

IN PASSING

i.m. Anton Hart

I am

walking to The Middle Store where
I will write a poem, tell Viv
about Anton whom she'll have known
tho she & Bridget as I remember them
were only young would maybe have
regarded him as one of the elders—a
'player' in any case. Viv, now in Melbourne
for many years—some of them at least
good for him. He's gone. I associate Anton
with heart an 'insight' sponsored by
the name—he longed for the big gesture
freedom from constraint misgiving doubt
I think he had years when it was barred
provoke it as he might with broad fast
brushwork. Semblance. Enactment. *Not*
the thing. He radiated great warmth.
I wonder how much despair or loneliness he felt.
Any? None? I didn't know him well—gave,
probably, little joy—no help to anyone, much.
Wonderful, pointless me. I remember
watching him dance one night. Wild.
We were friends. Friendly at any rate. I watch
a car parking, expertly—not so easy to do
outside the coffee-shop. Cath arrives
from the beach—the tide high &
water rough, but she has swum & had
a good long walk. It's too crowded here
(Saturday) & she moves on for home. I'll
catch up in a moment, leave too, & walk.

There is a picture of Viv's that I always talk about.
We have it round the house—juvenilia, from
her point of view—so, unfair to go on about it.

'overtaken'
by the Modernity it championed)—
all this
concerns me
at my wild remove,
here, in Hindley Street
where the Experimental Art Foundation
is no more
where
etc

Absolute presence

(& yet its character as 'represented', 'painted'
Clark
will be on about)

#

the failing masculinity of all of us

Darren cuts my hair

I am now an 'old guy'
& Darren is getting on & Adam
so young once is older
tho still looking handsome

Anton's wild dancing — where was it? Fran's? Her place
(had it been her Mom's formerly?) round near the Arkaba.
That's where my mind keeps placing it. Anton was
just outside the glass doors, that opened onto
cement, pot-plants & a back garden—creeper, vines maybe—
framed it. He was strong, muscled, long blonde hair, in
black most likely. He was in the mood, one
stepped aside & let him do it.

Was it Fran's?

That was the 90s. I had a similar long moment—2010 or thereabouts—dancing upstairs in the EAF studio—my blood was up & I danced for ages intoxicated with my energy. The music was great—Mikey's very likely. I remember Alex said the next day he was astounded. He was young. I hope that he remembers it. I remember only my euphoria, a moment of happiness.

Anton had a number of stand-out shows—really good work. One was the first in the new gallery space and it was itself partly architectural: an installation of elements that commanded and gave shape to the whole enormous gallery and one's experience of it—but with a 'Rear Window' kind of plot-line of images he'd made. Some were deliberately 'token', another a haunting reproduction at enormous scale of a crumpled photocopy that showed a speeding landscape—a photo from a car. Other elements were just an arrangement of the new wall panels, huge, free-standing, massively thick as well: interventions, 'blinds'. He did great work with George Popperwell. There was more. More than this. It was work I was grateful for. I mean, that it could be so good was validating.

Was Anton dancing to the Velvets, *live*?
'What Goes On In Your Mind'—it's on just now playing as I write. These songs, these same songs—are they all 'elegiac'—backward-looking, rueful ('Mr Moon Man', 'Sunday Girl')? I have sung 'I Didn't Know' most of the way home from The Middle Store. It is not elegiac. 'Tie You Up' is on now.

And now 'Sugar' — Teddy Wilson, with clarinet, trumpet, & Billie Holiday singing—extraordinarily pretty after 'Tie You Up'.

'Billie' now means in Adelaide Billie Justice
I sang it once for her mum, Tubby Justice. She'd
not known it. (Men singing Billie Holiday—
probably a phenomenon)

Michael Fitzjames—

I can't imagine him singing Billie Holiday
tho he would like her well enough. Michael sends
words about my work, something nice—that plausibly *could be said*.

I read some stuff—pages in this notebook—read them
again. A puzzle. Finally make them out:
structural analysis of a friend's long poem 'A Love Supreme'.
Not my favourite Coltrane—but I like the poem.

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I recall Denis once remarked, of a book called
Pretentious Crap—
"It's not even pretentious." Which was,

of course, funny.

It occurred to me some time later
you had to have some pretension, pretend
to something

else how attain it?

Anton

wanted—as in his dance that night—escape
from self-consciousness, limit, into freedom,
action, being.

On a few big occasions
he achieved it. Shows, whole bodies of work,
that were terrific

got there 'willed' into being.

'What Goes On In Your Mind' — the Velvets *live*.
How appropriate. It recalls Anton's dancing.

I have a photo of him—(who took it—
Alan? Paul?) It is staged, for some purpose,
& never got used. Anton is in the bath

head just above the sudsy water, eyes
almost closed,
his long lashes & cruel, beaky nose, a

bottle of Johnny Walker on the bath's edge
beside him: *la vie bohème*. I imagine their
delight with the result. He said I could use it

I could never find quite how, tho it's a beauty.
Album cover material.

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Now here I am, listening to this music

Pharoah Sanders. 'Upper Egypt and Lower
Egypt'. No, 'Africa'—and I listen,
momentarily unself-conscious.

'Elegy' I will call the poem.

SOME NOTES

People in this poem—chiefly, Anton Hart, Adelaide artist, a painter for the most part; Vivienne Miller, also principally a painter, based in Melbourne; Michael Fitzjames, Sydney painter and illustrator; Ben Sando, Adelaide artist. George Popperwell, artist. T.J. Clark is mentioned and his book on Cezanne & modernism—& Hal Foster's *LRB* review of it. Francesca da Rimini, an Adelaide artist, activist & writer. The photographers—guessed at—Paul Hewson? Alan Cruickshank? Billie Justice: Adelaide artist, & her mother, Tubby, a singer. Also me, my partner Cath, & work-friends Mikey & Alex.

Anton's dance might very well have been in the mid-to-late 80s.

'the first in the new gallery space'—no, it was the first show with the monumental, new, mobile walls. Anton employed them.

"He said I could use it." The photograph. I have it still and have often 'nearly used it'. But how?

The music, should anyone care to listen: 'Mr Moon Man'—Jimmy Dawkins w Big Voice Odom; 'Sunday Girl'—Blondie; 'I Didn't Know' *live*—Howlin' Wolf; 'Tie You Up'—the Rolling Stones; 'What Goes On?'—the Velvet Underground, the 'live' 1969 album; 'Sugar'—Billie Holiday; 'Africa'—Pharoah Sanders.

Finally—this is in no way a formal elegy. It wasn't set up to become one, right from the beginning. It does not cover enough of Anton's personality, or his virtues; his good looks are hardly mentioned; his charm, and so on. His presence—tho that is exactly what is gone & which we will miss.