

Charmian Clift and George Johnston, Hydra 1960: the “lost” photographs of James Burke.

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In one of her many essays, Charmian Clift writes of the melancholic experience of feeling like a photograph. She has been asked to address a group of students at Wollongong High School, a school she herself attended, and in preparing her speech she turns to a photograph that appears in the School’s fiftieth anniversary commemorative booklet. The photograph depicts a class from Clift’s time at the school, “formally posed with the boys lined up behind the girls and their hands resting on the girls’ shoulders” (“On Turning Slightly Sepia”, 48), and as photographs do it evokes in Clift’s memory small details that are not evidenced in the image itself; “I can still see one of those girls arched in a perfect swallow dive, and remember precisely a collar of little pearl buttons on a blue crepe dress that another of them wore to an end-of-term dance that year”(48). The photograph also prompts Clift to consider how different her teenage circumstances were from those of the students she is to speak to, their faces shining with the confidence that faith in the goodness of the future affords. Before those faces now momentarily turned to her, she thinks of herself as the past, and wonders, “if they realized that standing up before them I knew myself to be curling at the edges and turning slightly sepia” (51).

That Clift calls on the metaphor of the photograph to imagine her own image, both frozen in and subject to time before youthful eyes, is prescient, because the impression that comes to us today of Clift is drawn in part from what we see of her in photographs—beautiful, intense and dreamy—and belongs determinedly to a world of pre-digital photography. After all, pixels neither curl nor turn sepia, unless of course you use Photoshop to produce the effect in order to draw on some of the nostalgic resonance and historical authority of the pre-digital artefact. It is interesting too that some of Clift’s writing might be thought to entertain a photographic quality. In *Peel Me a Lotus* (1959), the memoir that deals with the first year she, George Johnston and their family lived on the Greek island of Hydra, Clift writes at times with the descriptive precision of a documentary photographer as she dwells on the town’s physical beauty:

[Hydra] rises in tiers around the small, brilliant, horseshoe shaped harbour—old stone mansions harmoniously apricot-coloured against the gold and bronze cliffs, or washed pure white and shuttered in palest grey: houses austere but exquisitely proportioned, whose great walls and heavy arched doors enclose tiled courtyards and terraced gardens. The irregular tiers are broken everywhere by steep, crooked flights of stone steps, and above the tilted roof-tops of uniform red tiles rise the octagonal domes of the churches and the pierced and fretted verticles of marble spires . . . (25-26)

Peel Me a Lotus is one of two books of memoir recounting the time Clift and Johnston spent on the Greek islands: *Mermaid Singing* (1958) covers the family's nine months on Kalymnos, while *Peel Me a Lotus* deals with the first year on Hydra, including the purchase of a house and the birth of a third child. The period that Clift and Johnston spent on Hydra between 1955 and 1964 is one of the most mythologised episodes in Australian literary history, commencing as it did against a background of scandal and speculation, and concluding a decade later when the couple returned to their native country feted and on the eve of their greatest successes.

Clift and Johnston first met in 1945 while both were in uniform. Johnston's role as a war correspondent saw him serve across the globe, including in New Guinea, the United States, India, China and Europe, and his reputation grew as he reported his experiences in major Australian and international papers; Clift was commissioned as a lieutenant before her 21st birthday, and was also engaged in a form of journalism through her role in editing a magazine for the Army Ordnance Corps. Immediately after the war the couple found themselves working together at Melbourne's *Argus*, where despite an age difference of over ten years and the fact that Johnston was already married with a daughter, they quickly commenced a relationship.

At the same time that Clift's and Johnston's personal relationship developed so too did their literary partnership. Part of their mutual attraction was based on the shared interest in writing fiction, and in 1948 they entered a co-authored manuscript, *High Valley*, into the nation's richest literary prize offered by the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The manuscript won the first prize of 2000 pounds, and the associated publicity established the image of Clift and Johnston as Australia's foremost literary couple and their joint myth began to form, with "Johnston as dapper man of the world and Clift as ardent ingénue" (Wheatley, 217).

Clift and Johnston were destined, however, to leave Australia, exasperated as they were with the country's postwar social and political conservatism and eager to explore the world. They departed in 1951 bound initially for London, with the scandal of their relationship still a lingering sore. After several years in London, and two more co-authored novels in *The Big Chariot* (1953) and *The Sponge Divers* (1955), they were sufficiently emboldened for Johnston to forego journalism in favour of full-time fiction writing. At the same time, they elected to move to the Greek islands, a choice that took them firstly to Kalymnos, before moving to Hydra in August 1955. The decision to forsake London and move to the Aegean was prompted by several factors, including a growing distaste for the competitive and rapacious aspects of big city life, and the promise of a cheaper lifestyle suited to their reduced means. They were also aware that in moving to Hydra they were joining a nascent community of like-minded writers and artists—something that was appealing to both Clift and Johnston with their shared love of an abundant social and intellectual life. The couple's years of bohemian expatriatism had commenced, and they thereafter continued to fascinate the Australian public as rumours grew over the years of heavy drinking, public arguments, infidelities and an impecunious lifestyle among a growing and self-consciously artistic community of fellow expatriates. That Clift and Johnston eventually returned to Australia with Johnston on the verge of publishing one of the major works of mid-century Australian fiction in *My Brother Jack* (1964) only added to the myths that had accrued around their years on Hydra.

Now, over half a century later, a remarkable collection of professional photographs, taken in the critical year of 1960, has surfaced that provides an unexpected insight into this period of Clift and Johnston's lives, and into the wider circle of the artist-community on Hydra. This hitherto unknown archive consists of approximately 1600 photographs taken by James Burke, a *Life* magazine staff photographer. Of these photographs approximately a half include Clift, Johnston or their children.

James Burke had been born in Shanghai where his father worked as a missionary. Burke spoke both Shanghai Chinese and Mandarin Chinese, and likely a smattering of other dialects, and spent most of his working life in central and eastern Asia. Like Johnston, Burke was working as a war correspondent when the two met in 1945. Both men were covering the Chinese War against the Tibetan people when they took the opportunity to embark on a perilous journey through the high Tibetan plateaus. It was an experience that made a big impression on Johnston. He apparently recounted the story frequently in later years, and a version was included in his final, unfinished novel *A Cartload of Clay* (1971), narrated through Johnston's alter-ego David Meredith, and with Burke retaining his own name.

In the Asian summer of 1945 he and Jim had flown into a high river valley in Tibet with a US Army under-cover outfit which was buying up Tibetan mountain horses to be used as remounts for the Chinese Army . . . Preparations for the airlift were going to take two or three months, so he and Jim hired riding horses and a Tibetan guide and a pack-train and set off to the west through the nomad country of Khan. It was, except for the last few days, a wonderful two months. They stayed in lamaseries and strange temples and smelly stone houses but mostly in the black yurts of the yak and sheep nomads, and they rode wherever the whim took them—or the high passes allowed them—through the most beautiful country Meredith had ever seen, or even imagined. (94-95)

The crisis of the "last few days" referred to in this passage came in the form of a kidney infection for Burke. So severe was the pain that Meredith finds Burke with "the Colt .45 cocked and up to his temple to blow his brains out" (96). Meredith wrestles the gun from Burke thereby saving his life, and then saves him a second time by riding with him out of the mountains (replacing him in his saddle as he constantly fell from the delirium) until they reach a US air-strip, with Burke still "insensible" and just in time for Meredith to catch the attention (by firing a gun) of the last plane departing the dismantled camp. Johnston was certainly not above embellishing his own myth on occasions, but in this case the gist of this "boy's own" adventure story appears to be true.

This episode on the high plateaus and valleys of Tibet also left its mark on Burke, and thereafter he chose to spend most of his time in the mountainous regions of northern India, Kashmir and Tibet. Burke made the transition from journalist to news photographer in the late 1940s and his assignments for *Life* included being amongst the first to photograph Edmund Hillary and Tensing Norgay on their return from the summit of Mount Everest in 1953. According to Johnston's biographer Garry Kinnane, after their initial adventure Johnston and Burke "managed to maintain their friendship, although their lives went in wildly different directions" (62), but Kinnane makes no mention of Burke visiting Hydra or

photographing Johnston and Clift. Similarly Nadia Wheatley's biography of Clift also mentions Burke in relation to the Tibet journey but gives no indication of any later contact between the photographer and Johnston.

So, how to account for 1600 photographs, now 'dumped' in an online archive, randomly numbered and available in no discernible order; only several dozen carrying (sometimes inaccurate) captions or metadata, and none of which were published in Burke's lifetime? Burke it should be noted may not have lived long enough to make something of them. In early October of 1964 he was photographing in his beloved Himalayas when, as Johnston wrote in *A Cartload of Clay*, "he made a careless backward step while focusing his camera and lost his footing and fell headlong into a vast and deep abyss where the grey snout of a glacier groaned and creaked and mumbled" (100). It was, Johnston added, "the right ending for Jim".

Burke is known to have visited and photographed on other Greek islands during the late 1950s and early 1960s, and also to have visited Hydra on at least one other occasion to photograph the filming of *Phaedra*, directed by Jules Dassin and starring Melina Mercouri. On none of these visits, however, does he appear to have worked with the intensity and focus of his visit in the autumn of 1960. The exact period of his stay cannot be established with certainty. The only photographs that can be dated with confidence is a sequence that portrays Norwegian novelist Tore Pedersen's family arriving on Hydra—known to be October 2nd—and others taken of the Johnston's daughter Shane at school participating in the Oxi Day celebrations that take place each year on October 28th. Nor is it exactly clear why Burke was on Hydra. His visit is mentioned in one account which claims he "accompanied a journalist on an assignment to interview ... George Johnston" (Reynolds, 36). This is, however, almost certainly not the case, as no such interview has surfaced or been reported elsewhere, and indeed in 1960 it is not easy to see why any journalist would have gone to such lengths to interview Johnston, or why they would be accompanied by a *Life* photographer who proceeded to take some 1600 photographs many which have no relationship to the supposed interviewee. The most likely explanation therefore is that Burke was on Hydra to visit Johnston, and perhaps (on the evidence of the photographs) work on some private project associated with the island's thriving artist colony.

Burke himself features in three photos in the archive—photos that were likely taken by Clift or Johnston as other photographs indicate they were both present at the time they were taken. All three photographs were apparently taken in the same café or taverna and feature Burke with Hydriot woman Katerina Paouri who was a wealthy patron of the island's arts and artists. Burke wears around his neck what looks to be one of the highly portable 35mm SLR Nikon cameras that were first introduced in 1959, the kind of camera that made possible a photographic magazine such as *Life*. Burke and Paouri raise their glasses to each other, but the pose is strained. The two figures acknowledge each other while appearing wary, awkward, cramped in a corner; seemingly aware that the pose they have been asked to strike is a photographic cliché.

This rather staged and stilted photo is, however, quite untypical of those taken by Burke himself. His skill as a photographer, derived undoubtedly from his experience as a photojournalist, is to capture images that are seemingly natural and unconstructed, where

the subjects are noticeably depicted as being unaware of the photographer, his camera, or their role as a 'subject'. Occasionally the game is up—the photographer's thumb blurs across a shot; a discarded camera bag sits in the corner of a scene; a subject takes a sly grin into the lens—but overwhelmingly the impression these pictures leave is of an objective viewing experience, whereby the gaze of the viewer becomes that of a disinterested passer-by or casual participant.

As a photojournalist, it is also clear that Burke's images (and the great number of them) demonstrate a commitment to the idea of a pictorial story or narrative. On a number of occasions it is apparent that he has followed a group of people through the course of day or at least many hours in the role of a patient observer. As a result we find him accompanying Johnston and Clift on several social occasions, with photos taken in preparation at their house; en route with friends; mixing in company, and then leaving or departing. On another occasion, he follows an excursion on donkeys (not involving Clift or Johnston) away from Hydra Port. The party is depicted leaving the town; on various stages on the precipitous climb away from the coast; reaching successive destinations in the form of two monasteries; inside one of the monasteries; walking in the surrounding grounds; and on the return journey homeward.

In this way, Burke's photography carries a strong element of documentary, with the camera seemingly placed as an independent and objective witness to unfolding events. Any obvious engagement between Burke and his subjects, whether of individuals or groups, is kept to a minimum. While some of the group portraits in particular reveal something of a structured tableaux effect on repeated viewing, the over-all impression is highly naturalistic; and while revelling in the obvious beauty of the island and town, Burke is rarely given to sentimentalising the picturesque circumstances.

At the same time, however, the pictures frequently assume, and rely for their impact, on an intimacy with their subjects, and this is nowhere more evident than in the photos taken in the Clift and Johnston house. The house had been purchased in February 1956 with windfall profits received from the sale of several stories, and although Clift acknowledged in *Peel Me a Lotus* that "The house we have bought is not one of the grand houses of the island" (27), it was nonetheless a substantial house for which she and Johnston felt great affection. Burke's photographs—although clearly focused on his human subjects—reveal something of its character and atmosphere, and of the dynamics of the human relationships conducted therein. It is probable that Burke may well have stayed with Clift and Johnston while on the island, but at very least he had, as evidenced by his photographs, frequent access to the house and was able to photograph the domestic circumstances in some detail.

In several series of portraits Johnston is depicted as a somewhat dark and brooding presence; constantly drinking and smoking and with a demeanour that is intense and concentrated. He appears to be most comfortable—and even animated—in a series of shots where he is captured at his typewriter, briefly exchanging a smile with the camera while battering away at the keys, or throwing his arms about in seeming exasperation at the task before him. In contrast the photographs of Clift taken in the house emphasise her domestic role; bent over a stove; preparing food at a bench; serving meals. Burke has captured in these photographs one of the sources of tension between Clift and Johnston, as Clift

believed that her vocation as a writer was put second to that of her husband, and that her ambitions were thwarted by domestic duties. As she wrote in *Peel Me a Lotus*, 'A housewife is a housewife wherever she is—in the biggest city of the world or on a small Greek island. There is no escape. She must move always to the dreary recurring decimal of her rites' (111).

There are also dual portraits of Clift and Johnston in the house that suggest other aspects of their relationship. In one photograph they are captured in a way that marks them out as opposites, or complements, of each other. Johnston is front lit; he wears a light-coloured shirt and dark pants, one arm hangs over the edge of dresser, the other rests on his hip; Clift's face is in relative shadow; she is wearing a dark shirt and light skirt, her arms lifted and arranging her hair. The couple face each other yet their gazes do not quite meet; Clift may be looking into a mirror, Johnston out of a window. The lattice behind them that divides the room and would allow light and air to fill the entire space is made out to be a distinctive, perhaps even symbolic, feature of this double-portrait which recalls to mind a film still in its potential drama.

Indeed, the impressions the photographs give is that Clift and Johnston were constantly in each other's company, confirming that in the island's small expatriate community there would have been little scope for relief from a relationship grounded in two ardent and volatile personalities. As many accounts attest Clift and Johnston's marriage was marked by a high-level of intensity and drama, and that at the time Burke was taking his photographs they were experiencing a particularly difficult time. Their respective biographers describe how infidelities during this period had led to heightened suspicion and insecurity; that they were drinking to an extent that exacerbated other pressures within the relationship; Johnston's health issues of tuberculosis and emphysema were becoming more apparent; their writing careers were in something of a lull with both disappointed by the reception given to recent books; and mounting financial pressure was putting their continued presence on Hydra in doubt. Indeed even though there is no evidence of it in Burke's photographs, in October 1960 the couple were in the process of packing the family for a return to England where Johnston would try and re-establish his career in journalism in order to stabilise their financial position. (The move turned out to be unsuccessful and short-lived. Johnston, Clift and their children were all unhappy in England, and they quickly returned to Hydra the following year when another windfall gave them temporary respite from their financial woes). And yet despite these problems some of Burke's photographs also suggest tenderness and physical intimacy between Clift and Johnston. At the very least, they impart a sense that their enjoyment of life wasn't confined to the time they shared with the wider Hydra community of expatriates, and that they could still take delight in each other's company.

Burke's mix of personal engagement with, and professional distance from, his subjects and their domestic goings-on might be thought to contribute to what is one of the greatest strength of the collection, which is the photographer's skill as a portraitist. On numerous occasions Burke finds time to suspend his engagement with other matters to intensify the focus on an individual, running off a rapid series of portraits that (apparently) capture his subject in an unguarded moment of reflection, repose or even heightened animation. One such example is the taking of over thirty images of Johnston (some including Clift who sits beside him) as he engages in a lively discussion at a tavern or café table. There is no sign of

who Johnston is talking with or the wider setting, but Burke has produced some memorable images of the passionately engaged Johnston, probably recorded exactly as the subject wished to be known and remembered.

Indeed in viewing these and other images one can't help but feel that in Clift and Johnston Burke had found near-perfect subjects, with both seemingly willing (and able) to suspend their awareness of the camera and meet the need to produce for the photographer those apparently candid moments that are necessary if the lens is to find its target. Clift and Johnston were both prone to self-mythologising, often demonstrating an acute awareness of the persona they projected as self-conscious artists, and it is inevitable that they were to some extent complicit with Burke in the creation of these images—at least to the extent that they could will themselves into the role of a disinterested 'subject', fully aware of the image they were projecting while seemingly oblivious to the presence of the camera.

One aspect of the Clift and Johnston myth to which Burke's photographs contribute is the facilitating role they played in Hydra's expatriate artist-community. What the couple brought to this scene, in addition to their natural sociability, was their permanence. Whereas others arrived for the summer season and departed before the winter, Clift and Johnston were resident on the island. As a result they became well placed to help new arrivals find accommodation and furnishings and enter into the social situation.

Clift and Johnston's hospitality and helpfulness is witnessed in two series of photographs featuring young Greek-American artist Dimitri Gassoumis and his family. The first consists of a number of photos taken at dinner in the family home, with Gassoumis and his family joining an already crowded table as Clift delivers the meal and Johnston pours the wine. An unaccompanied plate at the end of the table is suggestive of Burke's temporary absence as he retreats to take his photographs. In a second series of photographs Clift and Johnston are shown accompanying Gassoumis and his wife Carolyn through the streets of Hydra, apparently searching for accommodation. They are shown walking the streets, admiring views, and peering through the window of an apparently abandoned house, before climbing in through an open window and then measuring up the darkened interior.

As much as many newly arrived expatriates found their way to Clift and Johnston's house, the real social centre for the expatriate community was Katsikas' store and bar that occupied a corner site at the end of the row of cafes and tavernas that fronted directly on to the dock. As Clift wrote in *Peel Me a Lotus*:

Katsikas' Bar is six deal tables at the back of Antony and Nick Katsikas' grocery store at the end of the cobbled waterfront by the Poseidon Hotel, and here it is that we usually gather at midday among the flour-sacks and oil-jars and painted tin water-tanks and strings of onions and soft-white festoons of cotton waste: a sort of social club evolved from the necessity to relieve the boredom of an island winter. (15)

In better weather the tables were moved to the front of the shop and patrons enjoyed the entertainment provided by both the social life and the work on the dockside. In numerous photographs Burke pictures Johnston and Clift socialising at both the rear and (more

frequently) the front of Katsikas'. In this environment we see in Johnston a man who clearly revels in his role as a host amongst his fellow artists. He is depicted as garrulous, intense, solicitous, engaged and engaging. In one striking series of photographs Johnston is seen at the front of Katsikas' hosting a gathering that appears to be honouring leading Greek modernist painter and some-time Hydra resident Nikos Ghikas. As successive photographs capture Ghikas moving through the small crowd, Johnston appears to be in his element, making introductions, regaling his companions with a story, and deep in conversation. Burke, however, was not satisfied with photographing Ghikas in this social setting, and in a highly revealing series of some fifty portraits also captured the artist in his home and studio. This was only one of several sequences where Burke follows his artist-subjects to their homes, much as he followed Clift and Johnston into their home. In doing so he produces a record of the "other side" of the expatriate artist life of Hydra, away from the tables and cobblestones and sociability of Katsikas' bar.

In the minds of many, the member of the Hydra artist community that Clift and Johnston are most frequently associated with is Canadian poet, novelist, singer, songwriter, troubadour, mystic and monk, Leonard Cohen. The friendship between Cohen and Clift and Johnston during this period has been well noted, but until now few (if any) photographs recording the association have surfaced. Cohen, twenty-five at the time, arrived on Hydra in April of 1960. He had published two volumes of poetry, but was keen to commence writing fiction, and had travelled to Europe on a Canadian government writer's grant. After spending several months in London Cohen departed for Hydra on a whim, in search of both a warmer climate and the promise of joining the growing community of fellow artists. On arriving on the island he was introduced immediately to Clift and Johnston, and stayed with them for several weeks before renting a place of his own. Cohen was beguiled by Hydra, and by September he had purchased his own house. The Canadian's friendship with Clift and Johnston remained strong, and in later interviews he has fondly recalled their charisma and influence over the younger community of artists:

They were the focal point for foreigners on the island. They had a larger-than-life, a mythical quality. They drank more than other people, they wrote more, they got sick more, they got well more, they cursed more and they blessed more, and they helped a great deal more. They were an inspiration. They had guts. They were real, tough, honest. They were the kind of people you meet less and less. (Knuckey, 10)

Cohen and Marianne Jensen, a young woman he met on the island and would be his partner for the next decade, appear to have exerted a fascination for Burke, and he photographed them frequently. Cohen and Jensen are pictured on several occasions in company with Clift and Johnston (at lunch, swimming, sunbaking on rocks) and always the two couples appear notably relaxed and comfortable in each other's company. Core to the archive of Burke's photographs and to the record it leaves of this Hydriot artist-community and to Clift and Johnston at this point in their lives, is a set of some 150 photographs recording an evening at a taverna known as Duskos. In many of the photographs Cohen is seated beneath a tree in the taverna's courtyard, immediately beside Clift, and surrounded by the other key players amongst the expatriates, including Johnston. Still some seven years away from recording his first album, Cohen is depicted playing a guitar and leading an apparently boisterous sing-

along. Typically Burke works his camera over an extended period, capturing people coming and going and drinking and singing and laughing and kissing and hugging. Clift and Johnston throughout this evening seem both together and apart. Clift is content to lean against Cohen as he strums and sings, at the centre of those who are focused on the music, while Johnston sits to one side, engaging in a series of conversation as people drift in and out of the scene.

When Clift looked back on that photograph of her 1930s Wollongong school group, she recognised an encapsulation of the time of its taking, noting that with hindsight she could “see Depression stamped all over that grey group photograph” (“On Turning Slightly Sepia,” 48-49). Similarly, Burke’s photos from that evening in Dusko’s Taverna now seem a crystal-clear representation of the time and place of their taking; frozen moments when even this cosmopolitan, youthful and multi-racial community of artists seem to bathe in a sepia-tinged innocence on the very cusp of the 1960s. These images also provide a compellingly suggestive record of Clift and Johnston—whatever their personal problems—embedded within a community and a place with which they seem totally at ease.

Clift and Johnston finally returned to Australia in 1964. The immediate reason was the imminent publication of *My Brother Jack*, the novel that Johnston was confident would gain him recognition as a major novelist. He was right of course, with the novel going on to win the Miles Franklin Award as did its successor *Clean Straw for Nothing* (1969). The return to Australia also precipitated a high water mark in Clift’s career as she became Australia’s premier newspaper columnist with a weekly feature in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The couple’s success, however, was illusory. Johnston’s health was failing, and Clift and the children struggled to adjust to life away from Hydra. Despite the positive changes that had occurred in Australian cultural life in the decade and more they had been away, it was still a form of surrender to a lifestyle which they had consciously rejected. The couple had turned their backs on the material comforts of big-city living in order to pursue their writing, and then when Johnston’s writing finally succeeded in the way of which he dreamed, they chose to forego the way of life that had produced that success in order to promote the novel and optimise the associated financial and other benefits. Writing as David Meredith in *Clean Straw for Nothing*, Johnston noted how after moving to Hydra he had to “stuff my ears with wax against the beguiling siren song of money and self-importance and excitement” (177). Eventually, however, the wax fell away and the siren led first Johnston, and then his family, back to Australia. Despite Clift’s own success on returning to Sydney the effect on her was devastating. She suffered a protracted depression mixed with continued heavy drinking and—perhaps finding herself “curling at the edges and turning slightly sepia” away from the brilliant harbour at Hydra—took her own life in 1969. Johnston died from tuberculosis and related respiratory ailments just over twelve months later.

The period on Hydra may have been difficult for Johnston and Clift in numerous ways, but it was on Hydra that they connected to a place, a lifestyle and a community that allowed them to live and express themselves most intensely. In the imagination of the Australian reading public, that decade amongst a group of like-minded bohemians and libertines on a remote Greek island marks their transition to greatness as Australian writers. The one month Burke offers in pictures tells an intriguing part of that story, and now 50 years after Burke dropped into the abyss—and thanks to the power of digitisation and the Internet—his photographs have begun to surface. The rediscovery of these photographs commenced in late 2008 when

a deal was announced between Google and Time Warner, whereby Google would scan and host some ten million photographs from the *Life* archives. It was declared that the overwhelming majority of the photographs had never been seen, having "been sitting in dusty archives in the form of negatives, slides, glass plates, etchings and prints". It is not certain in what form Burke's images were stored for nearly five decades, but to the patient researcher these previously unseen snapshots were suddenly made available in their full digital glory at <http://images.google.com/hosted/life>.

In the years following their release by Google a small number of James Burke's photographs have begun appearing on Leonard Cohen websites, where their connection to Clift and Johnston remains largely incidental to the Cohen fan-base. To those interested in Australia's cultural history, however, they provide an unexpected and compelling insight into a seminal episode in the nation's history of literary expatriatism, and into the lives of its most intriguing literary couple.

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