Dear Stephen,

thank you for your letter of March 29. I’d love to review *Australian Cold War* for *Overland* 99. I just over the Easter break 9 sat down and wrote the draft of a review article which I think makes some important points. I’ve elaborated points I made to you in my letter, and I’ve got a few other things off my chest—something I’ve wanted to do for some time. When is the deadline for issue 99?

I found your letter to *Overland* editors (12 Sept 84) interesting and can see that on the matter of radical professionalism we share views. In the light of your comments about *Overland’s* future I’d like to repeat what I jotted down last year when I renewed my subscription: I thought issue 97 was a beauty; it felt and looked good. The material in it made compulsive reading. The Moorhouse piece was an interesting experiment in political-critical writing; the Guido Baracchi material something that will become a future source document (also it was entertaining); Martin’s revised, along with that of John Herowim made good reading and contained critical insights into bohemian/radical life; I thought Jarwood’s review courageous, non-trendy, and sane. It was good to see Manning Clark still getting a run—9 think he is in danger of being phased out by the new wavers...... Here’s a lot more I could say...
but simply, I thought issue 97 made a break
from tradition and announced itself as a contender
for a piece of the modern politics-literary market.

By way of feedback to your letter I offer the
following notes:

1. I'm amazed Meanjin does better than Overland
in the sales field. These days I find that journal
unreadable, trendy, and going "marginal." (The
term refers to Docker's reference to Marcuse; he
new left being a movement of marginal groups
not an outfit concerned about masses of ordinary people.

2. I personally know people who should know
about Overland, but don't. How to overcome this I
don't know. Certainly the advertising/promotion campaign
you mapped out appears valid, necessary, and seems
to be paying dividends. The 100th issue of Overland
should be picked up by the Age, Sydney Morning
Herald, Australian in Saturday feature articles? It
is a historic occasion.

3. A growth industry, I believe, is in the field of
cultural/political analysis etc. the 40s, 50s, 60s.
Overland with its roots and support seems to
me to be in a position in the field to memoir
analysis/insights, to be able to offer a lot here. I
do not regard Penguin's publication of Millis (Serpents
Tales), Grae Gray (Exit Left), Allen & Unwin's
Australia's First (Old War), an isolated phenomenon.

4. Some contemporary writers are trying to
produce "left" creative political writing that is not
about marginals (i.e., not about lesbians, druggies,
lesbians/homosexuals/suicidal depressives etc.), Moorhouse's
anarchist piece in issue 97, Mike Wilding's new
Documentary novel on William Fane (Penguin, April 85) are indications of this. So too is Nadia Wheatley's recent novel. I think this sort of work has a future and is worth encouraging. Sure makes a change from the Williamson type consciousness twisted by the Australian middle class in the 70s.

In the context of what I see as an upsurge in creative political writing in Australia, it is not accidental that the work of Jack Lindsay should suddenly be "discovered".

A number of people seem to me to be getting sick of the new left/new wave arrogance and professionalism. The wider, democratic, non-paranoid, non-sectarian basis of Overland could make a great deal of sense to these people, if they could only understand this aspect of the journal and not merely dismiss it as a manifestation of the 40s/50s "radical nationalism" and an aspect of Melbourne intellectual life — which is how the cultural analysts seem to stereotype Overland.

Anyway, these are just a few thoughts. I heard over East following your letter. I want to see Overland continue.

Best wishes,

Rowan

[added]

but not in droves.