Thesis Title: The Sixties – the lived experience

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The period commonly referred to as the Sixties, which in fact mainly covered the years between 1967 and 1975, was a time when society's accepted values were questioned, undermined and sometimes overthrown. In Australia, opposition to the Vietnam War was at the heart of this turmoil. It is commonly believed that this period is dealt with extensively in the Australian literary canon but I discovered in my initial literary search that, while some fiction made oblique references to the period and there were some literary works by Vietnam veterans, very few novels or memoirs told the story of the Sixties from a radical perspective. This discovery drove me to write my literary memoir *All Along the Watchtower*, which has since been published. The choice of 'literary memoir' was made to capture the spirit of the lived experience of the Sixties where I compressed characters and sometimes re-arranged the timeline of events in my bid for authenticity rather than factuality.

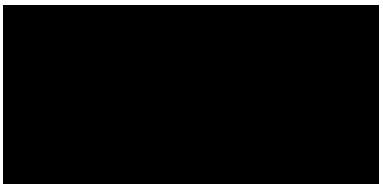
While my memoir (80%) laid the foundations of my PhD, my exegesis (20%) examines the question of memory and cultural memory in regard to marginalised stories like the radical perspectives on the Sixties and indicates how our society can be detrimentally affected by this absence. I studied and analysed all the existent Australian literature about the Sixties across the political spectrum and compared the dearth of radical fiction about the Sixties to the plethora of radical fiction written by Australian authors from the Forties and Fifties and examined the causes for such a difference. It might be valuable to first read the exegesis and secondly the memoir as the former answers questions that would be raised if reading the memoir first.

The Vietnam War produced a ripple effect, in which large and diverse sections of Australian society became active in the antiwar movement and then in other political struggles. Surprisingly there are few works in the Australian canon that capture the upheavals of the Sixties and markedly fewer works of radical literature.

The absence of radical stories and other marginalised narratives undermines the possibility of an authentic cultural memory, which affects how we see ourselves and where we are headed as a society.

Doctor of Philosophy Declaration

"I, Michael Dudley Hyde, declare that the PhD thesis entitled 'The Sixties – the lived experience' is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work".

Signature: 

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Acknowledgements

I realised fairly early on that they do not grant you a PhD for nothing. It was tough and exhilarating all at the one time. Mine was always a labour of love although at times the ties that bind became a bit tenuous.

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It was through my supervisors, Dr Paul Adams and Dr Pam Macintyre, that I could stay on course and stay the distance. Always, always encouraging. Paul really got me thinking about Cultural Memory which became such a central part of my exegesis. And it was Pam who stopped me ‘umming’ and ‘aaahing’ when she told me that she did not know many others who knew what I knew and to come out fighting for what I had discovered and for what I was arguing. I owe them so much – the bottle of champagne hardly suffices. They also helped me become more aware of what University research can do. That it can make a difference to many lives and sometimes to a whole culture – which is what it should be doing. My PhD has led me to further research regarding hidden and marginalised stories.

At Victoria University Library I found assistance that was so efficient and friendly from the librarians, especially Mark Armstrong-Roper and Gail James as they helped me find obscure material, and guided me through the Net.

My parents should be thanked also – they always wanted me to continue my studies and now, forty years later I have written something of which they would have been proud. Both now reside in the soil of Sherbrooke Forest – where I will take my Doctorate and let them know.

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Conference Presentations- Literary

- MWF Regional Writer's Tour 2009
- Allwrite Festival 2007 Adelaide – Keynote Speaker and workshop presenter.
- Mornington Peninsular Literature Festival 2007 - Keynote Speaker
- Williamstown Writers Festival 2006 – 2012 - Workshop presenter
- Melbourne 2002-2014 - Speaker and workshop presenter.
- Whitsunday Voices 2006 - Speaker and workshop presenter.
- Somerset Festival 2005 - Speaker and workshop presenter.

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- **Hyde, M 2009, '**Transition and Pedagogy', **Learning Matters Symposium,** Victoria University, December, 2009, Melbourne, Australia.

Literary Judge

- 2001 FAW Community Writing Award.
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Tertiary Awards

- 2010 Faculty Award for Teaching Excellence, Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development, Victoria University.
- 2010 Vice-Chancellor's Citation for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (Higher Education), Victoria University.

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Chapter One

Introduction

In my literary memoir *All Along the Watchtower*, I create a narrative which documents my memory of the personal changes I went through as I became involved as a student at Monash University with the political and social causes around the Melbourne anti-war Movement, allowing readers to engage with this tumultuous period in Melbourne's history and consider the positives and negatives of the experience from the point of view of one individual's personal development, shaped by the broader social change of the Vietnam War period. (This part of my PhD was completed in 2010 and has since been published as *All Along the Watchtower*.) This exegesis will address two questions which are relevant to All Along the Watchtower and the cultural history which it considers. Firstly, what are the challenges for an anti-establishment writer in developing a literary memoir that explores the Vietnam War and associated cultural revolutions of the Sixties at Monash University and in wider Melbourne in the 1960s? Secondly, what can the re-creation of a personal memoir tell us about the 1960s era at Monash University? Writing about the Vietnam War presents challenges for a writer that are not faced by writers who choose other kinds of subject matter, even including those writers who have written about other wars. The specific aims of this exegesis are to critically compare the anti-establishment fictional writers associated with the protest movement during the Vietnam War in Australia in the 1960s with the anti-establishment writers of World War 2 and the early 1950s in Australia; to consider how the gaps in fiction and memoir in Australian literature about the Vietnam War period challenges for my literary memoir; and to identify the different historical-cultural barriers for anti-establishment writers of this period as compared to the anti-establishment writers of World War 2 in Australia.

One of the more obvious constants in the production of the literary memoir and the writing of the exegesis is the almost unwieldy size and complexity of this study, *The Sixties – the lived experience.*

The Sixties was a period of significant upheaval. According to Bendle ‘the 1960s introduced an historical caesura - a discontinuity - into the social, cultural and political history of Australia whose scale and implications no government recognised (2007, p. 1). If this is the case, then the choice to at best ignore or at worst to cultivate deliberate amnesia concerning such caesura demands some investigation if our society and inherent communities are to achieve some historical and cultural integrity. Cultural memory goes to the core of this and becomes the link between the following five chapters of this exegesis, which introduce the concept of cultural memory and give a review of the Australian literature of the period; examine cultural memory theory; survey the Australian radical writers of the Forties and Fifties; compare them to the Australian radical literature of and about the Sixties (including *All Along the Watchtower*); and end with an emphasis on the linkage between my memoir and the exegesis.

Cultural memory is a complex concept because a variety of recollections and syntheses can be attached to the same time frame and social/political events. As Halbwachs (1992) argues, different social groups hold different ‘frames of social memory’. Individual memory is already social and affected by at least one and often several different frames of memory, because it operates at the intersection of social influences. As I discovered in researching and writing my literary memoir, *All Along the Watchtower,* memory is not just the store of imprints left by private experience but a process whereby we structure our experiences within some larger collective frames of signification. It is also a continuously changing process, in which individual memories are affected by the very act of recollection. Cultural memory too is continuously evolving, with new frames of recollections created by new historical conditions and a range of social groups disputing cultural memory and attempting to create their own visions of time and memory.

Cultural memory, as Erll notes, necessarily involves ‘an active engagement with the past…acting out a relationship to the past from a particular point in the present’ (2009, p. 2). This active engagement with the past and the lessons to be learnt culturally and politically is one of the tasks in the writing of any cultural history of the period. Individual memory is not, however, the same as cultural memory, nor is the

narrator's identity in a literary memoir the same as his or her actual identity. As Flood notes, 'the stories of self that an individual relates are combined to form the personal narrative that is told to the world. It is an externalised recording of memory. The story of self comes into being once it is told' (2005, p. 41). Bruner further explains that:

> 'The acceptability of a narrative obviously cannot depend on its correctly referring to reality, else there would be no fiction. Realism in fiction must then indeed be a literary convention rather than a matter of correct reference. Narrative "truth" is judged by its verisimilitude rather than its verifiability' (1991, p. 13)

something I sought to achieve with my literary memoir. In terms of memoir, this may well come down to what stance the memoirist takes in relation to the truth and its appearance. However, a memoir is also a constructed 'story of self' and even when the memoirist constructs a world which appears to be 'real', it has all the pitfalls of memory reconstructed after the event. Individuals have the capacity to both recover and forget cultural memory '. As Flood says: 'it is important to acknowledge…that there are many memories that reside within an individual that will remain unspoken either consciously or unconsciously' (2005, p. 41).

Cultural memory and the writing of memoir rest, to an important extent on the operation of memory itself. In her novel *Sorrows of an American*, Siri Hustvedt, uses fictional devices, to examine the complexity of memory and how it operates, saying, 'every memoir is full of holes. It's obvious that there are stories that can't be told without pain to others or to oneself, that autobiography is fraught with questions of perspective, self-knowledge, repression and outright delusion.' (2008, p.8). While I might question the more serious assertion of 'outright delusion' with regard to my own memoir, there can be little doubt that in terms of my memoir and cultural memory as a whole, Hustvedt is right when she says, 'Our memories are forever being altered by the present – memory isn't stable, but mutable' (2008, p. 144) and that therefore 'we make our narratives, and those created stories can't be separated from the culture in which we live' (2008, p. 88).

This notion of 'created stories (which) can't be separated from the culture in which we live' may seem like a truism. However, my research indicates that while there are many narratives that flow from our culture that help us know and understand who

and what we are, there is a surprising absence of ‘created stories’ about the social/political/cultural upheaval of the Sixties in Australia. This absence has become one of the main investigations of this exegesis and was indeed an important motivating force behind the writing of my memoir. The question that will run as an undercurrent throughout this study as it examines, the literature of the 40s and 50s and 60s, is what does this mean for the well-being of our society in terms of dominant, ‘acceptable’ narratives on the one hand and marginalised narratives on the other?

Chapter Two

Cultural memory and a review of the Australian literature of the period

This chapter will argue that the Sixties was a turbulent social and political period in Australian history, a turbulence that was felt and experienced on profound levels across continents and cultures. The meagre number of contributions to Australian literature of and from the era is examined and three categories emerge. The first two will be explored in detail, while the third category is introduced but its specific investigation foreshadowed for Chapter Five. This section of the exegesis leads into a discussion of the effect that the marginalisation of stories has on the question of cultural memory.

The British author Julian Barnes observes in *The Sense of an Ending*, 'most people didn't experience 'the Sixties' until the Seventies' (2011, p. 40), which accords with the Australian experience, where 'the Sixties' is commonly seen as covering the period from 1967 to 1975. The decade known as 'the Sixties' in Australia (and in other Western countries such as the USA, France, Germany and Britain) was turbulent on every level. The very term conjures up a multitude of images, quite disparate but nevertheless profound and widespread. The tremors were felt everywhere - in politics, economics, international relations, social and personal relations, music, theatre and film. It was the era that McLaren described as 'Australia's only successful revolution…students around the world inaugurated the counter-culture with its slogan of personal and political liberation…Politics was never going to be the same' (McLaren 1996).

The pervasive intensity of these times can be illustrated by an example from the realm of international sport. In 1968 at the Olympic Games in Mexico City, the Australian Olympic 200 metre sprinter Peter Norman, who finished second, stood on the podium with the two American Black athletes, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, who raised their clenched fists in a Black Power salute as a gesture of solidarity with their Afro-American brothers and sisters who were fighting for their Civil Rights back home. David Davis wrote in the Los Angeles Times that 'the United States was verging on chaos'. 'As the Vietnam War raged in Asia, the civil rights movement raged in America's cities. Assassin's bullets felled Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert

F. Kennedy.' Peter Norman, in a deliberate act of support, wore an Olympic Project for Human Rights badge while on the podium. The International Olympic Committee 'deemed it a political act not fit for the Games' and demanded that the US Olympic Committee expel Smith and Carlos, which they promptly did. None of these three athletes ever represented their countries again. Smith and Carlos faced death threats, racial abuse, financial hardship and personal tragedies (Carlos' wife committed suicide in 1977 due to the pressure), while Norman was snubbed by the Australian Olympic Committee for the 1972 Games, suffered depression, alcoholism and painkiller addiction, 'was one of the few Australian medal winners not to be asked to appear at the 2000 Sydney Olympics' and died in 2006 of a heart attack (*findingDulcinea* Staff 2011).

Forty-four years later at the London premiere of the movie *Salute,* which tells the story of the late Peter Norman, Tommie Smith made a telling statement, encapsulating the many heroic actions of the time:

> I think of the sacrifice. Being much older now, much much older, I can see the sacrifice of these two young men. The not knowing what to expect but still making one of the biggest sacrifices of their careers, in fact of their lives… (indiatoday 2012).

A pronounced problem with any discussion of the Sixties is that it has become a comfortable 'shorthand in contemporary debate for stock notions of protest and rebellion' (Stephens 1998, p. 3). Stock representations certainly can overcrowd frames of representation of the present and repress much which is difficult or troubling in memory. The Sixties is sometimes seen as nothing but a romanticised era kept alive by nostalgic aging radicals intent on justifying the thoughts and deeds of possibly the most intense time of their life (Carney 2009). It is also a period often presented in terms of caricature, represented by wild and woolly young men and women in tie-dye clothing, dancing up to their hocks in mud, smoking copious amounts of marijuana, and fighting the police. The jocular slogan 'drugs, sex and rock 'n roll' applied to the years 1966-75 neatly displays how they have been seen by many (Altman 2010, pp. 178-196).

As well as the Sixties being parodied or turned into superficial nostalgia, their very labelling as a time of protest and rebellion has come under fire. Moore (2006) goes

to great pains to assert that the turmoil of the era was a figment of the radicals' imaginations, arguing that the opposition to the Vietnam War was blown out of all proportion and that in the latter half of the Sixties most young people did not oppose the war: these myths resonate throughout Australian society with, if anything, increasing stridency.' (Moore 2006, p. 7). Moore's opinions are supported by *The Australian* journalist Frank Devine, who alleges that those involved in the upsurge are self-delusional about the intensity and range of their rebellion: 'Many participants in the 60s cling to romantic fantasies of conservatism renounced and convention denied, perhaps inspired as much by what they have heard or read about the 60s than what they actually experienced. It is a strenuously self-promoting decade' (*The Weekend Australian - 10,000 Days Supplement* 16 November 1996, p. 2). Making a further claim for his case, Moore shows how Australians in their thousands turned out to welcome LBJ (US President Johnson) in 1966 and compares this to the reception of Bill White, one of the first conscientious objectors to the Vietnam War, in the same year, saying, 'On receiving his formal discharge, and following substantial publicity about his case, a mere 100 people were present to cheer White as he left the Court building on 24 December 1966' (2006, p. 7).

Moore does not cite any examples that might undermine his contentions - for instance, the quarter of a million Australians who marched in the first Moratoriums in 1970; the draft resisters who went to gaol; the hundreds who were arrested; the hundreds who transported and hid draft resisters and others on the run; and the uncountable numbers who sacrificed careers and livelihoods (Langley 1992). Australian Gallup Polls of the period do not appear to support Moore's position. While the majority of the population supported the war and Australia's involvement during those specific years (1966-68), there are clear indications that the tide was turning becoming an issue that people were discussing and the issues involved. The Gallup Poll of February-April 1966 shows that 62% of the population sought some form of compromise and 52% thought that National Servicemen (conscripts) should stay at home (1966). By December 1969, the polls showed that 49% wanted to continue the war, a sharp decline from 62% in May 1967. (*Australian Gallup Polls* Sept-November 1968). Neither does Moore receive support from other conservative commentators, like Australian historian Keith Windschuttle who at least acknowledges the tide of rebellion in Australia at that time. (In fact at that stage

Windschuttle himself was part of that rebellion.) Windschuttle draws attention to the way in which the various left-wing groupings rallied support on university campuses, which also affected sections of the Labor Party and the community as a whole. Although he lampoons the radical analysis of the war – 'the Left had successfully re-defined the war as a struggle by an ancient and gentle Asian people for national independence from French and American imperialism' – he acknowledges the huge numbers mobilised for the Moratorium marches in Melbourne (100,000) and Sydney (30,000) and says that 'The sentiment helped Gough Whitlam's Labor Party gain office in 1972' (Windschuttle 2005, p. 25).

Langley in *Decade of Dissent*, based on statistics from the era as well as extensive interviews with activists, also strongly disagrees with Moore's perceptions. Langley paints a picture of a society in upheaval, not only angry about the US and Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War but also rebelling against accepted mores and values across the Australian political, social and cultural canvas. He pinpoints one of the crucial aspects of the era that over a relatively short period and space of time, a vocal but determined minority quickly became the majority. 'The 1960s and early 1970s became an era of demonstrations, strikes and confrontation as initial public support for the war turned into majority opposition. These actions melded with other historic changes to create one of the most turbulent periods in Australian history... the real significance of Australia's contribution lay not on its effects on the battlefield, but in the tremors it sent through Australian society' (Langley 1992, p. x). Altman, as if answering the political assertions of Moore, sees the Sixties in Australia as a home-bred movement revolting against the inertia and conservatism of the Fifties and early Sixties: 'It is common to dismiss the Sixties as inconsequential in Australian life, no more than a faint echo of overseas events ... the Sixties, however defined … a time of Technicolor brilliance, surrounded by the remembered greyness of the Menzies years... (Altman 2010, p. 181). The concentrated activism is one of the aspects frequently referred to by those involved. Headiness and elation were often accompanied by the fear and terror that comes with the desire and impetus to turn the world upside down - something I tried to capture in my literary memoir. Those involved were deeply committed not only to stopping what was considered wrong and heinous but also to laying the foundations for a new, more just and kinder society - one where war was not seen as an answer, where racism was not ever

acceptable, where women were equal on every level and poverty was a thing of the past – but it became clear that the powers-that-be would not simply accept this vision of a new world order, especially when their own interests were endangered. Russell in her thesis *Today the students, tomorrow the workers!* reflects on the intensity of the period: '1968 very quickly became a year which one activist has remembered as just one demonstration after another, often with several major incidents occurring simultaneously on the one day in different parts of the country' (Russell 1999, p. 139)

If we accept the Sixties as a 'turbulent period', a time of social/political/cultural upheaval, one would expect to find many Australian 'created stories' (Hustvedt 2008, p. 88), a weighty list of cultural productions that would reflect that turbulence. My exploration has unearthed few. This absence is the foundation of this exegesis which reveals considerable gaps in Australian fiction, biographies, autobiographies, memoirs and literary memoirs that reflects that unrest. Specifically, there is a surprising lack of *radical* writing about this period. Altman says: 'There is very little substantial written about the lasting impact of this period on Australian life' (Altman 2010, p. 196) and Pierce concurs: 'The Australian [radical] literature of the Vietnam War, although recent, is almost forgotten' (Pierce 1980, p. 290). This deficiency, however, is not so pronounced when we turn to the literature by Australian Vietnam veterans or those who were sympathetic to the Australian involvement in the war. Clearly, the literature written by the Vietnam veterans and other writers who align themselves with the veterans centres around the war itself; other writings, however, are concerned with not only the actual experience of the war but with the effect of the social and cultural experiences and movements that came into being which the war helped to produce. The Vietnam War lay at the core of the Sixties - it was a reference point, the beating heart from whence all changes, reforms, upheavals and movements came. The war created heated debate throughout the country. It split or united families, friends, workplaces, political parties and governments:

> political issues and controversies were heatedly debated on the lawns, in the lecture halls and in the occupied admin buildings of Monash, Flinders, Queensland and Sydney universities as at Colombia, the Sorbonne, Rome, Tokyo or the LSE…Vietnam was the cause which galvanised a generation of radicals because the war epitomised what was wrong with the world, from

> poverty to racism to injustice…Vietnam symbolised the irrationality and inhumanity of capitalism (Armstrong 2001, pp. 50-51).

I have identified three categories of literature which consider the socio/political issues of the Sixties, albeit some quite remotely. The first category covers fiction which uses the Vietnam War and the Sixties as a backdrop but which, in a sense, does not directly engage with the politics of the war, the counter-culture and the social upsurge in Australia. Some examples of this type of literature are *When the Hipchicks went to War* (Rushby 2009), *Smoky Joe's Café* (Courtenay 2001) and the young adult novels, *The Running Man* (Bauer 2004) and James Roy's *Hunting Elephants* (Roy 2008).

When the Hipchicks went to War (2009) follows the adventures of Kathy, Rushby's central character, who is caught up in the go-go-girl world of Sixties Brisbane. She is an apprentice hairdresser from the suburbs who leaves school and then discovers that her dream job is not what she thought it would be. Kathy becomes a dancer and in the process hears of a dancing job that involves travel. She and two friends audition as a trio and discover that 'travel' means entertaining the troops in Vietnam. The novel, arguably for young adults, certainly expresses the new social relations, the changes in the way that young people viewed their lives and their rebellion against what was considered 'acceptable' behaviour. It also displays the young female protagonist's lack of knowledge about the Vietnam War and the hostility from some friends when they hear about her forthcoming tour to entertain the Australian troops. But it does not embrace one side or the other and the reader is given only a superficial sense of the impact the Sixties had on that generation. Similarly, Michael Gerard Bauer's *The Running Man* (2004), one of the two main characters, Tom Leyton, is a Vietnam Vet, who is undoubtedly lost in a sea of terrible memories and experiences, but in general the narrative revolves around the ways in which people deal with their deep and dark life cocoons (silkworms play a metaphoric role), rather than dealing with the politics of the war, the counter-culture or the social upsurge in Australia.

In the second category are the most numerous titles: typically stories told through the eyes of Vietnam 'vets' (and/or their supporters), who are either angry, disillusioned, despairing, damaged or a combination of these. At the beginning of my research, I

believed that works in this category were also few in number but while the numbers are still not overwhelming, there are many more than I realised, with a number being self-published, such as *Trauma, Tears and Time* (Evans 1993), and *Best we Forget* (Clancy 1998), sometimes as a result of therapy sessions where they struggled with their war experiences. Barry Heard (*Well Done Those Men*) and Don Tate (*The War Within*) – both published by mainstream publishers, Scribe and Murdoch - have said they wrote their stories in part due to others suggesting that putting their experiences, confusion and anger down on paper might aid them in their recovery (Heard 2005 & Tate 2008). The list is relatively extensive: *The Cream Machine* (Pollard 1972); *The Odd Angry Shot* (Nagle 1975), which later became an Australian movie; *When the Buffalo Fight* (McAuley 1980); *Desperate Praise - the Australians in Vietnam* (Coe 1982); *Token Soldiers* (Carroll 1983); *Nasho* (Frazer 1984); *In Good Company – One man's war in Vietnam* (McKay 1987); *Memories of Vietnam* (Maddock 1991);*Trauma, Tears and Time* (Evans 1993); *Best We Forget* (Clancy 1998); and *Count Your Dead* (Rowe 2003). More recently, the two books referred to above, *Well Done Those Men* (Heard 2005) and *The War Within* (Tate 2008), were published, receiving critical acclaim and good sales. Interestingly, both of the latter appear to be more soul-searching and deeply reflective than those written earlier. Christopher Koch's novel *Highways to a War* (1996) also belongs in this category. Although not displaying complete support for the war, it exhibits some sympathy for the South Vietnamese, and is clearly not written from the point of view of the anti-war protestors achieving 'an aesthetic distance from the wars in Indo-China' (Bennett and Strauss, 1998).

In many ways, as Pierce has observed, 'Australian novelists of the Vietnam War have tended to be unofficial if not unwitting spokesmen of the views of servicemen' (Pierce 1991, p. 98). A close examination of these texts shows them to be much more than simply 'the views of servicemen'. The rage and sadness of the authors is palpable in most of the stories, along with admirable irony and self-deprecating humour. Murphy in *Meanjin* provides a telling account of the forces at work in these novels, where Australian regular soldiers and conscripts, having been fed a consistent diet of the domino theory and tabloid headlines of red arrows pointing at a vulnerable Australia (in the days of purely black and white), arrive in Vietnam, where

they are seen by a sizeable number of Vietnamese as the enemy and seen by those they are supposedly there to aid and defend as arrogant interlopers. Their concrete experience has to bridge the yawning chasm between their government's political ideology and their own on-the-ground frustration. They discover they are not all-conquering, selfless heroes but caught in the quagmire of lies, demoralisation and historical complexity – which is

> a recurring theme in the literature… the corrosive effects of being the foreigner in a guerrilla war, where the 'soldier can never distinguish 'enemy' from 'friend' and eventually gives up trying out of fear and frustration, treating all as the enemy. It is part of the sociology of My Lai (Murphy 1987, p. 157).

The exception to the alienation and anger felt in the other novels is *When the Buffalo Fight*. The author writes that the Australian soldier is:

> secure in the knowledge that the Australian is superior to the man of every other nation... Without realising it, two of their greatest strengths were the dry Australian sense of humour and the inborn independence of the Australian male, ingested with his mother's milk... (Alexander cited in Murphy 1987)

Such fervent, patriotic arrogance is not so evident in the other examples in this category, certainly not in Nagle nor in Pollard's *The Cream Machine* (1972). The latter is interesting on a number of accounts. It was published very early (1972) with regards to the Vietnam War, with hardly any time for reflection of Australia's involvement nor the subsequent polarisation in Australian society. It was more a 'close to the bone' story of a working class young man, who along with his mates, was probably going overseas for the first time. In Vietnam, the author experienced the terror of war, death and dying, the killing of innocents as well as combatants and the immense sadness of losing his friends. But there are other elements to this account – his reflection on the Vietnam War and its comparison to other wars where Australia was involved:

> '…I grope for the supposed similarity between us and the traditional national image: where the tall bronzed Anzacs? …where is the morale and endurance of Tobruk…? (1972, p. 77).

and the consistent stream of inescapable, understandable cynicism:

> ‘Toby, perhaps the only one possessing the required qualities, is dead and I am white and frightened … What will we say in the veterans’ clubs next year? Nothing, we will let them talk and buy the beer … We are trying to stay alive and pay off Holdens’ (1972, p. 77).

In Tate’s, *The War Within,* readers also don’t find that patriotic arrogance borne of an older Anzac mythology . In Tate’s acknowledgments we see the author’s perspective, which still asserts the courage of the Vets and the bitterness felt by those who fought in a war that ended up being unpopular and returning to a thankless home country: ‘We’d fought the most unpopular war in Australia’s history, and came home despised because of it’ (Tate 2008, p.463). Tate, like many servicemen in Vietnam, came from a background of poverty and semi-skilled and unskilled jobs (2008).

A similar message is evident in the majority of these novels – pain and rejection mixed with a good deal of hope rising from the ashes. Heard’s memoir, *Well Done Those Men*, the reader is given some sense of what it was like ‘back home’ and the social upheaval that marked the Sixties in Australia - especially when Heard, as a returned soldier from the Vietnam War, has to face the youthful protests against the war on Melbourne streets and at RMIT University where he studies after coming home. Some of the insults and attacks he endured gave me (as a leading radical student activist at the time) some pause for thought, not because I have changed my position concerning the war but because I am now more aware that in different circumstances, it might have been me and my political allies in that situation – a reflection that appears in my memoir *All Along the Watchtower,* when a group of young activists at a political rally are confronted by soldiers recently returned from Vietnam.

> To them, we were the real criminals. I looked at their square backs as they walked off, pleased we hadn’t met them after they’d had a few beers and realising that in different circumstances, with different family or friends or different luck, it could’ve been me. (Hyde 2010, p. 157).

It does not take too much imagination to understand how these authors, regular soldiers and draftees, and their supporters saw the rebels of the Sixties. *In Good Company* (McKay 1987) views the young Australian protestors as nothing more than

superficial dupes who are slavishly following the American example: ‘my peer group believed they were interested in Vietnam only because their American counterparts were demonstrating against the draft and the war and it was trendy’ (McKay 1987, p. 5). This ‘aping’ of overseas confrontations was a common charge levelled at the young antiwar movement, as though opposition to the war and the society that spawned it was nothing more than ‘a cool’ thing to do. It also unintentionally indicated the inferiority complex and cultural cringe felt by many Australians at the time, especially in the context of a world dominated by the USA.

However, McKay’s novel is intriguing in its honesty and his ability to face up to experiences which contradict his world view. A poignant example is his description of what must have been a Save Our Sons (SOS) demonstration at the Swan Street Barracks in Melbourne, where conscripts were to take their first steps towards training for the Vietnam War. While the author refers to the rally as ‘noisy mayhem’, he comments on the protestors’ actions, almost respectful of their sincerity: there was no shortage of chanting, placard waving and not so fake ‘crocodile tears’…

> judging by the reactions of the young draftees who were watching all this from inside the depot grounds, it was not without its effect. Some of the guys were quite impressed by the intensity of the demonstration’ (McKay 1987, p. 6).

Mixed with this confused and complex reaction is the bewilderment that comes from being treated as a pawn and feeling the bitter humiliation that comes from this experience. More confusing still, many soldiers returned to an Australia that was already busy with its rapprochement to the People’s Republic of China and the re-alignment of political alliances.

> There was a photo on the front page of the Brisbane Courier-Mail. It showed Dr Jim Cairns [a leading Labor Party opponent of the war] shaking hands with a North Vietnamese trade union delegation… It seemed all too quickly we had embraced our previous protagonists… I found the situation difficult to come to grips with. It seemed like a kick in the guts to the men who had gone to war for their country – now the ‘enemy’ were being treated as if nothing had happened. But I suppose that is the lot of the soldier; he really *is* just a pawn for the politicians (McKay 1987, p. 189)

The third category of writing consists of those who approach the social/political issues of the Sixties from an anti-establishment, counter-culture, anti-war point of view – *radical* writing. It is the relatively small numbers in this category that is surprising, even mystifying when we contemplate the tumult of the Sixties: indeed, it is the nub of the matter. At this stage I will only give a cursory account of this grouping as a prelude to a more extensive examination and discussion in Chapter Five, which deals with 'Literature of and about the Sixties'.

A little known novel, Kenneth Cook's *The Wine of God's Anger* (Cook 1968), set entirely in a 'south-east Asian country' (that does not leave any doubt that it is Vietnam), and is well before its time. Other examples include, *The Thundering Good Today* (Couper 1970), *We Took their Orders and are Dead* (Cass et al. 1971), Richard Neville's *Hippie, hippie, shake : the dreams, the trips, the trials, the love-ins, the screw ups – the Sixties* (Neville 1995), centring on the hippy tales of the era and Neville's anti-establishment publishing career; and Jenny Pausacker's teen novel, A *Tale of Two Families* (Pausacker 2000), which brings to the fore the effect that the Vietnam War and the Sixties had on families and friends. My young adult novel, *Hey Joe* (Hyde 2003) also belongs in this group, as does Brian Pola's *Yarrowee* (Pola 2007). Moorhouse's *Days of Wine and Rage* (1980) is a miscellaneous collection that is more a chronicle of the writings and actions of the new intelligentsia that evolved in this period, which Moorhouse calls a personal book of 'poetry and other pieces', rather than a memoir; while his *'The Americans, Baby'* (1972) is, as Moorhouse describes it, 'a discontinuous narrative of stories and fragments' that revolves around issues of relationships, sex, politics, cultural independence, and opposition to the domination of Australian culture by the US **(**Moorhouse, p. 72).

Other writings by anti-establishment writers of this period - memoirs, autobiographies and historical accounts in the main are written from a different relation to memory and historical sources. They claim a 'factuality' which does not apply to my literary memoir (see Chapter Five and Conclusion). Freney's *Map of Days: Life on the Left* is an autobiography, which, according to the author, is written in the 'literary genre' (Freney 1991). For Freney, the 'literary' elements of this autobiography mean that he has included 'personal and sexual material' and has relied on memory, as well as historical sources (Freney 1992, p. 146). Noone's memoir, *Disturbing the War* (1993), is a study of the Melbourne Catholic community and its reactions and

changing attitudes to the war in Vietnam. Taft's *Crossing the Party Line: Memoirs of Bernie Taft* is a memoir which, in addition to the Sixties period, covers Taft's entire history in the Communist Party as a member and functionary. York's *Student revolt: La Trobe University 1967 to 1973* is written, by the author's self-admission, as a history: 'I have tried to apply the maxim of C. Wright Mills, who once declared that in his writings he always did his best to be objective but made no claim to being detached. I have attempted to write a factual account, as a historian who participated in the events and who has no regrets, politically, for having done so' (York, 1989, p. 5). Scates' *Draftmen go Free,* like York's account of the LaTrobe student revolt, is similarly positioned as a history and, again like York, is a memoir as well. In the foreword of the book, Kevin Healy indicates that Scates, even though deeply involved in the anti-war movement (a draft resister who spent eight months in Pentridge prison) avoids personal anecdotes and opts for the cerebral approach, writing 'an important, albeit surprisingly belated, history of the period' (Scates, 1988). Considering the eruptions of the Sixties, which I discussed earlier in this chapter, the number of works of fiction, memoir and autobiography in this third category is small. The effects this has on Australian cultural memory and the Australian people, especially in terms of how we remember the dynamics of the Sixties and how we see ourselves, will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter Three

Memory and Cultural Memory

‘Memories are living processes, which become transformed, imbued with new meaning, each time we recall them.’(Rose S 1992, p. 2)
‘There is accumulation. There is responsibility. And beyond these, there is unrest. There is great unrest.’ (Barnes J 2011, p. 150)

As I wrote my literary memoir *All Along the Watchtower*, the question of cultural memory assumed greater and more profound importance. This chapter will examine the issues of individual memory; how it connects to cultural memory; the effect of marginalised, hidden, lost stories on cultural memory; more specifically, how the lack of stories affects our culture’s understanding of the impact of the Sixties; and how narrative helps to discover and shape our cultural memory. While this exegesis makes no pretence of discussing memory on a deep psychological plane, to exclude the issue of personal memory in relation to cultural memory would weaken the discussion. Thus my starting point is with individual memory and the light it might shine on the much larger subject of cultural memory.

The protagonist of Julian Barnes’ novel *The Sense of an Ending* (2011) dwells on a previous relationship that collapsed some forty years ago. He is not so much attempting to revive the relationship but to seek out some meaning, some life lesson about himself, his past acts and his own life. The story and his search is beset by memory: ’I need to return briefly to a few incidents that have grown into anecdotes, to some approximate memories which time has deformed into certainty.’ (2011 p.4) Barnes further elaborates on this theme as his character ruminates about his own past behaviour.

> How often do we tell our own life story? How often do we adjust, embellish, make sly cuts? And the longer life goes on, the fewer are those around to challenge our account, to remind us that our life is not our life, merely the story we have told about our life. Told to others, but – mainly – to ourselves. (2011, p. 95)

It is not a matter of whether personal memory is a cache of lies, more a matter of what is emphasised and what is left out, consciously or unconsciously. When our memories are recounted, written down, made into a film or sung, it is as if that performative action changes what *probably happened* to what *definitely happened* – and when read, watched or listened to, the production becomes the memory, becomes the reality itself. In some way, the story overtakes whatever happened in the past. As Flood notes, 'the stories of self that an individual relates are combined to form the personal narrative that is told to the world. It is an externalised recording of memory.' (2005, p. 41). Our sense of self, our story of self - the changes made and the impacts felt - comes into view once it is told. Importantly, stories of self use and discard many memories that reside within an individual, consciously and unconsciously. Radstone's observations are particularly apposite here: 'It is almost a truism to state that the past is mediated by, rather than directly reflected in personal memory' (2005, p. 135) – all of which has direct bearing on my literary memoir, *All Along the Watchtower (2010).*

Our personal stories, relying on memory, create something we relate to and, in fact, to a large extent determine how we see ourselves and what kind of person we want or wish to be. This collection of our often repeated, individual anecdotes tries to answer what the Red Queen in *Alice through the Looking Glass* demanded of Alice on her metaphoric journey: "Where do you come from?" said the Red Queen. "And where are you going?" ***(****Alice Through the Looking Glass*. (Carroll, cited in Flood 2005, pp. 38-39).

As Flood explains, 'When discussing ideas of memory and narrative, these two questions are pivotal in the way we come to construct stories of self' (Flood 2005, p. 39). Individuals, some more than others, visit and revisit these questions throughout their life in an attempt to affirm or change their life story and to set a course for their future.

Cultural memory operates in much the same way, although it moulds and shapes a community, a society, a nation. As a collection of people, we want to know where we come from and where we are going. Like personal memory, cultural memory is continuously evolving, restructuring experiences, changing parts of the storyline and

the roles of characters, deliberately omitting uncomfortable segments, including and/or emphasising fragments, excising pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that may not suit the picture a particular culture wants to create:

> Cultural memory is continuously evolving with new frames of recollections created in new historical conditions with different social groups disputing cultural memory and attempting to create their own visions of time and memory (Halbwachs 1992).

It is difficult to imagine a society where a specific cultural memory is agreed on by all sections of the community. As Halbwachs pointed out, there are frequent, often heated debates, between the various parties as to *what* happened and *how* it happened (1992). The story of Gallipoli in Australian mythology is a perfect example. Over the last twenty years the Allied landing at Gallipoli in World War One has often been presented as an example of the courage, fortitude, selflessness and resilience of the Australian soldier and as an example of what the Australian nation stands for – mateship, helping those in need, becoming a nation in its own right. Stevens observes that 'In the Australian consciousness, mythic war tales have a pervasive influence…national identities are defined through them' (Grey, cited in Stevens 2006, p. 45.12)

On a much smaller scale, the opposing argument sees the landing as an illustration of the horror of war, the obsequiousness of the Australian government, and the use of our soldiers as pawns in an imperialist war. In some circles, the event is characterised as ignoble and, in fact, an invasion of Turkey. One only has to visit the war museum in Ankara and study the photos and accounts from the perspective of those on top of the cliffs watching the Anzacs storming the beaches, to see how a different point of view can radically alter the story or at the very least present contesting views of the 'Anzac'. Hergenhan makes a potent observation concerning the story of the Gallipoli conflict when he states that 'Australians are eager to learn ever more about the Australian side of the Gallipoli conflict, but not the Turkish experience' (Hergenhan 2007, p. 187). To be told that after an eight month long campaign British Empire and French forces withdrew, having suffered 44,000 deaths, compared with 85,000 Turkish deaths, would clearly undermine the dominant cultural narrative of Gallipoli as heartland (Australian War Memorial 2013).

This example of Australian cultural imperviousness to another's point of view, another country's pain and stories, is the way in which the growing interest in Australia's participation in the Vietnam War is accompanied by 'little attempt to understand what it meant to the Vietnamese… The meaning of the war to Vietnamese people, their culture and history, remain neglected' (Hergenhan 2007). One of the most powerful novels to emerge from the Vietnam War was *The Sorrow of War* by Vietnamese author Bao Ninh, which, tellingly, is only available in Australia if ordered from overseas.

Such stories could help fuel a more authentic cultural memory but their absence only serves to remind us of other deficiencies. The tragic stories of the Australian Indigenous Stolen Generation for many decades were at best marginalised and at worst repressed and as a result the health of the Australian community, in particular the indigenous community, suffered and still suffers. Parallel to these hidden stories are the stories of British colonialism and its invasion of Indigenous Australia. For nearly 200 years the 'acceptable' stories were of an indigenous population who meekly accepted the poisoned flour, the rape of women and the massacres disguised as retaliation for the killing of sheep and shepherds. In an attempt to right this distortion, a seminal book, *The Black Resistance*, by Robinson and York (1977), argued that the Blacks didn't take things lying down. York and Robinson went on to examine many incidents where Aborigines fought back when their country was invaded. The Australian historian Henry Reynolds, has further elaborated on this story in a stream of publications in an attempt to position it in the national psyche.

There are many other examples of hidden, silenced or marginalised stories to which Australian mainstream culture is almost oblivious. For instance, atomic bomb tests were carried out in Australia by the British government, at Monte Bello Island, Emu Field and Maralinga between 1952 and 1963 with the agreement and support of the Australian government. Over the years allegations were made about the terrible effects (death, cancer, psychological trauma) on the Indigenous People of the area, as well as on the military personnel at the test sites. In response to the inherent dangers of the tests (ionising radiation, disposal of radioactive and toxic materials), the Australian government established a Royal Commission in 1984, which did not result in any compensation to those affected. This story was covered in the investigative account *Beyond Belief*: 'I began to better understand that men and their

families still suffered as a result of their involvement with the British bomb tests. It was clear that here was an important part of Australia's history that had been swept under the carpet for more than 40 years' (Cross & Hudson 2005, p. ix). Other accounts have surfaced, although only rarely and sporadically, in the media, articles including like the one I wrote over thirty years ago for *Nation Review*, 'The man from Maralinga' (Hyde 1978). But overall, the tests and the aftermath are not seen as a significant part of the national story, nor as part of the dominant cultural memory. As the Australian author Robert Drewe stated very recently, 'Prime Minister Robert Menzies obsequiously bowed to Britain's request to test their new atomic bombs, right here' and 'few Australians know about these nuclear tests Britain arrogantly conducted in our backyard…' (Hawley 2012).

What problems arise for our communities when accounts of a significant historical period - for instance, the Turkish perspective on Gallipoli, the Stolen Generations, the European arrival or invasion and the British nuclear tests - are scant and rarely heard? To focus on the specific import of this exegesis, what problems arise for a national culture in which the stories of the turbulent Sixties are meagre and the radical stories of that period, told by those who wanted to turn the world on its head, are even more negligible. It appears that when it comes to our cultural memory, there are stories that are seen to be insignificant and stories that splutter and extinguish due to lack of oxygen, while others have been ignored, silenced and forgotten. As Brown points out,

> The silencing of stories, taboos on acknowledging and claiming life experiences, is dangerous in any society. Writers help rid us of the burden of stigma and secrecy by creating stories that evoke irreconcilable experiences, or, more importantly perhaps, the possible consequences of such experiences (2004).

Similarly Ferrier says,'Of course, in relation to memory, it is the accounts most favourable to the dominant class that are most readily circulated, while oppositional narratives have to fight for their voices to be heard' (2003). Memory is clearly related to the question of which narrative becomes dominant, a question that in its turn is related to the deployment of power.

The existent radical Australian literature that explores the adventures of the Sixties will be dealt with in detail in Chapter Five. However, at this point it is important to investigate the small number of Australian literary contributions and the impact of that on cultural memory, and to explore the reasons for such a dearth. This shortage is brought into sharp relief when compare to the numbers of American literature from the Vietnam War and the Sixties. There are, according to John Newman's *Vietnam War Literature: Annotated Bibliography, (*1995*),* 666 'narrative and other modes of literary expression' (cited in Carpenter 2003, p.30). It is an astonishing figure, even taking into account the differences in size of US and Australian populations. Much of this outpouring comes from US veterans, far outnumbering the literary contributions by the Australian veterans. The quantity and quality of US literature is seen as ironic: 'the one war America lost gave rise to more and better literature – collectively – than any of America's twentieth century wars' (Carpenter 2003, p.30). This preponderance of US literature is matched by the multitude of US films about the Sixties, the Vietnam War, its effects on US society and the various social protest movements at home, which were abundant and as active as in Australia. This mass of American movies, including *Rambo*, *Deer Hunter*, and *The Green Berets* screenings of which were regularly disrupted by anti-war protestors, have created a prism through which Australian society sees and 'understands' the war and the upheavals of the Sixties.

Ironically, resistance to American 'cultural imperialism' and assertion of our own identity was one of the major planks of the Sixties opposition. Street theatre began to thrive in the Sixties and the iconic Pram Factory and the Australian Performing Group were established (Robertson 1997)**.** Australian popular music began to take its place on stage and on the airways; TV and radio and Australian publishing companies sprouted, ensuring an outlet for Australian authors (one of the best examples was McPhee/Gribble Publishers, which was founded in 1975 and assisted in the writing careers of Australian literary luminaries like Helen Garner, Murray Bail and Tim Winton (Leys 2011)); children's and adolescent literature by Australian writers thrived and found an enthusiastic home-grown audience (Lees, Macintyre, 1993). Australian History nudged aside British History in schools, where it became part of the Victorian Matriculation syllabus. Astonishingly, in tertiary institutions like Monash University, European History was the only history offered to the first student

intake in 1961 but by 1962, student choice had expanded. European and British History were both offered at first year level and European, Asian, and Australian History at second year level and by the mid to late 1960s Australian History had become established as a popular choice of undergraduates (Monash University Faculty of Arts Handbook 1962).There was a strong sense that Australia had its own stories to tell and that we were quite capable of driving our own culture. Demonstrations were held at the annual Moomba celebrations in Melbourne in 1977, protesting the choice of Mickey Mouse as the 'King of Moomba' and demanding that the much-loved Australian children's' literary character, Norman Lindsay's *Blinky Bill*, take Mickey's place.

All this history of struggle for cultural independence could not stop American films from affecting the way in which we view the war and the Sixties. *Green Berets, Apocalypse Now, Born on The Fourth of July, Platoon, Good Morning Vietnam, The Deer Hunter, Full Metal Jacket* , *Rambo* are some examples (McMaster, J 2006). Although the messages of the movies are varied, with a few, that are critical of US involvement, like *Born on the Fourth of July,* most have a similar thesis - that American (and by inference, Australian) soldiers were not properly supported and the wounds of a divisive past should be closed and stitched up. As Noam Chomsky argues,

> some of the lessons of the war are being systematically unlearnt, as illustrated by many of the American films of the war; *Rambo* and *The Deer Hunter* register a regrowth of the belligerent confidence in machismo and technology which characterised the Vietnam debacle. Michael Clark has argued that this is a hegemonic process, in which the past is invoked not as a point of resistance to imperial ambition but as a warning to do it right next time. In Australia, *Vietnam* clearly had quite different political purposes, but its process of reconciling history leaves it open to interpretations (cited in Murphy 1987, p. 154)

Our cultural memory has been Americanised and the received narratives of the period tend to Americanise the war and see the Sixties from a US frame of reference: 'It is not surprising that the US experience of the war has become enmeshed with the Australian memory, given the widespread popularity of American

stories and films of Vietnam in Australia' (Stevens 2006, p. 45). This prevalence of US movies has had a twofold effect. First, the number and popularity of these films mean that Australian audiences could be forgiven for assuming that there are many easily available cultural productions about the Sixties. The fact that these books, movies and memoirs deal with America and its own debates, rather than the Australian scene, seems to be forgotten. Secondly, an almost consistent conservative message has influenced Australian audiences. All of this serves to undermine a genuine Australian cultural memory of the Sixties.

Cultural memory to some extent depends on the ability of a society to generate its own myths – hopefully not as an act of duplicity but as an attempt to see, in the Red Queen's words, where we have come from and where we would like to go. But according to Murphy, 'the Vietnam war is resistant material for such myth making; the political dissent that accompanied it has made a hegemonic memory more difficult to establish' (1987, p. 153). Hegemonic memories are not only difficult to attain but in the end may only create shaky foundations for a society's cultural memory. The Israeli film industry was faced with this problem after the Second World War as it attempted to 'give Israeli culture a homogenous, collective shape that left no room for marginal narratives, including those of Diaspora Jews who had so recently survived the Holocaust' (Gertz 2005, p. 67). Similarly, the Australian narrative either seems to ignore or distort the culture of the Sixties, by sending the uncomfortable stories of those times to the outer reaches and, like the Israeli film industry, attempting to impose 'an imaginary national unity on all participants and, by doing so, imposed homogeneity on an identity that was in fact fragmented and heterogeneous' (Gertz 2005, p. 68).

If the stories of the Sixties are many but not yet told, why and how did this come about? Stephens has neatly observed, 'Given that the Sixties had a multiplicity of aftermaths it is surprising that only one outcome – the failure scenario – is regularly accentuated' (Stephens 1994, p. 24). So far this exegesis has shown that as far as the Sixties is concerned, little of the written record reflects the vitality and range of the various radical movements. What radical written works there are have often been written to resist this 'failure scenario'. Barry York, in his examination of the student revolt at La Trobe University, explains the impetus behind his thesis.

> I was prompted to embark on this particular venture when I heard that La Trobe University was going to celebrate its 25th anniversary in December 1989. Various factors made it clear to me that the campus crisis of the late 1960s and early 1970s would be ignored, or underrated, in the University's official and semi-official commemorative publications (York 1989, p. 4).

To resist is one thing; to understand why the 'failure scenario' or, worse, the amnesia scenario occurred and still occurs is another. It would be easy and convenient to slip into a 'dark men in dark corners' scenario where the gatekeepers of cultural memory channel the 'acceptable' stories of any era into the sunlight and divert the 'unacceptable' into drains and sewers where they never see the light of day. However, York presents a convincing alternative perspective: 'The 'politics of forgetting' frequently stems from the need of those in power to create a view of themselves that tallies with a particular objective in the present' (1989, p. 4). Rose somewhat agrees: 'Or is forgetting functional, so that we record and remember only those things which we have reason to believe are important for our future survival?' (1992, p. 2)

In other words, 'those in power' preserve the myths that suit their own positions and keep society on the track they want maintained. This can be done unconsciously but it can also be done consciously - as with the Gallipoli legend where some fifteen years ago the then Prime Minister, John Howard set out to revive that particular myth and cement it in the national psyche through changing the school curriculum and celebrating this battle over all other battles and the wars in which they occurred.

Another possible reason for this cultural amnesia is a difficult and perplexing one. Guilt seems to have affected not only some of the soldiers who went to Vietnam but also some of those who opposed the war and who were intent on challenging the society to its core, politically, socially and culturally. Many of those protesting the war or involved in radical protests were young, although the Sixties protest movement has been exaggeratedly seen as the precinct of the youth. The Australian author David Martin, writing about his experiences in the 1970 Melbourne Moratorium, described some of those with whom he demonstrated: 'A taxi driver, veteran of the last Great War…Four high school girls. A stamp dealer…A young architect. A retired schoolmistress…A man of sixty whose doctor warned him not to come, because he is suffering from a heart condition. Not to forget the two Anglican nuns'(Cass et al

1971, p.93). Nevertheless, many involved in the political and cultural actions of the time *were* young (especially given that conscripts were only twenty years old), which means that some of them looking back and examining their behaviour, feel some embarrassment for the extremes about their youthful conduct. In turn, this has undermined the many positive results that emerged from their efforts and those times – the profound changes and reforms in thinking and actions which can still be felt today, something that I raise in *All Along the Watchtower.*

A corollary of this is the guilt felt by Australian society about the way in which the veterans have been treated since their return. The most significant example of their treatment has been the deplorable manner in which the government and those businesses who allegedly profited from the war (CRA; Dow Chemicals; General Motors, Honeywell and other) have responded to the plight of veterans and their families affected by post traumatic stress disorder and the effects of Agent Orange. This societal guilt has been adopted by some involved in the uproar of the Sixties. It was not, of course, the radicals who sent those young men to fight in an unjust war but the very organisations and businesses that neither acknowledge their distress nor pay any reparations. Interestingly, apart from the veteran's organisations themselves, many of those involved in helping the veterans are those who were immersed in the radical politics of the time. Russell has much to say about this sense of guilt, arguing that if we are to have a different memory of the Sixties in Australia, one that is not simply nostalgic or heroic, activists have to be careful not to apologise themselves and their actions out of existence:

> In their willingness, even eagerness, to identify any naiveté on their part which may have contributed to the disappointment of their hopes, ex-radicals may inadvertently contribute to the portrayal of their activism as naïve and thoughtless, which it was not! (Russell 1999, p. 458)

Every society, community, culture has its own stories, some of which are given high status, mainly because particular narratives serve the purpose (to repeat York's words) 'of those in power to create a view of themselves that tallies with a particular objective in the present' (1989, p. 4).

The Sixties era has been difficult for many Australian writers to contemplate because at the heart of the Sixties uprising was the Vietnam War, a trauma that has never

been truly dealt with by our society. As Doyle et al. have noted, ‘Many Australian authors either ignored the war or treated it indirectly, thus abetting public amnesia regarding its causes and consequences’ (2002, p.135). Public amnesia can only damage a community. On a personal level, omissions, absences, lies and half-truths, are not beneficial to a person’s health and it is the same with culture – leaving big chunks out of the national story results in shaky foundations. Omissions denigrate the lives of some sections of society, places barriers to mature debate and say there is only one way to see and remember eras and events.

I began this chapter with a brief discussion of personal memory, so it is fitting that I conclude with some findings by neuroscience researcher Jee Hyun Kim, who argues that a person’s actions will be determined by what they remember and believe in.

> Maybe that’s why scientists are working very hard to understand how memory works. On the other hand, understanding how forgetting happens is rather neglected (I am working on forgetting). Just as super memory can exist as an extreme form of normal memory, perhaps erasure is also possible as a form of super forgetting (2012)

There has been amnesia on a grand scale about some of the uncomfortable, unresolved episodes in Australia’s national story. Our society’s cultural memory regarding the Sixties rebellion has been severely impaired, due to a specific brand of ‘super forgetting’ which has not helped with any process of healing and has led to a distorted vision as to ‘where we are going’. Anthony Ashbolt remarked that ‘Billboards for the future resonate with a distaste for the past’, in which even memories of times as tempestuous as the Sixties in Australia may fade, leaving only the official history remaining (cited in Russell 1999, p. 458) It is interesting to compare the Vietnam War with World War Two. In comparison, less has been forgotten and more remembered in the literature of the second period. Indeed, Australian literature flourished during World War Two and immediately post-war, despite the fact that society encountered turbulence at every level. A study of this phenomenon the radical writers, their novels, their politics and its effects - will occupy the next chapter.

Chapter Four

Australian Radical writers of the Forties and Fifties

I discussed earlier the lack of literature of and about the Vietnam War and the accompanying social movements of the Sixties – but the situation is reversed when it comes to the wealth of literature and, more specifically, the multitude of radical writers who emerged during and after World War Two. While the focus of this exegesis is the Sixties in Australia and the state of its literature, it helps to compare the two eras. In fact, the differences are so marked that they demand close investigation. Who were these writers pre- and post-World War Two? What did they write? Why and how were they so supported? What were the differences in the historical/cultural conditions of post-World War Two compared to the post-Vietnam War period? What obstacles did these writers of the Forties and the Fifties have to face? Why did one era produce so much literature, while the other produced so little?

World War Two was a mass conflagration which engaged millions of men and women across the world in the prosecution of the war. In Australia this meant hundreds of thousands of men enlisting; women active in the military services and at home taking the place of the absent men in the factories and workplaces. Society at large stood behind these men and women as they fought Hitler, Mussolini and the Japanese. All facets of society – the press, the government and opposition, business and the arts – united as one. Immediately after the war, Australia, like all other nations embroiled in the conflict, had to deal with the massive loss of lives; the mass demobilisation of returned soldiers, many of whom were wounded, both physically and mentally; women who had had a taste of independence they had never experienced before and now had to be cajoled back into the home, 'where they belonged'; a population slowly moving away from rationing; and a people sick of war and desirous of peace and stability.

This scene is clearly different to the Vietnam War and the reactions of Australian society. The early stages of the war saw some opposition but mainly support, albeit tentative in some quarters: the media and the Menzies-led Parliament were united in support of conscription and the war, and there was little public opposition. But the

more the war continued, the less public support it received and amongst those who were sent to fight in Vietnam support also dwindled. Australia became a divided nation, seized by a social uproar that found its way into homes, places of education and workplaces – a development which I portray in *All Along the Watchtower*. Post-Vietnam War Australia had also to contend with the veterans who, like their World War Two counterparts, returned home with physical and psychological injuries. An important difference was that initially Vietnam veterans were not welcomed home with open arms: the government that sent them did little in terms of providing them with assistance, keeping their heads down and eyes averted from those they had needlessly committed to a war of America's choosing. In fact, to this day (2013) the government has left Vietnam veterans with very little support; many veterans have suffered from the effects of Agent Orange, the defoliant widely used in Vietnam which not only affected the Vietnamese but also the Australian and American soldiers and their children. Author and Vietnam veteran Barry Heard (2005) has written and spoken about the effects of the chemical and psychological effects of fighting a war that became extremely unpopular and a government that appeared to disown them.

The circumstances could not be more different for the writers of World War Two and the radical writers of that era who told the tales. The writers and their literary works may well be more numerous because the different context enabled a different metanarrative for writers of this period. Adams (1991) notes that for writers of the Second World War, the narrative was a continuous modernist project, brought about by the alliance with Labor in the building of a national literary culture after the war. Radical writers anticipated shared power arrangements with the Labor Party in a patriotic government of reconstruction after the war. Communists and those closely linked to them (commonly referred to as 'fellow travellers') felt a new nationalist period of 'social awakening'. Writers who benefited from this supportive cultural climate included Communist writers such as Lambert, who wrote *Twenty Thousand Thieves* (1951), a book based on his war experiences in the Middle East. Lambert privately published the resulting book, received a Commonwealth Literary Fund Fellowship in 1949, and was soon accepted by a commercial publisher - Frederick Muller Ltd in London - and went on to sell over 750,000 copies (*Australian Dictionary of Biography* 2000, pp. 49-50).

Lambert is just one example of the communist/socialist, anti-capitalist, pro-working class, and group of radical writers, who were active before, during and after the war. Importantly, they did not write only about the war but also the social and political issues of the times, which they considered to be part of their role as story-tellers. Some of the authors I mention, such as Katharine Prichard were writing well before the war and they became an integral part of the wave of progressive writers post World War Two, along with other writers who emerged during this period. Later in this chapter I will examine more closely the literary contributions of a number of these writers but to begin with, it is important to list some of these numerous writers (some, like Dorothy Hewitt, also wrote poetry and plays), to gain some appreciation of the difference between the two literary eras of the Vietnam War and World War Two.

Mena Calthorpe: *The Dyehouse* (1964), *The Defectors* (1969);
Gavin Casey: *It's Harder for Girls* (1943), *Amid the Plenty* (1962), *Snowball* (1958), *The Man whose Name was Mud* (1963);
Betty Collins: *The Copper Crucible* (1969);
Eleanor Dark: *The Timeless Land* (1941), *Storm of Time* (1948), *No Barrier* (1953);
Ralph de Boissiere: *Crown Jewel* (1952), *Rum and Coca-Cola* (1957);
Jean Devanny: *Sugar Heaven* (1936), *Roll back the night* (1945);

M. Barnard Eldershaw: *Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow* (1947);

Frank Hardy: *The Man From Clinkapella* (1951), *The Four-Legged Lottery* (1958), *The Hard Way* (1961), *Power Without Glory* (1950);
Dorothy Hewett: *Bobbin Up* (1959);
Walter Kaufmann: *Voices in the Storm* (1953), *The Curse of Maralinga and other stories* (1959);

Eric Lambert: *The Twenty Thousand Thieves* (1951), *The Veterans* (London, 1954), *Five Bright Stars* (1954), *Glory Thrown In* (1959), *Hiroshima Reef* (1967);

Alan Marshall: *These are my people* (1944), *How beautiful are thy feet* (1949), *I can jump Puddles* (1955), *How's Andy Going* (1956), *This is the Grass* (1962);
John Morrison: *Twenty-three (collection)* (1962), *Sailors belong Ships* (1947), *Black Cargo* (1955);

Katharine Susannah Prichard: *The Pioneers* (1915); *Black Opal* (1921); *Working Bullocks* (1921); *Coonardoo* (1929, republished 1956), *Intimate Strangers* (1939); *N'Goola and other stories* (1959); *Subtle Flame* (1967);
Criena Rohan: *The Delinquents* (1962), *Down by the Dockside* (1963);
Donald Stuart: *Yandy* (1959), *The driven* (1961), *Yaralie* (1963);
Kylie Tennant:*The Battlers* (1941), *Ride on Stranger* (1943), *The Honey Flow* (1956);
Ron Tullipan: *Follow the Sun* (1962), *March into Morning* (1962);
Judah Waten: *The Unbending* (1954), *Shares in Murder* (1957), *Time of Conflict* (1961).

It is an extraordinary list, made even more remarkable when compared to the meagre list of radical writers of and about the Sixties. Not all of these writers can be classified as radical writers of the 1940s or indeed writers who wrote about the war, although some, like Eric Lambert, Frank Hardy and Walter Kaufmann, clearly fall into both these categories. But the war promulgated a shifting of ideas and a disruption of previous points of anchorage creating an upsurge in radical and nationalist left wing thinking, which had previously not existed. The war, if not mentioned in these works, nonetheless had a sustained effect on their authors' thinking and writing and contributed much of what would become the foundation for the hugely influential radical nationalist thinking of the post-war period. In Judah Waten's novel *Time of Conflict* (1961), we see a theme common to much of this evolving radical fiction:

> the transformation of the working class from despair to optimism through class consciousness; the learning of discipline and organisation; the learning of new texts and new speech; the identification of false hope (careerism, reformism, social democracy) (Adams and Lee, 2003, p. 103).

Time of Conflict tells a story in which Waten tries 'to return to revolutionary history … to the realm of everyday life'. Waten 'tried to capture the essence of a new historical phase (post World War Two) with the most significant symbolic form of the previous age' (Moretti cited in Adams and Lee 2003, p. 110).

The war had also taken women out of the home and into the factories, which had an important effect not only on how women were seen by the general society and their families but also how they saw themselves. This change, emerging from the war

experience, can be witnessed in a number of novels, but never more clearly than in Dorothy Hewett's *Bobbin Up* (1959):

> When the war started she was seventeen. She'd put her age up and was working unskilled at Davies Coop for an adult's wage. She learnt a lot in those years, along with all sorts of women, manpowered into industry for the first time. There was a big strike wave in the textiles for ninety per cent of the male rate. The women had marched from the Jumbuck Mills to Bonds, stood outside in the street and called the girls out … no mucking about, and a great silence fell over the woollen and cotton mills of Sydney… But she'd seen women fight, she'd seen them unite, she'd seen them show a courage and resourcefulness you wouldn't believe existed under all the petty details of their lives (pp. 139-140).

The contributions of those writers served to inspire me in my determination to write my literary memoir, *All Along the Watchtower*. However, they did not provide me with a model I could draw from. Theirs was a more unified world, with a population who had had similar experiences, a people setting about a social reconstruction and building a nationalist utopia. A certain cohesion existed - although not entirely, a point which I will expand on later in this chapter. Radical writers often had some affiliation with the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), which had a political 'line' when it came to the Depression, the Second World War and subsequent events. From 1941 when Germany and Russia declared war on each other, Australian communists threw their weight behind 'the war against fascism'. However, the partnership between radical writers and the CPA was never plain sailing, with writers like Lambert, Dark, Hardy, Waten and Tennant periodically falling out with the CPA leadership and policies, resigning, being expelled and sometimes re-joining the Party. In fact, Kylie Tennant(1986) has an amusing story where she attempted to resign from the Party but was informed that this was not possible, that she could only be expelled! This fractious relationship was specifically connected to the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956, but also seems to have been an undercurrent in the war and post-war years. Open and behind-closed-doors debates raged concerning what constituted radical writing. Katharine Susannah Prichard in an article in the *Communist Review* argued that 'Australian writers who associated themselves with the work-a-day lives, thought and experience of the people created Australian

literature' and that 'modern writers…as sensitive instruments for human progress, must spend all our energy of body and brain to direct the anti-capitalist passion of the Australian people towards organisation for socialism'(1943). There were often differences in the Realist Writers Group (see below) regarding what was considered socialist literature and what wasn't: '…we argued out the finer points of Stalinist literary dogma - …the positive hero…the collective and the individual hero, the responsibility of writers as 'engineers of the human soul' '(Turner 1982, p.138). Notwithstanding this difficulty and unease, the Party provided a strong political line, not only for the Party members but for the radical Left and for many members of the Labor Party as well. It was as if the CPA supplied a political and emotional anchor for the radical writers of this era.

Turning to the Vietnam War and its aftermath, I can see no such social cohesion in Australia - or in other Western countries. While there was some consensus that the war had either been 'a bad mistake' or 'unwinnable' or 'illegal' or 'unfair' in its prosecution, there was also some confusion as to how we as a nation should react to the outcome and reverberations of the war. Perhaps the Vietnam War produced fewer writers who wrote about the war and its social/cultural ripple effect because post-Vietnam War Australia was not concerned with a narrative of progress or of 'reconstruction', which might have enabled a left wing, progressive, national culture. As Carpenter has argued,

> Vietnam squelches whatever remains of the Western metanarrative of history that accommodates war as a possibly inevitable form of primal human collective behaviour and the Enlightenment notion that, when properly controlled and disposed by reason, war can be used to accomplish worthy and beneficial ends, as in the case of democratic revolutions or as a means of last resort in resisting totalitarian forces (Carpenter 2003, p. 32).

It seems also that the national consciousness had become more anti-war in general and had more existential doubts. The necessity of war and the perception of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War as righteous can only be seen in some of the novels written by the Vietnam veterans (see Chapter Two).

Another contributing factor may be the nature of the 'New Left', which emerged from the mid-1960s. After 1972 the writers and artists of this period could expect support

from the newly-elected Whitlam government. McQueen notes that 'The arts were funded as never before through the Australia Council' (McQueen 2011) and McLaren agrees: 'Encouraged by the newly formed Australia Council, the arts grew in vitality' (McLaren 1996). However, the New Left was unable to develop lasting narratives of the period from which it emerged. Catley has said that 'The peculiarity of the New Left was that it comprised middle-class radicals, mostly from universities, and that their program was always hard to determine. Rather, they mounted a critique' (November 2004). This is to some extent debatable – while it is true that New Left programs were not easily discernible, the greater difficulty was that there were many different political groupings on the Left with different programs and strategies, all vying for the leadership position, not only in the anti-war movement but in the other social/political/cultural movements of the time, from feminism to street theatre. This was different from the 'Old Left', which was much more interested in developing programs of national cultural development. While World War Two resulted in some sort of solidarity among radical elements, including the radical writers, the antiwar movement of the Sixties spawned a number of different critiques and policies regarding the Vietnam War and also gave birth to many and diverse social crusades, which also contained their own debates and quarrels. All of this, it could be argued, provided for a healthy progressive movement but frequently these divisions led to the weakening, falling away and/or disappearance of various radical groups. Similarly this diversity and the many political lines did not assist writers in developing a unified radical commentary or literature.

There were some debates among the post World War Two literary colleagues but most saw themselves as 'realist writers' in one form or another and there was a great deal of political agreement, which we can see in their novels. Some of these authors used the debates within the Left as part of their story-line and characterisation - for example Tennant's *The Battlers* (1941) - but overall there was a clear indication in their stories that they were on the side of the workers, the 'ordinary people', and there was a vision of a new and better society based on peace, fairness and equality – something they have in common with the radicals of the Sixties, as evident in *All Along the Watchtower* (2010). Kaufmann and Lambert, both members of the CPA at various times are good examples of writers who 'looked at socialist politics and the popular front as a way out of depression and fascism',

which they saw as a direct result of capitalism (Adams 1999, p. 36). For these writers and many others, Depression and war went hand in hand. Adams (1999) observes that many of these writers saw the anti-fascist front as leading to socialism. For instance, Kaufmann was a refugee who fled Germany and came to Australia in 1939. In his *Voices in the Storm* (1953), set in Germany as Hitler rose to power, Communism is seen as 'the regeneration of the world, fascism but a plague, a fever at the turning point of history' (Kaufmann, cited in Adams 1999, p. 36). The novel's main character displays his strong belief in Communism, just like his creator:

> Gerhart Winkel regretted nothing. His road had ended in a prison cell, but he had become a communist. Not one step would he retract…The day was coming as surely as the sun would rise, when German workers would break their shackles and German peasants till a soil they *owned*…That was the future, that the radiant dawn' (Kaufmann 1953, p. 274).

Similar sentiments can be found in Lambert's *The Twenty Thousand Thieves* (1951), a book with a world-wide readership. Sullivan, a communist character, states:

> …think of the countries in Europe that Hitler's overrun. Their ruling classes are collaborating with the Nazis…After the war the world will take a swing to socialism. The Communists will emerge as leaders of the people. They are the only ones who have consistently taken the anti-fascist line' (Lambert, cited in Adams 1999, p. 37).

Of these realist writers, Frank Hardy was the most well-known. His collection of stories, *The Man from Clinkapella* (1951) is an excellent example of radical writing. The introduction to the book encapsulates Hardy's world view and his attitude to literature: 'Writing … is … a weapon with which he wages war against injustice and oppression' (Hardy 1951, p. 1). The stories too display the spectrum of subject matter drawn on by these writers. 'The Load of Wood' (1951) depicts the struggles of a sustenance worker in the Depression of the Thirties. 'The Man from Clinkapella' (1951) a beautifully succinct short story, captures the 'blokey' sensitivity of a soldier who comes to another soldier's tent after one of his mates has most likely been killed:

> Presently, a tall, dripping figure wrapped in a ground sheet, entered the flickering light of the tent. “Cow of a night,” I said, as he took off the wet cape.
>
> “It’ll keep the Jap bombers away, that’s one thing,” he answered quietly. “Just got in with a convoy, got to put up wherever we can for the night. Got any room for me?”
>
> “You’ll be right, mate,” I answered … you can sleep on the bed in the corner there.” (Hardy 1951, p. 3)

Another story, ‘The Returned Soldier’ (1951), tells of a soldier who throws his Victoria Cross into the river after failing to find work and feels as though he has been thrown on the scrapheap – something the Vietnam vets might relate to. ‘A Stranger in the Camp’ (1951) deals with a man who takes on the union and demands it does what it was originally organised to do – stand up for workers’ rights.

Significantly, many women writers belonged to this radical literary upsurge, most writing well before the wave of feminism that began in the radical Sixties. Katharine Susannah Prichard had been writing about the working lives of the Western Australian goldfields since the 1920s and had also tackled the topic of Australia’s Indigenous people, specifically Indigenous women, with *Coonardoo* (1929). Prichard was joined by authors like Jean Devanny with her book *Sugar Heaven* (1936), centred on the sugar cane fields of Queensland. Eleanor Dark belonged to this group with her trilogy about the European settlement of Australia, starting with *The Timeless Land* (1941). Dark also wrote *The Little Company* (1945), about an extended family (several who are writers) beset with their own problems, set against the backdrop of The Second World War and the threat of impending Japanese attack – a novel which has clear relevance to some of the themes in my memoir, *All Along the Watchtower*, where the personal issues are enmeshed with the political. Later, Dorothy Hewett came on board with *Bobbin Up* (1959), which not only dealt with urban factory life but with the family and male/female relations and the struggles that went with that. Then came Criena Rohan, somewhat younger but part of the same movement, writing her classics of the lives and loves of workers down by the docks on the Melbourne waterfront, *The Delinquents* (1962) and *Down by the Dockside* (1963). These two books received glowing reviews from Kylie Tennant, as though the baton was being passed on.

Two women in particular belong to this assembly of radical writers, Marjorie Barnard and Flora Eldershaw who wrote as one under the nom de plume, M. Barnard Eldershaw. Although known more for their *Bulletin* prize winning novel, *A House is Built,* possibly their most significant radical literary effort, written before the war had ended, was *Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow* (1947). Its politics was radical but so was its structure where the story is told as 'a book within a book'(Eldershaw, p. xi). It opens in the future, the twenty-fourth century and focusses on a right-wing invasion of Australia and the revolution that rose to meet it. However what is noteworthy about this novel was the reaction of the censors who became incensed over a number of issues, particularly where the narrative deals with an 'Australian government , in order to keep the populace in line and willing to fight, manipulated the flow of information and concealed or distorted facts…' (Eldershaw 1947, p. xiii).

The political/social/cultural milieu created fertile ground for writers of the Forties and Fifties but their work could not have developed and found a wider audience without the Realist Writers' Group and the Australasian Book Society (ABS). David Martin in *Overland* argued that 'the best way of supporting Australian culture is to support good Australian writing and art' (Adams 2003, p. 63). One of the major reasons for the establishment of the ABS was because, as Hardy pointed out, there was a problem with getting progressive writing into the hands of the Australian people: 'One or two Australian or English publishers would put out mildly progressive books occasionally, but these lay in bookshops to be read mainly by the middle class and that in small numbers' (Adams 1999, p. 63). Beasley agrees: 'ABS's primary requirement was to publish books by new authors, books that might, for non-literary reasons, not be published elsewhere' (Beasley 1979, p. 142).

Both groups had strong ties to the CPA but the strength of those bonds vacillated, mainly due to the CPA leadership's attempts at dictatorial control over the ABS. Debates about what made a communist novelist and what was good political fiction also raged throughout their existence (Carter 2003, pp. 89-91). The Realist Writers' Group 'incorporated twin aims: the encouragement and development of worker-writers and the continuation of a perceived national, democratic and realist tradition' (Syson 1992, p. 7). In his article 'Out from the shadows' Syson discusses these two groupings that could work together but in the end were 'factional streams', which led

to the eventual demise of their journal *The Realist* and the various groups working under the umbrella of the Realist Writers' Group (1992).

There were years of heated debates and these two pillars did eventually collapse. But the Realist Writers' Group and the Australasian Book Society, which 'at its height had two thousand subscribers' (McLaren 2003, p. 120), encouraged and backed radical/progressive writing and created an atmosphere of real support for radical writers and their literary works for many years before their expiry. No such groups, apart from sporadic gatherings of like-minded writers, existed during or after the Vietnam War and the Sixties. There were certainly writers opposed to the war who found outlets for their writing in journals like *Overland,* which published an anti-war issue dedicated to 'the true heroes of the… war…the people of Vietnam' with the cover of a photo image of a sculpture, 'Burning Buddhist II', and an editorial on the war and resistance to it (1971). Occasionally a group came together to produce a book, like the anthology, *We took their orders and are dead* (1971) and the non-fiction account of the Monash University political struggles *It is right to Rebel* (1972), which I edited . But nothing like the scope and work of the ABS and The Realist Writers' group could be found in the Sixties. The Australasian Book Society continued to publish up to 1978 and did not completely wind up till 1981; however, it belonged to an earlier age of political struggle and literary achievement and was not seen as part of the raging Sixties.

It would be incorrect to imply that it was all plain-sailing for these radical writers and their organisations. While it was true that the writers and their groups produced a staggering list of books in the 40s and 50s they had to face a number of dangerous obstacles. Ferrier says that the 1950s:

> in the ideological sphere was a time of a restored hegemony of conservatism; of the reinscription of traditional masculinities and femininities; of paternalistic policies towards an Indigenous population who were not yet 'citizens'; of denigration of the political Left and assertions about its demise(Ferrier 2003).

The most threatening obstacle was the 1951 Australian Referendum, in which the federal government sought approval to ban the Communist Party of Australia. The referendum came about after the Menzies-led government finally succeeded in its attempt to carry the Australian Communist Party Dissolution Bill in 1950. Menzies

had campaigned strongly to have the CPA declared an illegal organisation, which meant that anyone who worked for the Party would be jailed for five years. Anyone who was deemed to be a communist and worked for the federal government, the unions or the defence forces could also be dismissed. An immediate challenge was taken to the High Court, which declared the Bill unconstitutional, forcing Menzies to hold a referendum to change the Constitution. In 1951, as the Cold War hotted up, the referendum was very narrowly defeated.

But this did not mean the vanishing of the 'reds under the beds' paranoia. The Cold War gathered momentum and radicals in general were under threat, which meant those who raised their pens in protest were in danger. Historian and writer Humphrey McQueen in a speech delivered at Varuna, Eleanor and Eric Dark's old home in the Blue Mountains, gave an account of the troubles they faced in this time of anti-communism. The Darks had a history of radicalism. Eric Dark had written *Who are the Reds?* in 1946, to which Eleanor contributed a Foreword, and her novels also challenged the status quo and the establishment. McQueen maintains that if the campaign against the referendum (led by Eleanor Dark's friend and leader of the Labor Party opposition, H.V. Evatt) had not succeeded, writers like Dark would have ended up in 'a Menzies concentration camp' (McQueen 2011). Ferrier adds that Prime Minister Menzies personally vetoed 'Franklin and Eleanor Dark sitting on the national arts funding body.' (Ferrier 2003).

The radical writers of the 40s and 50s were faced with mounting political pressures and intimidations but through their literary and publishing organisations they helped to create a successful radical literary culture, which in turn contributed to a lasting cultural memory. The situation in the Sixties could not have been more different. In the following chapter I will examine the small number of Australian Sixties radical pieces of literature, to demonstrate the surprising, even alarming absence which spurred me on to write my literary memoir *All Along the Watchtower*.

Chapter Five

Australian Radical Literature of and about the Sixties

> I have focused on places and situations where literary tradition and real life notably transect, and in doing so I have tried to understand something of the simultaneous and reciprocal process by which life feeds material to literature while literature returns the favour by conferring forms upon life (Fussell P, 1975, Preface).

In Chapter One I defined the three categories of Australian literature that emerged from the Sixties in Australia and provided a study of the first two categories. The first category covered fiction which uses the Vietnam War and the Sixties as a backdrop but which does not directly engage with the politics of the war, the counter-culture and the social upsurge in Australia. The titles in the second category were the most numerous: stories told through the eyes of Vietnam Vets (and/or their supporters and sympathisers), who are either angry, disillusioned, despairing, damaged or a combination of these. The third category of writing approaches the social/political issues of the Sixties from an anti-establishment, counter-culture, anti-war, even revolutionary point of view. For the purposes of this study I will use the term radical writing for the literature I now wish to examine. My contention is that there are very few pieces of literature in this category, which seems to contradict the popularly held belief that there are numerous published stories of and about the rebellious Sixties in Australia. As I argued in Chapter One, the size and extent of protest in the Sixties means that the current amnesia is badly in need of remedy.

Following on from that that investigation and analysis, I will look at the impetus and the writing of *All Along the Watchtower*, and explain why I chose the narrative form of the literary memoir as the best way to capture the essence of those times, as well as surveying what other researchers have to say about this method of discovery and recovery. My study of the literature that tells the stories of the Sixties in Australia and the Vietnam War does not include works of non-fiction. However, some mention should be made of non-fiction accounts, such as *Vietnam: The Australian War* (Ham 2007); *Monash: Remaking the University* (Marginson 2000); *University Unlimited:*

The Monash Story (Davison & Murphy 2012)**;** and a forthcoming book by journalist and author, Mark Dapin, *National Service and the Vietnam War,* to be published by Penguin. There are also published non-fiction accounts of radical organisations/movements that emerged from the Sixties that were decidedly anti-war and part of the counter-culture, for example - *The Pram Factory* (Robertson, 1997), a history of the radical Australian Performing Group- a movement that produced a number of Australian playwrights (for example, David Williamson and John Romeril) and actors (for example, Jane Clifton, Bruce Spence and Graeme Blundell). The published radical historical/non-fiction accounts of the Vietnam War and the Sixties are *Student revolt!: La Trobe University 1967 to 1973* (York 1989); *Draftmen go Free* (Scates 1988); *It is Right to Rebel* (Hyde 1972); *Radical Melbourne 2; The Enemy Within* (Sparrow & Sparrow 2004). As well, there are various unpublished radical Honours, Masters and Doctoral theses which researched different facets of the Sixties, the most relevant examples being *A History of the Save Our Sons Movement of Victoria :* 1965-1973 (Armstrong 1994)**;** *The Yeast is Red* (Mansell 1994); *Today the students, tomorrow the workers! : radical student politics and the Australian labour movement 1960-1972* (Russell 1999); and *Melbourne's Maoists: The Rise of the Monash University Labor Club 1965-1967* (Robins 2005).

My study will focus on the apparent absence *of* published radical literature from and about the Sixties. The term 'literature' presents some difficulties. Definitions abound but among literary theorists, there seems to be agreement that a piece of literature should display some level of excellence in form and style and have some artistic merit. This exegesis makes no claim to produce a watertight definition but for the purposes of this discussion, the following is a reasonable benchmark: 'writings in prose or verse; *especially*: writings having excellence of form or expression and expressing ideas of permanent or universal interest' (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/literature). My definition of 'literature' will primarily encompass novels, anthologies, autobiographies and memoirs. The radical literature of the Sixties mentioned in Chapter One included *The Wine of God's Anger* (Cook 1968); *The Thundering Good Today* (Couper 1970); *We Took their Orders and are Dead* (Cass et al. 1971); *'The Americans, Baby'* (Moorhouse 1972); *Days of Wine and Rage* (Moorhouse 1980); *Hippie, hippie, shake : the dreams, the trips, the trials, the love-ins, the screw ups – the Sixties* (Neville 1995); A *Tale of Two Families*

(Pausacker 2000); *Hey Joe* (Hyde 2003); and *Yarrowee* (Pola 2007). The radical autobiographies and memoirs were *Map of Days: Life on the Left* (Freney 1991); *Disturbing the War* (Noone 1993); and *Crossing the Party Line: Memoirs of Bernie Taft* (Taft 1994). This makes nine pieces of fiction and three autobiographies/memoirs: twelve in total, a number that does not adequately represent the furore of what happened in Australia between 1967 and 1975, where so much that had previously been accepted and taken for granted was questioned, challenged, undermined and at times overthrown. As I have asserted, much of what we experience now in Australian social, cultural and political arenas can be traced back to the Sixties. Some lines from my final chapter, 'Those Were the Days', in my literary memoir *All Along the Watchtower* sum it up:

> Today I see many aspects of our society that have their roots in what we fought for during the Sixties and what many from those days still fight for. I can see it in our music, literature, art, theatre and film, schools and universities. I can see it on the smallest and largest scale, in homes and at work, in the anti-war and environmental movements, in community groups – even in the way society thinks, discusses, argues and tells stories (Hyde 2010, pp. 271-272).

The radical literature of the Sixties uses the period's many conflicts and experimentation as material for its narratives whether it be war and peace, racism and Land Rights, male/female relations and roles, sexual identity and exploration, variety, availability, legality/illegality of drugs, social justice, music, communal living and so on. One of the bravest and earliest pieces of radical literature is the anthology of prose and verse *We took their orders and are Dead (*Cass et al 1971*),* which was published just after the announcement of the withdrawal of the majority of Australian troops in Vietnam. Its foreword captures the inter-relationship between the war and social unrest on the home front:

> The most important social and cultural consequence in Australia of the Vietnam War was the development of a counter-culture in the late 1960s and 1970s which sprang from the military involvement of the American and other allies in the war in Vietnam. A spirit of generational protest had been brewing in pre-Vietnam issues such as censorship and the death penalty but ramified

> during and after the war in Vietnam into issues such as sexual politics, Aboriginal rights and movements to conserve the natural environment (1971, p. 5).

This anthology is noteworthy in a number of ways: for its range of topics; its list of contributors, most of whom wrote original pieces for the collection and went on to become doyens of Australian fine arts including Bruce Dawe, Tom Keneally, John Romeril, Glen Tomasetti and Alan Wearne; and for those contributors who spanned the years between World War Two and the Vietnam War – Dorothy Hewett; Patrick White; Frank Hardy; Judith Wright; KylieTennant; Judah Waten. The anthology also contains a short story by J.M. Couper who wrote the *Thundering Good Today* (1970), one of the few novels in the radical list, and the seminal anti-war poem by A.D. Hope, 'Inscription for any War'.

Mansell in his Master's thesis *The Yeast is Red* explains the social upheaval and its dialectical relationship to the war:

> Even though Vietnam and the associated conscription of male youths was the catalyst for the youth radicalisation of the Sixties which produced the new left, the new radical consciousness was caused also by the effects of the social and cultural changes of the period. While actively opposing the foreign war, theorists of the new left began to develop an original and sophisticated critique, based partly on the demand for more participatory democratic forms, of their own society. Vietnam, an increasingly unpopular involvement, became a metaphor for what was seen as a suffocating and conformist malaise at home (1994).

Mansell makes the point that the Vietnam War was a symbol of the 'suffocating and conformist malaise' of the turbulent Sixties. While the war certainly became synonymous with Sixties rebellion, in many ways the war was the impetus for the radical changes that swept most of Europe and America and Australia. Without the Vietnam War, the fundamental contradictions in Australian social, cultural and political life would not have been exposed and the subsequent changes would not have come about so rapidly and urgently.

So what makes a piece of literature radical in the context of the Sixties in Australia? My thesis does not extend to radical experimentations with style and performance, although there were certainly many examples of that during the Sixties, especially in music and theatre. It is the radical content, the subject matter that is the focus of my research.

The following selection of literary works brings to light the wide-ranging concerns and experimentation that constituted the rebellious Sixties. They also help to dispel the absurd caricatures of the period mentioned earlier in this thesis (Chapter Two), demonstrating that the concerns of the times were more profound than the way in which they are normally depicted.

The early stages of the war were the impetus for Kenneth Cook's *The Wine of God's Anger (1968),* which was the first Australian radical novel with the Sixties at its core. While it is set in a war in a 'South East Asian country' (ie. Vietnam), it goes to the deeper concerns of wars in general. In a letter to conscientious objector Denis O'Donnell, Cook wrote, 'the novel is simply a conversation between Karl (main character) and the hero outlining the impossible dilemma of anybody interested in moral attitudes to war' (Cook 1968). The political thrust of this novel is clear. Landsdowne Press explained in the cover blurb why it was publishing the book at that time: 'the questions the book raises are topical and intensely relevant to the moral dilemma in which many people in Western countries find themselves today' (Currey 1968) - and sent a copy for review to O'Donnell after he was released from Holsworthy Military Prison. O'Donnell saw the book as being on his side, interpreting the following statement by Karl as supportive of conscientious objection: 'No country will be great until it is willing to lose its liberty rather than take the life of one human being.' Later O'Donnell says, 'It is by far the best argument for objection to war within and without the superficial boundaries of the Vietnam debate' (O'Donnell 1968). Although O'Donnell is positioning the Vietnam War as yet another example of war in general, with all the associated rights and wrongs of warfare, it is doubtful that the book would have had much of an impact if in fact the war in Vietnam was not already raging in 1968. In fact the publishers clearly imply that the uproar provoked by the Vietnam War encouraged them to publish Cook's novel.

J.M. Couper's *The Thundering Good Today* (1970), described as 'the most overtly political young adult novel ever to have been published in this country', deals with opposition to conscription and the Vietnam War (Saxby cited in Macintyre 2002, pp. 39-40). Considering that the war was still raging and it was only two years after the pivotal year of rebellion1968, Couper's novel is ground-breaking and represents a potential leadership of radical literature that was never followed in numbers. While the novel is told in the voice of a young man who attended an elite private school, it nevertheless deals with some of the very early debates concerning Vietnam and conscription in Australia. The main protagonist has a revealing dispute with his girlfriend Liz, who contends that communism has to stop somewhere: 'Communism. It's got to be stopped. It's ugly and brutal. It pays no heed to any single person. Naked power and that's all' (1970, p. 59): a common argument at the start of the war. Later in the story, the main character talks succinctly about his growing opposition to the war and America:

> 'What I think of as conscience is that it's all no use to Australia. We're being killed for nothing….I despise Prime Ministers that ask me to do this so that they can masquerade as a Great Power alongside the President of America. We're not a great power, and America won't make the mistake of thinking us so. She'll do what she wants in the end and won't consider us. Our country's just the same little pawn that the twenty-year olds are' (1970, pp.136-137).

Frank Moorhouse's edited collection, *Days of Wine and Rage* (1970) can only be described as an extraordinary, eclectic personal collection of articles that attempts to capture the cultural and sociological shifts in Australian society over a decade, 1970 to 1980. It is, in the main, a chronicle by what Moorhouse describes as 'the lumpen intelligentsia'. Once more we find articles, observations and short stories from those who would become well-known over the ensuing decades: Wendy Bacon (writer/lawyer); Les Murray (poet); Donald Horne (writer/social commentator) Rodney Hall (writer and Miles Franklin winner); David Williamson (playwright); Vicki Viidikas (author); and John Forbes (poet).

The collection covers such an array of writing that it is a difficult book to define. There are snippets of communal living in Balmain (NSW), experimental film making, and importantly the rise of underground newspapers, something I touched on in my

memoir. The advent of the offset printing press allowed and encouraged all kinds of publications, like the dynamic University of New South Wales' *Tharunka,* which took up the fight against censorship in general and sexual censorship in particular. It was an event that Moorhouse saw as

> the most significant activity of the decade. It was to involve us all in about forty prosecutions for obscenity and to put Wendy Bacon in jail for a week…The editorial work moved from house to house and from printer to printer to avoid seizure by police. (Moorhouse 1970, pp. 5-6).

In a section of the book titled, 'The Golden Years', Moorhouse gives an explanation/definition of the counter-culture, defined in terms of the inner urban student/intelligentsia lifestyle of those times:

> I mean those who traditionally, or by some circumstance of the times, feel themselves *apart* (if not disaffiliated) from the wider society. They live by choice or circumstance, by distinctly different mores – in their own sub-cultures… ideological gypsies…sceptical anarchists …some of the young …semi nonconformist middle class who prefer the company of those on this list … hipsters, hippies, …angst-ridden writers, film makers, painters, musicians… libertarians (Moorhouse 1970, p. 78).

Many of the above lived in the Sydney inner-city suburb of Balmain and a section of the book tells the story of the Stenhouse Circle, which emerged in Balmain. In the mid-nineteenth century a Scottish lawyer called Stenhouse had a personal library of 10,000 books, around which gathered a formidable circle of writers, including Henry Kendall and Henry Parkes. Jim Davison, then editor of the Australian literary journal *Meanjin,* observed that very few in Balmain knew of the Stenhouse Circle commenting that 'Australia is a 'sandcastle civilisation'. Many small constructions are finished and then washed away and not known or recorded by those who follow.' Davison also said that we enjoyed 'a cultural amnesia' (1970, p. 123), – a concept that has become a major point in this thesis. This cultural amnesia does not only affect the radical stories of the Sixties – it may, in fact, affect so much of Australian culture that the picture we have of ourselves is quite distorted. This amnesia drove me to write my young adult novel, *Hey Joe* (Hyde 2003), which at the time I thought

might be one of the very few books written that tried to capture something of the Sixties. As I have since discovered, my intuition was correct.

Hey Joe is told through the eyes of Jimi a young man, who decides to go and look up his father Joe, who was an anti-war activist and Sixties rebel but an absent father. Jimi discovers that his father, who seems to be suffering some kind of mental breakdown, has travelled to Vietnam for reasons unknown. Jimi leaves University, breaks up with his girlfriend and heads to Vietnam, but not before his mother gives him an old journal of Joe's called 'Notes for a Novel':

> A thick black folder lay in my lap. My mother, Molly, had thrust it into my hands as I was about to get on the plane. 'Notes for a Novel' was scrawled across the front in crude white lettering. Inside was a collection of typed and handwritten notes and stories, the odd letter, a leaflet or two, some photos, news articles, a pressed flower. Pages from the turbulent times Joe and Molly and their generation had lived through (Hyde 2003, pp. 17-18).

Once in Vietnam Jimi is faced with the difficult task of looking for his father, all the time wondering if his father is worth looking for. It is his father's journal, written twenty-five years before, that helps Jimi the most, both in tracking Joe down but also giving Jimi a sense of what kind of a person his father is and a sense of the Sixties as well. 'Notes for a Novel' was my device for exploring the Sixties. I begin with the July Fourth 1968 militant demonstration against the Vietnam War outside the US Consulate: "The violence at the demonstration...the night still spits and crackles in my brain"' (2003, p.11). I describe: experimentation with tranquilisers, as a defence against police horses in demonstrations; living underground and avoiding arrest('Maybe she's wondering where I am. Only telling those who need to know is the guiding principle when somebody clears off for a while – but it has its downside' (2003, p. 57)); joining the Monash University Labor Club and becoming a student revolutionary; stealing weapons from the Army display at university; helping draft resisters escape; the Moratorium against the war: ('streets that fast became clogged with an outpouring of dissent – toddlers on shoulders and in strollers...Vietcong flags…US Out...Christians for Peace... Ordinary people became defiant' (2003, pp. 110-111)). Joe helps to organise aid for the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, visiting the NLF in Cambodia and the Tet offensive: 'In my pocket was five

hundred dollars cash to be given directly to their representative. The NLF would give us a receipt, which we would take back to Australia' (2003, pp. 141-142). Joe experiments with drugs, particularly LSD; he mourns the loss of life and friends in particular; he meets the many kinds of people from all walks of life who joined the anti-war movement and the social upheavals; left-wing headquarters. These notes not only assist Jimi with his search but also give the reader a sense of the times.

One of the most important discoveries in the journal are letters to Joe from his old friend Brian, who chose to fight in Vietnam, meaning that the two friends found themselves on opposite sides. Sadly, Brian is killed by sniper fire during the war and it is his death and Joe's unravelling mind that sends Joe to Vietnam after the war, finds his mate's Vietnamese girlfriend Lieu and where Jimi finally catches up with his father. In many ways it has become clear to me that I wrote the novel is a precursor to my literary memoir *All Along the Watchtower,* something that reviewers have commented on (O'Carrigan 2010). The journal entries were, unknowingly, tentative steps towards my major work on the Sixties in Australia. Jimi's journey became my own journey, during which interviews and historical searches, and my own travels to Vietnam jogged my memory and my first concerns about cultural amnesia surfaced. While it is not the only piece of radical literature of the era, it certainly covers much of what went to make up those troublesome times, Encapsulated in Jimi's own words : 'So these were the times Joe knew; everything was in a state of flux, any belief was confronted, old ways were being challenged and it seemed like nothing was certain' (2003, p. 110).

A novel that lies closer to my own literary memoir in terms of a personal story in the thick of the Sixties is Brian Pola's *Yarrowee* (2007). Pola describes his time in a Jesuit Seminary and his student revolutionary days at La Trobe University in Melbourne; his readings of *The Anarchists' Cookbook* and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*; smoking marijuana in pool rooms in Carlton and eating at local cafes and student haunts; attending plays at the Pram Factory in Carlton ;folk songs and anti-Vietnam War demonstrations; and later his post-student days as a teacher, his own spiritual journey and living and loving in Yarrowee. The two important strands which set this book apart from the rest are Pola's coming out as gay (although Freney's memoir also deals with this struggle) and his time spent in Pentridge Prison along with two fellow student comrades, Barry York and Fergus Robinson. La Trobe

University had obtained Supreme Court injunctions to restrain them from entering the campus, which they duly ignored and were therefore incarcerated in Pentridge jail for an indefinite period, without trial, bail rights or appeal. The rape of Pola in jail by five other young prisoners, which was set-up by some of the warders as revenge for Pola's political actions, is one of the most horrific scenes I have read in any Australian radical narrative (2007, p. 147-149). His comrades, York and Robinson, went on to write *The Black Resistance* (1977). and York also wrote *Student revolt!: La Trobe University 1967 to 1973* (1989).

Pola's work covers much of the skulduggery of the government, police and business including detail on how universities were run and in whose interests they were organised. Pola doesn't shy away from discussing the problematic issue of guns and student revolutionaries arming themselves, although his dialogue is somewhat stilted:

> 'Did you have a gun, I mean?'
>
> 'Yes. I had two. I always had a .22 rifle handy and I had a double barrel shotgun.'
>
> … you must remember we were being hunted down and jailed. We were being infiltrated and spied on. Australians were being killed in Vietnam as well as millions of innocent Vietnamese, all on the altar of almighty capitalism and American greed and paranoia. It was war…We wanted an independent Australia governed by progressive revolutionaries. We wanted change. We were revolutionaries' (2007, p. 39-41).

I touched on the issue of armed revolution in *All Along the Watchtower*, with regard to subjects like aiding the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, buying my own gun for self-protection and debates around the necessity of armed struggle, but it was not paramount in my memoir. However, the Maoist groupings with which I was associated with and the Marxist-Leninist Party of which I was a member argued that capitalism was never going to peacefully relinquish control of the means of production and of society as a whole. In many ways I and my associates believed in Chairman Mao's dictum, 'Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun' (Mao 1938,

p. 224). We believed in armed struggle as a necessity if Australia was to free itself from the shackles of capitalism and, in that era, US imperialism.

Pola's book is self-published, like many other works in the history of radical publishing. Mainstream publishers use established networks and well-worn paths to ensure that their books will appear in bookshop windows and the authors will be heard and seen on radio and TV. But perhaps Pola's *Yarrowee* could only have been published in this way. Intriguingly the manuscript of *All Along the Watchtower* was rejected by Scribe Publishers because the publisher Henry Rosenbloom, himself a radical in the Sixties, wondered who the audience for my book could be. The Scribe editorial committee could not envisage that there would be any interest or any potential readers. I was fortunate that my memoir was picked up by The Vulgar Press, a small Australian independent publisher which had published some of my earlier novels.

In my third category of radical writers are the autobiographies/memoirs of Taft, Noone and Freney. These anti-establishment writers of the period are writing from a different relation to memory and historical sources than the one I have chosen They claim a 'factuality' that is not present in my literary memoir *All Along the Watchtower*, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Freney's *Map of Days: Life on the Left* (1991) is an autobiography which, according to the author, is written in a 'literary genre'. For Freney, as I mentioned in Chapter Two , the 'literary' elements of this autobiography to mean that he has included 'personal and sexual material' and has relied on memory as well as historical sources. However, the book is more or less factual, because 'when all the personal abuse and political attacks are put to the side, very few factual errors in my book were alleged, let alone proven' (Freney, 1992, p. 146) The author further notes, in response to attacks from left-wing colleagues on his book concerning its accuracy, 'that when I dealt with the broader historical events and the later post 1968 period … I did carry out much research' (Freney 1992, p. 146). Despite its literary framing, therefore the book tends to conform to a factual narrative in which the facts purport to be accurate and for which extensive research is involved. In other words, the book conforms to the genre of autobiography, as the author suggests. Freney's work is the closest literary work to my memoir, especially given the deeply personal nature of his account and his involvement in various political struggles here and overseas. Freney also recounts

his ‘coming out’ as gay, a significant strand of the Sixties that my memoir specifically did not include. I was of course confronted by this crucial issue on a personal and wider political level but I did not think that this part of the Sixties’ story was mine to tell. In fact, I included a section in an earlier draft that dealt with the struggle of one of my housemates with his sexuality but in the end I excluded, it because I thought my rendition came across as not believable and fraudulent.

Freney’s and my memoir also have one other significant commonality: both have been criticized in left-wing journals. Writing in *Arena*, Anne Curthoys argues:

> Freney had by his own admission relied solely on his own memory, and had not undertaken independent historical research. Freney had not recognised how faulty memory can be, and the particular responsibilities one has in talking about the lives, aspirations, motivations, character and actions of other people’ (Curthoys 1991, p. 47).

My published memoir has been generally well received but like Freney’s work it also received crticism from left-wing circles. Historian Ken Mansell, who wrote the Master’s thesis, *The Yeast is Red* (1991), was the main critic of my literary memoir. His principle objection is that I captured the spirit of the Sixties in Australia by compressing several people into a smaller number of characters and that I rearranged events into a slightly different timeline (for instance, the escape of draft resister ‘Kurt’ to China), which I did to assist the drive of the narrative (Mansell 2011). The question of memory in memoir was examined in Chapter Two: Memory and Cultural Memory. My motivations concerning *All Along the Watchtower* will be discussed later in this chapter.

Taft’s *Crossing the Party Line: Memoirs of Bernie Taft* (1994) is a ‘memoir’ which covers, in addition to the Sixties Taft’s entire history in the Communist Party as a member and functionary. Deery notes that Taft’s intent was to recreate a more objective and factual account of what it was like to be a Communist in the periods that Taft examines: ‘Taft effectively recreates the mental world of communists at home and abroad’ (1995, p. 74). Taft’s work does include many stories and accounts of the Sixties in Australia that my memoir tried to capture but his memoir is narrower in its understanding of the broader counter-cultural movement of those times. Even the mobilisation against the Vietnam War and the resulting Moratoriums are seen

and understood primarily through the filter of the CPA, its policies and its strategies and its battles with the group I was associated with in the anti-war campaigns: ‘A group at Monash University…took extremist positions which threatened to narrow the focus and appeal of the movement. Our efforts were directed at preventing them from dominating the campaign’ (Taft 1994, p. 246). His approach is of course quite reasonable; he did not set out to concentrate only on the experiences of the Sixties but rather his life as a Communist in Australia and abroad, and the accompanying internal and external debates.

Val Noone’s memoir *Disturbing the War* (1993) is part autobiographical, part history and part philosophically and personally reflective. Out of the three anti-establishment memoirs mentioned, it is the that is most closely focused on the Vietnam War and its ramifications, as felt throughout Australian society, albeit specifically the story of the Melbourne Catholics’ fight against Australia’s involvement in the war: ‘Despite the efforts of the NCC (National Civic Council) and the power of the US empire to which it was attached, individuals and groups among Melbourne Catholics spoke up and refused to co-operate with war-making’ (Noone 1993, p. 313). Even though the memoir primarily examines the role of Catholics during the war, it is one of the most informative, detailed works about the Vietnam War itself and those ranged against it. There is a veritable fountain of information, including such marginalised stories as the rarely quoted figures of the 13,900 young Australian men who did not register for the ballot (1993, p. 104); and the virtually untold story of the secret bombing of Cambodia by Nixon and Kissinger over a period of three years, after which the Pol Pot regime ‘rose in its ashes’’ (Noone 1993, p. 222).

This exegesis has consistently made the point that the war was the beating heart of the Sixties and that much of what defined the Sixties, politically, socially and culturally, had its roots in the opposition to that war. Noone agrees: ‘The peace movement against the Vietnam War…can be seen as part of a global upsurge of the human cry for peace and justice – and evidence of a growing species consciousness’ (Noone 1993, p.312). Noone also discusses some of the new social living arrangements, sometimes referred to as ‘communes’, that emerged in the Sixties. Radical Melbourne Catholics in 1968 established a number of experimental open house communities ‘that linked resistance to the war with the choice of a radical lifestyle and direct action on the problems of homelessness’ and those

involved took vows of voluntary poverty and ‘personal responsibility for the issues of the day’ (1993, pp. 288-289). In his chapter ‘Time of hope’, Noone further discusses the ripple effect of the war: ‘In the years 1969-1972, dramatic developments in Australia took place in the streets as large numbers of people became active over the war, the environment, women’s rights, Aboriginal Land Rights, education, health and welfare’. He also mentions the successful national strike against the penal clauses in the Arbitration Act when Clarrie O’Shea, the secretary of the Tramways Union, was jailed, an incident which features in *All Along the Watchtower*. One of Noone’s pertinent observations concerns the way Australian culture and its arts profile changed during the period of the Sixties: ‘Underpinning the political changes were cultural changes such as the new wave of Australian drama linked to La Mama and the Australian Performing Group at the Pram Factory in Carlton’ (Noone 1993, p. 219).

Given that Noone’s book studies the role of Catholics in the Sixties, one of its focuses is on the impact of the Pill and contraception, which I barely mentioned in my memoir. However, *All Along the Watchtower* certainly delves into all the other political and cultural changes discussed in *Disturbing the War*. Striking a very personal note for me, Noone also recounts the broader story of Christian groups’ steady mobilisation against the war, including the Christians for Peace organisation, for which he and my father Dudley Hyde were directly responsible (1993, p. 228). My Christian father and mother of course play a significant role in my literary memoir.

This section of my exegesis would be weakened if I did not mention the classic Australian novel *Monkey Grip*, by Helen Garner (1977). There is some argument that it should have been included in my radical category of literature of the Sixties. It’s a novel set in Melbourne during a long hot summer where a young single mother, Nora is trapped in a damaging relationship with Javo, a hard drug addict. Nora is addicted to romantic love as much as Javo is addicted to his drugs. The novel’s characters live in shared houses and constantly explore the nature and meaning of relationships. Like Garner, Moorhouse’s books (*Days of Wine and Rage* and *The Americans, Baby*) also recounted aspects of shared (‘communal’) living but they went further, capturing so many other social/political/cultural aspects that emerged out of the radical Sixties which demanded their inclusion in the third category of radical books. Early in this exegesis I suggested that sex and drugs were more

central to most Australian's superficial sense of the Sixties than political activism was. In a sense, even though *Monkey Grip* (1977) deserves its place as a classic of Australian fiction, it set up a template that many of the more radical experiences of the 60s didn't fit into.

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The radical literary works I have discussed are undoubtedly impressive but the overall list is short. The impact of the Sixties was examined at length in Chapter Two, evoking a period during which so much was questioned and turned on its head. Lani Russell in her significant thesis *Today the Students, Tomorrow the Workers* (1999) explains the extent of the upsurge and the manner in which it has been vilified, underrated, and neatly pigeonholed as an aberration, where even the huge numbers that came to oppose the Vietnam War are seen as having ostensibly been exaggerated out of all proportion. Historians like Jan Bassett and Grey have urged people not to take the Sixties genie out of the bottle, while journalists such as Greg Sheridan have characterised the era as 'shameful and bizarre' (Russell 1999, pp. 449-453): 'Those who see the Sixties as a bad time best forgotten have played a prominent role in public remembrance of this period since the 1980's … [which] involved the screening out or negative framing of aspects of that period' (Russell 1999, p. 451)

Russell also confirms one of the main points of this exegesis, which is that the social/cultural/political impact of the Sixties continues to be felt to this day:

> The Australian radical movements of the 1960s demonstrate the capacity of social movements to prefigure social ideas and practices which may be adapted in society more widely. Anti-war activists modelled ideas that today provide the framework for national discourses – attitudes, for example, about the right to self-determination, both for nations and for indigenous peoples…these radicals were the first to engage in new patterns of behaviour which were adopted by millions of people worldwide (Russell 1999, p. 449).

For some years I considered that the only way to rectify the absence of radical literature might be to write a novel or a collection of short stories or edit an anthology of short stories, commentary and poetry written by various participants of

the radical Sixties (for instance, Helen Garner, Albert Langer, John Romeril), but after some discussion with publishers and editors, I recognised the role and strength of personal narrative and saw how I could use the form of the literary memoir to best capture the spirit of the turbulent Sixties. Humphrey McQueen wrote about my memoir, 'He does not tell us what the Sixties meant, but shows us what they were like…he recreates what it felt like at the time' (Hyde 2010), which is exactly what I wanted to achieve.

The literary memoir is different to both autobiography and memoir. American writer PB Alden sees this genre as originating in memory and experience but focusing on a specific section of a life and/or deals with a specific theme or experience, something that certainly rings true where my memoir is concerned. Alden says that the literary memoir often positions the personal story in a larger historical context. Particularly relevant to my memoir is her observation that the literary memoir has a narrative shape that derives from the writer's personality, reflection and memories.

I had a general idea of what I wanted to say but, like most authors, I knew that the process of writing was an act of discovery. Not only would details flood into the memoir as I wrote but insights would emerge that told a deeper story of the radical Sixties. Drawing on the work of Nicola King, Natalie Kon-Yu has discussed approaches to remembering the past in her paper 'The recounting of a life is a cheat: are memories simply intact, waiting to be dug up or are they 'retranslated'?' In her text *Memory, Narrative and Identity: Remembering the Self*, Nicola King suggests that there are two main approaches to remembering the past. She refers to Freud's model of an 'archaeological excavation' which 'assumes the past still exists "somewhere" waiting to be rediscovered' (King 2000 p.4). King goes on to define the second mode of remembering is 'one of continuous revision or "retranslation," reworking memory-traces in the light of later knowledge' (2000, p. 4). King (2012).applies these ideas to literary fiction, to show how novels can challenge the Freudian model of 'excavation'.

Initially, *All Along the Watchtower* leant towards the Freudian model but this model was quickly dispensed with as I realised I wanted to tell a narrative which would 'retranslate' and provide readers with an 'experience' of the Sixties. Alden's argument that memoir attempts to re-create experience, not produce a factual

historical document, is acutely relevant to *All Along the Watchtower*, as her claim that the literary memoirist is not fabricating but trying to capture the truth (Alden 2011). Alden has captured precisely what I set out to accomplish. I wanted to depict the life and times of the Sixties, to convey the feelings of elation, doubt, fear and determination. While I frequently and diligently referred to historical documents, including my own ASIO files, to make sure that certain details were correct (for instance, the date of Ronald Ryan's execution, the first Moratorium, the wording of threatening letters), I understood I was not writing an historical treatise per se, neither was I writing fiction. Thus I compressed a series of antiwar demonstrations into a few and a range of people into one or two characters - for example, the character Bill, who features prominently, is a fusion of three people I knew well in the Sixties - two friends who I worked with politically for many years and with whom I shared houses. One of the latter, Jim Bacon became a union organiser and then the Premier of Tasmania. The third part of this fusion was my actual travelling partner when we travelled to China and then on to Cambodia to donate money directly to the NLF of Southern Vietnam and to interview the long time radical Australian journalist, Wilfred Burchett.

In the memoir, Sam Delmastro is the major representative of the thousands of anti-war Draft Resisters in Australia. He is an amalgamation of one student friend, a number of resisters who I either lived with, knew well or fleetingly. His name comes from the student friend who has since died – in a way it was a tribute to him.

With regards to Brian, he is an interesting mixture. There are two main ingredients to this character. I knew a number of young men in the USA who went to the Vietnam War and kept contact with a few of them but the main person was an American with whom I became good friends whilst living in the USA. He was originally very enthusiastic about America's involvement in the Vietnam War and about being drafted, but after his tour of duty, his marriage collapsed, he suffered post traumatic disorder, became antiwar and seemingly 'dropped out'. The second was an old boyhood friend, Brian, who I had lost contact with but presumed he was still in favour of the war. Many years later I came across him and discovered that he and a number of students from Dookie Agricultural College had travelled down to Melbourne to join in a protest march and even more surprisingly had witnessed the burning of my

registration card outside Assembly Hall in Collins St, Melbourne, which I describe in detail in *All Along the Watchtower*.

Of course, as many fiction writers will attest, once you have slowly but surely developed and written these blended characters into your narrative, they become more real, more tangible, more authentic than those 'real' people you have drawn on. Bill, Sam and Brian and other characters in the memoir became and have become, in many ways, quite substantial and complex.

If the narrative demanded it, I had no hesitation in re-arranging details concerning, like who said what and who did what, to enhance the story and convey my thesis about 'The Sixties – the Lived Experience'. I wanted to tell the truth as I saw it, as I experienced it, but not in any pedantic manner. As Alden states: 'our understanding is that the writer is doing his or her best to capture the truth of the matter. Not to fabricate, not to make things out to be what they weren't. But we accept shaping and rearranging of time.' (Alden 2011). Given the absence of radical literature, I saw my literary memoir as an act of resistance. Rodan has discussed 'resistance' stories in her article *Testimony, Narrative, and a Lived Life*, looking at life stories written by and from the standpoint of Aboriginal women and showing that these 'writings are a form of resistance to the discourses in the form of practices of the dominant group' (Rodan 2000, p. 75). Like the Aboriginal women authors, who said that telling/writing their stories made them feel as though 'a weight had lifted' (Rodan 2000, p. 57), I found that writing my memoir was a necessary step in my understanding of what we had experienced and to some extent it became a healing experience. Brennan (2012) in her article 'Frameworks of grief: Narrative as an act of healing in contemporary memoir' suggests 'that it is the very act of writing, specifically of crafting and shaping a narrative for publication, that enacts healing' .

The appropriateness of literary memoir to my methodology was confirmed by the work of Professor Molly Andrews, who writes about the stories people tell about their lives. Her research 'explores the implicit political worldviews which individuals impart through the stories they tell about their lives' (University of East London 2013).' Andrews raises three important questions central to the 'narrative research' methods she has developed:

> Do the tales people tell about their lives and the societies in which they live reflect an underlying construction of the political world and their place within it? Do these stories mirror and/or resist stories which are generally accessible in the society in which an individual lives? What makes stories more tell-able than others? (Andrews et al 2005).

While the first question pinpoints the guiding force behind my memoir, it is the second question that has the strongest application to *All Along the Watchtower* as a piece of literature that attempts to redress the existent imbalance of radical narratives of the Sixties. The third question was always a factor when writing my memoir, particularly so because I had already observed that the Sixties in Australia was replete with 'tell-able' stories that had not as yet been told. Narrative is a way of understanding memory and experience and organising it in a sequence which is understandable to an audience. It works on linear and non-linear lines and also can be metaphorical. As Andrews, Squire and Tambouka argue, narratives are important organisers of human experience: 'narratives are the means of human sense-making. Humans are imbricated in narrative... sequential temporal orderings of human experience into narrative are not just characteristic of humans, but make us human' (Andrews, Squire & Tambouka 2008, p. 43). Or as Flybjerg (cited in Bathmaker and Hartnett 2010, p. 2) notes:

> good narratives typically approach the complexities and contradictions of real life. They reveal ambiguity rather than tidy it away. In Hodkinson and Hodkinson's words, good narratives 'retain more of the 'noise' of real life...other forms of research aim to exclude noise, yet 'the excluded noise may be a highly significant part of the story (Hofmeyer, cited in Andrews et al, 2008, p. 137)'.

As I realised when writing my memoir, narratives also need to manage people, places and events of memory into a workable number of characters and settings, sometimes as a timeline of events. This in turn creates an illustrative journey – an act of discovery for both reader and writer. Self-narration offers what Hofmeyr calls 'transitory forms of power'; it allows the narrator to relive, control, transform, (re-) imagine events, to reclaim and construct chosen identities, social interactions and communities'.

When I set out to write my literary memoir I resolved to tell the whole story, warts and all, to hold back nothing. At the same time, my story had to be good enough to engage the reader and hold them till the end. Gergen and Gergen (1983, pp. 270-2) identify five features of a well-crafted narrative or story: creating a clear goal; selecting events and conflicts that are relevant to that goal; establishing a time/space order within the story; ensuring the linkages give the narrative coherence; and finally, placing a boundary around the story with clear beginnings and endings (Gergen & Gergen cited in Lambert 2002, pp. 112-113). These features only became clear and provided a helpful touchstone as I embarked on the drafting and re-drafting of the story. *All Along the Watchtower* had to meet these demands if it was to complete what became a long, personally intimate, narrative journey. I hoped I had the necessary ingredients for a ‘tell-able’ story, a story that could tell the story of a lived experience of the radical Sixties in Australia and help us overcome the debilitating cultural amnesia of this era.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

The heart of this thesis has been my literary memoir *All Along the Watchtower,* which told my own personal journey during the Sixties in Australia, focusing on my time as a student revolutionary at Monash University in particular and in the city of Melbourne in general. I deliberately chose the form of the literary memoir because for me it was the best way to convey the particulars of political struggles of the era and to capture, in McQueen's words, 'what it felt like at the time – to be batoned into unconsciousness; to burn one's draft card; to hear now legendary lyrics for the first time' (Hyde 2010). The choice of literary memoir, the choice to use literature as a means of uncovering and 'showing' the socio/political struggles of history is not a new concept. Writers as diverse as Shakespeare, Tolstoy and Henry Lawson knew that literature could give their audiences a sense of the social and political turmoils of their times and convey insights not so easily grasped through other means, because

> literature still offers us some means of understanding experience through action…if generations … are told that literature has no use beyond amusement, then generations… in turn, are in danger of losing even more of that expansion of the possible which literature can disclose. The more we deny imaginations links to life, the more we limit our choice of realities (Docker J, 1984, pp. viii-ix).

Rose in his book, *The Making of Memory*, concurs, conceding

> that it has so far been left to the other half of our fragmented culture, the terrain traditionally inhabited by poets and novelists, to try to explore the subjective meanings of memory. Memory pervades ancient ballads and modern novels alike (1992, p. 7).

The starting point for the writing of *All Along the Watchtower* was my belief that there was a considerable gap in the Australian canon concerning literature of and about the Sixties, and more specifically, a yawning chasm when it came to radical literary contributions - something that my exegesis showed to be true.

The next step was the realisation that I should take up the challenge and tell my story of the rebellious Sixties because I had lived through the Sixties in Australia, intensely and actively involved for a decade, and because I had already written a number of published novels. I had something to say and *All Along the Watchtower* was to be my contribution to the narrative of Australian society and the Australian psyche.

All Along the Watchtower was my attempt not only to help fill the void but to pay respect to the many who made considerable sacrifices during the Sixties uprisings in an attempt to make a better world. Much has been made (and rightly so) of the veterans; deaths, pain and anguish but nothing is known of the losses, breakdowns, suicides, family break-ups and shattered careers that were experienced by many anti-war activists, who literally and figuratively risked so much – liberty, family life, careers, health, and sometimes life itself – trying to right the wrongs of the world.

> Less often recognised are the casualties of the Sixties, those who were caught up in the major political and cultural, events of the time and found their lives disrupted in ways that resulted in depression, dependence and an inability to adjust to later life (Altman 2010, p. 179).

Intriguingly, in the midst of writing *All Along the Watchtower* I received some good advice from the words of the Vietnam veteran author McKay, who says of his own book '…I have tried to write the story without the prejudice of hindsight' (McKay 1987, p. vii)**.** Good advice indeed if you are working diligently to capture a time of your life, a time so full of intensity, fear, courage and hope.

Despite the extraordinary surge of Australian literature of the Forties and Fifties, in 2013 we find so many of these novels are out of print, thrown away or impossible to find which once again must negatively impact on our cultural memory:

> A visit to any second hand bookshop would demonstrate that no matter how solidly books by these forgotten women (or the forgotten men) may once have sold, they cannot now be given away.' (*The Australian's Review of Books*, 14 June 2000, cited in Ferrier 2003).

It would be a loss to our society if the meagre amount of radical literature about the Sixties went the same way as those hundreds of books from the radical writers of the Forties and Fifties.

As I write the last words of this exegesis, there is some evidence that the tumult of the Sixties is starting to receive greater acknowledgment. Two publications have recently appeared. The first is *A Distant Land* (2012), a novel by Australian author Alison Booth, which is set in 1971, deals with some aspects of the Vietnam War, conscription, and security intelligence organisations and asks the question, 'Should Australia be at war?' Importantly, the publisher's blurb states, '[the Vietnam War has been] neglected by Australian literature until relatively recently' (2012). The second publication is Gary Foley's PhD Thesis, *An Autobiographical Narrative of the Black Power Movement and the 1972 Aboriginal Embassy* (2012), which is particularly significant because Foley was one of the Indigenous leaders who established the iconic Aboriginal Tent Embassy outside the Australian Federal Parliament as a constant reminder of the plight and rights of the First Australians. *All Along the Watchtower* and these works may mark the beginning of a resurgence, in which stories of the Sixties emerge from the shadows and come into the light.

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