributors, especially from the undergraduate body. They depended on former students, staff and 'outside' intellectuals, no longer in touch with university life. The *literati* preferred to write for a controversial weekly, *Honi Soit*, available without charge and with a mass readership, rather than for sedate annuals whose relatively few readers had to purchase them.

In the case of *Arna* the hiatuses may have resulted from problems within the Arts Society; the Arts Council forced its executive to resign in October 1962 because of their inactivity. The historian of the University of Sydney Union attributed the demise of *Hermes* to its inability to compete with *The Union Recorder* and *Honi Soit*, which by the end of the 1960s 'were both presenting prose and poetry'.⁶²

The interpretations, structures, authorship, publishers, and publication dates of the literature of student life responded to the changing politics of the student movement, as well as wider ideological, social and political changes. Communism collapsed, Maoism withered away, Trotskyism mutated, economic rationalism transformed society.

The analytical studies appeared in three clusters. The contemporaries, all with a historical approach, were activists; Richard Gordon and Warren Osmond in 1970

61 John Carrick, acting editor. The editor, John Carter, was on leave.

62 *Honi Soit*, 3 October 1962; J. Wilkie, *Amalgamated, But the Same: a brief history of the first 25 Years of the University of Sydney Union 1972-1996*, Sydney, The University of Sydney Union, 1996, p. 92.

and Michael Hyde in 1972. The collapse of the leftist ideological hegemony about 1977 interrupted this line of narrative.

The ten years 1978-1988 produced only three studies, largely scholarly rather than political. The powerful analyses of Rootes and York were both founded on academic theses. Horne's broader yet impressive overview was more academic than much of his writing. Because the political writers were now directing their narratives to small niche audiences, they found it difficult to interest major publishing firms.

The third cluster, from 1989 onwards, wrote in yet another ideological context. They included Gerster and Bassett, Armstrong, Connell, Coombes, Beer, Wallace, Barcan, Curthoys, and Hastings. Soviet communism and its satellites had collapsed and China had nothing to offer the residual student militants. Another remarkable ideological change was the victory of neo-liberal 'economic rationalism'. That an interest still existed in student activists of the 1960s and 1970 may have been sustained by the survival of a quasi-Marxism amongst some academics and by the continuing intellectual importance of those two decades. Moreover, as the possibilities of political successes waned, the academic quality of the interpretations improved. As victories in the streets became illusory, activists turned to a study of the past.

Those commentators who saw the slow revival of political activism after 1960 as initially founded in a changing morality derived from religion and from new concepts of socialism were on the right track. In the first four or five years of the decade the religious and the left-wing politicians were junior partners. A shift occurred about 1965, as the local and international religious and political scenes changed. The politicians, though a small minority of the student body, became more influential. The recasting of their political beliefs was aided by ideological changes in the major political parties.

The faltering cultural tradition, the waning of the traditional liberal humanism was evidenced in the uncertain life and varying content of *Hermes* and *Arna*, the competition for control of *Honi Soit*, and a slow erosion of the formality and objectivity of *The Union Recorder*. The movement of assiduous literary and political activists between the various university journals was evidence of the minority role of the agitators. The outbursts of 1967-74 came as a surprise to the students themselves.

The cultural crisis sometimes occasioned grumbles about the deteriorating educational quality of new generations of undergraduates. The new intellect promised to assist the onslaught on traditional values; but did the counter-culture posit a viable alternative?

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