Who Shot Frank Hardy?
Intertextuality and Textual Politics

The recently published *Oxford History of Australian Literature* — with its implied legitimation of a regional corpus — may serve by its very inadequacies to provoke again the methodological and political questions involved in the writing of literary history. These questions have in fact been discussed at some length in recent years; but not, apparently, in the halls of Sydney University. Two points should therefore be made at once. First, this is not a history in any meaningful sense of the word. It is a collocation of normative judgements, and history is present only in the gestural form of dates and sequencing. Second, it is capable of handling only those texts which seem to stay firmly within the limits of the “literary”; its typical strategies are those of decontextualisation and depoliticisation.

The rationale for this limitation is given succinctly in the editor’s introduction:

A writer who starts with social groups . . . or with a strong view to propound about the nature and shortcomings of society . . . or with a desire to examine the machinery of politics and social life . . . arrives at the quality of life and experience, if at all, indirectly. Other things, such as the relations between workers and bosses, or black and white, or rich and poor, become more important . . .

Social class and class conflict are distinct from and irrelevant to an ethically defined “quality of life and experience.” But this exclusion of the political is of course itself a deeply political act. Despite the claim that the contributors will attempt “to expose the critical assumptions upon which our judgements rest,” the methodological principles and the masked political positions underlying the book’s analyses are never in fact examined or reflected upon.

Three propositions would cover most of this latent literary theory: that textual meaning is immanent in the text; that a text or a corpus of texts constitutes a homogeneous structure whose unity is guaranteed by the transcendental concept of the “author”; and that reading is an ahistorical, unsituated encounter with an inscribed textual meaning. Now clearly these propositions, at least in this crude form, are debatable, indeed highly problematic. But since this essay is intended to be more in the nature of a tendentious case study than a metatheoretical analysis, I shall simply put forward a number of counter-propositions in the hope of developing the case for a very different kind of literary history.

I assume, then, that the categories of text, author, and reader are constructed within a socially normative literary system, and that they are unstable categories whose function may shift during the social reproduction of the text. I further assume that the meaning of a text is not
separable from its historicity; and that this historicity is not located in a
determinant moment of genesis, in such a way that it could be established
by an adduction of material from discrete socioeconomic and cultural
realms apparently coeval and in some sort of relationship of homology
with the text. Rather, I want to argue that the historicity of the literary text
can be theorised most adequately as a relation between two levels of
intertextuality: a first level of productive transformation under given
conditions of the codes of prior literary and cultural texts; and a second,
institutional level at which the text is rewritten in an ultimately political
process of valorisation and recontextualisation.

My case in point is the novels of Frank Hardy, in particular *Power
Without Glory*, which have proved notoriously difficult for orthodox
literary history to handle. Adrian Mitchell, writing the "fiction" section of
the *Oxford History*, uses the reductive categories of "school," "movement," and "tradition" as tools with which to denounce "the
propagandist intentions of socialist realism." Hardy "is altogether too
programmatic, and shows little sensitivity to writing. In some respects he is
hardly a novelist at all. *Power Without Glory* (1950) is a long-winded,
ambitious documentary study of corruption and extortion, clumsy in
structure and style, and only partly salvaged by Hardy's moral fervour. His
ture ear is for the anecdote, the pub yarn." In the later novel *But the Dead
Are Many* "the supervising pattern is so tight that the novel appears to
exist for the fugue form, rather than to derive advantage from it. The
contrapuntal action and the characters' self-preoccupation fail to interest
because in the first place the characters are themselves uninteresting. Only
towards the end does the pressure of real feeling begin to emerge." And the
achievement of works in this tradition is put "in its proper literary
perspective," finally, by reference to the novels and short stories of
Christina Stead, Martin Boyd, Hal Porter, and Patrick White.

The perspective and the socio-critical assumptions at work here are in
no way different from those employed twenty years earlier by H. M. Green
in his *History of Australian Literature*. Green wrote of *Power Without
Glory* that

it is written to a formula, and its men and women are little more
than factors in an equation, so that, though extremely vigorous and
by no means without bloodshed, it is a bloodless story; a number of
leading politicians and other public men are introduced with little
disguise, but none of them is really alive. Crammed with action and
incident, the book is almost structureless and quite without
perspective and the style is crude and commonplace, so that it is
monotonous and dull; nevertheless, it has sincerity and force, and
there is no doubt about its author's talent, if he cared to devote it to
literature instead of social propaganda.

Finally, to emphasise my point that, whilst judgements of value may vary
slightly, the theoretical framework underlying these orthodox literary
histories remains constant, here is Harry Heseltine writing in Geoffrey
Dutton’s *The Literature of Australia*:

After the lapse of a decade, the impact of *Power Without Glory* has considerably diminished. Yet it still impresses as an honest, if clumsy, piece of work, unquestionably inspired by sincere indignation and a desire for reform. Hardy’s chief literary strategy is thoroughly familiar in Australian writing — documentation, depending on an overwhelming accumulation of detail. Fiction, under the weight of such a technique, can easily collapse into a mass of indiscriminated data, unless it is buttressed by the author’s immediate and passionate interest in his material. Hardy has enough of that kind of interest to retain for *Power Without Glory* some lasting merit as a work of art; its importance as a document in social history may in the long run be even greater.6

These judgements, made within the terms of a shared liberal-humanist ideology, hold in common the following presuppositions: that there is a clear distinction between an aesthetic and a documentary function of texts; that ethical values are a proper component of the aesthetic function, but political values are not; that aesthetic worth is in part determined by the ethical commitment (the “sincerity”) of the author; and that narrated subjects must be so constructed as to attract empathetic identification. More fundamental than all of these, however, is the assumption that the proper task of the literary historian is not the examination of the function of cultural capital within a social formation, but its evaluation; and what s/he evaluates is a firmly constituted entity, “the text,” whose meaning and value are objectively ascertainable and independent of what Benjamin calls the text’s “afterlife” (Nachgeschichte).7

It is this problem of what constitutes “the text” and of the place it can be assigned in a historical series that I want to examine with reference to *Power Without Glory*. A passage in Hardy’s account of the prosecution of the novel for criminal libel makes it clear that the question of the relevance of context to the determination of meaning is a serious one which can be enforced by judicial as well as by academic authority:

Judge Martin argued, ‘Unless reading the Author’s Note is to show the intention was not to portray an actually living man; that his intention was to portray what Mr Campbell calls a composite fictional figure, that is the only reason for reading the Author’s Note.’

‘With respect,’ Starke said, ‘I cannot concede Your Honour’s proposition is correct.’

‘What do you suggest is the reason for reading the note?’

‘Because it has to be read — it is part of the context.’

‘It is not part of the context at all, Mr Starke. It is not part of the book.’

‘Your Honour, I speak of context as the whole publication — everything between the covers — and I do submit this Author’s Note . . . I say with a great deal of confidence, sir, that the
Author's Note should be taken or may be taken to be part of the context of the publication by the jury.'

But the Judge was insistent. 8

The Judge's literal insistence is one we should be wary of, because it gives legal sanction to precisely that fetishisation of the text which makes possible the constitution of the "literary" as an autonomous realm with intrinsic characteristics. If we disregard his ruling, however, we might notice that many of Hardy's books (Power Without Glory, The Hard Way, The Outcasts of Foolgarah) contain both a fictional text and a metatext which doubles the text on a different ontological level. Correspondingly, in all the books subsequent to Power Without Glory there is an internal doubling of the act of writing: Paul Whittaker writes about the process of writing about his alter ego Jim Roberts in The Four-Legged Lottery; The Hard Way splits the author into two characters, Frank Hardy and Ross Franklyn, in an alternating narrative structure; the author F.J. Borky is seen at work in The Outcasts of Foolgarah on a novel which is obviously The Outcasts of Foolgarah; Jack self-consciously reconstructs the life of his double, John Morel, in But The Dead Are Many; and in Who Shot George Kirkland? Ross Franklyn writes about the writing of a novel called Power Corrupts, and after his death is doubled by a biographer who gradually comes to identify with him. Increasingly the effect of this is to produce a baroque structure of mise en abîme, a self-reflexive structure of obsessive repetition.

I am using the word "repetition" here in a Freudian but not in a psychological sense, since what concerns us is a textual pattern rather than an individual act of consciousness. 9 Although the metatextual and internal doublings are synchronic in form, their persistence through a series of texts indicates that they are motivated by a diachronic relation to the traumatic moment of the publication and prosecution of Power Without Glory. Specifically, the later texts repeat the primal scene of that novel's exclusion from the Australian literary market in the Cold War period, and the primal ambivalence, established in the scene of the court, of the relation between the real and the fictional. In this process the "mirror" of the traditional representational novel (the one that gives a "reflection of life") is transformed into the mirror image of Frank Hardy/Ross Franklyn in The Hard Way and then into the multiplication of endlessly receding mirror images in But The Dead Are Many and Who Shot George Kirkland? The effect of this is to destroy the epistemological privilege of representational discourse. The text which seemed to derive its veracity from its relation to the real must now be seen as a form of textuality, constituted in an ambivalent relation to other levels of textuality. Power Without Glory, for example, is a productive transformation of "extracts from Hansard, from old newspapers and magazines, from Royal Commission Reports, from documents in Melbourne and Sydney libraries" (The Hard Way, p. 44) and of second-hand accounts of Wren and his period; but it mixes a novelistic discourse with a historical and a sociological discourse in such a way that language working referentially ("In 1889, the overseas price of wool fell, goods had accumulated far in excess of the market, land and
property prices began to collapse”) serves to validate the language of fiction (“John West was sacked, together with most of the other boot workers”). The appeal to a transcendental reality is a way of obliterating the novel’s own status as text, and in this it merely reproduces the generic norms of the realist novel. The Hard Way, with its mixture of autobiography and third person autobiographical fiction, begins a process of playing with and undermining this mode of validation which is carried through more fully in the later texts.

The crucial question here is that of the referentiality of fictional signifiers; and at the heart of this question is that of the semiotic status of proper names. The issue is not merely an academic one: it has consequences in law. Two opposing views on the nature of fictional signification were presented at the trial. The defence argued that “by a work of fiction is meant something which is the product of the author’s imagination but which does not represent an actual situation, fact or character.” A witness for the prosecution, John Wren Jr., argued on the other hand that a work of fiction “is a work which can deal with real people about whom lies are written” (The Hard Way, 190). The difference is that between conceptions of discourse as primarily an act of signification or an act of reference.

The paradox is that Hardy is committed to both views. The Author’s Note to the first edition of Power Without Glory outlines a Lukácsian aesthetic of representation of the “typical,” the essentially real:

Characters — that is, people — cannot be invented, they must be based on persons drawn from real life . . . But no single person, as he exists, is concentrated or typical enough for literature; something must be added, something taken away. In every person there are characteristics typical of many people . . . Sometimes actual historical events and people will be portrayed, often composite incidents and characters . . .

(The Hard Way, 196)

And his career as a writer began when he was told that “literature is life” (The Hard Way, 35). In order to defend the novel, however, he was obliged to stress its difference from life, its fictionality. The prosecution, on the other hand, was in the position of having to defend a proposition that was simultaneously true and false. In order to identify the character “John West” as being a representation of John Wren they went so far as to introduce as exhibits the “real” chair and the “real” print of Beethoven described in the novel (The Hard Way, 184). At the same time they needed to deny that Wren had committed any of the crimes attributed to West — and this involved a substantial portion of the book.

Niall Brennan summarises the complexity of the legal issue involved by pointing out that “as it stood in the public eye, Mrs Wren had been accused by Hardy of adultery. She could be exonerated of this charge only if it could be proved that the likeness of John West to John Wren was sufficient to implicate her; namely, if Hardy’s picture of West was an accurate picture of Wren then Mrs Wren could say she was innocent of
adultery and had therefore been labelled.” The defence, however, was able
to point to a number of obviously fictional incidents in the book, many of
them involving crimes, and to argue that these fictional incidents
“weakened the identification, rather than besmirched the character.”

The theoretical problem at issue here is that of the ontological realm
occupied by proper names. Searle argues in *Speech Acts* that, although
proper names seem to be purely referential, to be sui generis, unique
particulars, they nevertheless entail descriptive predicates; they have a
function of signification as well as a referential function, and the latter
depends on the former, on our ability to distinguish between essential and
contingent identifying descriptions. In other words,

if both the speaker and the hearer associate some identifying
description with the name, then the utterance of the name is
sufficient to satisfy the principle of identification, for both the
speaker and the hearer are able to substitute an identifying
description. The utterance of the name communicates a
proposition to the hearer. It is not necessary that both should
supply the same identifying description, provided only that their
descriptions are in fact true of the same object.

The crucial point for our purposes is that

the uniqueness and immense pragmatic convenience of proper
names in our language lies precisely in the fact that they enable us to
refer publicly to objects without being forced to raise issues and
come to an agreement as to which descriptive characteristics
exactly constitute the identity of the object. They function not as
descriptions, but as pegs on which to hang descriptions.

It is this inherent ambiguity of the function of proper names — an
ambiguity that is in sharp conflict with the precision required of legal
definition — that allowed Hardy to claim that the degree of referentiality
of the character “John West” depended as much on the code of the hearer
as on the code of the speaker (“I have never claimed that the characters in
the book are real people but apparently some people see themselves in it. If
so, certain men in high places are guilty of bribery and murder” [*The Hard
Way*, 26]).

But the ambiguity of proper names used in the everyday world is
further complicated when we consider the two-fold question of the status
of *fictional* proper names and the status of public persons like the
“legendary” John Wren — that is, a John Wren who is already partly
fictional, who is known by “hearsay” and is therefore as much a cultural
unit as a unique private person. Hardy attempts to broach the theoretical
problem involved here by distinguishing between four modes of
signification in the novel. We could schematise this distinction as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signifier</th>
<th>Signified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Real</td>
<td>Real</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Fictive</td>
<td>Fictive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Fictive</td>
<td>Real</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Real</td>
<td>Fictive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first class would cover the use of the real name of a real person: Billy Hughes, for example. The second class covers most of the minor characters in the book: invented characters with invented names. The third class is that of the "composite fictional character": an invented name (West, Malone, Thurgood) grouping selected semes or "characteristics" of real people (Wren, Mannix, Theodore; an interesting case in a later novel is the fictive character "Buratakov," who is the author of a real book, *The A.B.C. of Communism*). For the fourth case Hardy gives the example of the character "Eddie Corrigan," an actual person whom Hardy inserted into a different, fictional story (*The Hard Way*, 116).

The crucial factor here, however, is that all these signifier/signified relations are bracketed within a fictional frame. The novelistic signifier is an "imitation" of another signifier, whether this be real or fictive (thus the novel's signifier "Billy Hughes" is a fictional representation of the real signifier "Billy Hughes" which in turn signifies an actual person). Brennan makes this point in relation to the third class in order to prove the referential function of these proper names:

The names were imitated as to their initials, their vowels and their metrical structure. Closer imitation of names was hardly possible. John West seemed to be the man we all knew about. His tote was in Jackson Street, Carringbush, rather than in Johnson Street, Collingwood. The childish way in which Hardy fabricated these names — substituting even affixes like ' -bush' for ' -wood' indicated either a deliberate attempt to portray a character, or else a paucity of ability to dream up his own names.\(^{13}\)

But the essential point here seems to me to be the slight divergence of the fictive signifiers from the real signifiers, the différance which is constitutive of all signification (as opposed to the principle of identity which is the basis of reference).

I'll draw this part of my argument to a close by suggesting that there are two overlapping ontological realms in *Power Without Glory*: the Fictive and the Fictive Real (in which "John West" has a status similar to that of the fictional character "Richard Nixon" in Cooper's *The Public Burning*). These realms have as their counterparts outside the novel the realm of the "Real" (which is always a hypothetical realm) and that of the Real Fictive: a realm in which John West replaces John Wren in the public mind; in which people report having witnessed events invented by the novelist (*The Hard Way*, 119-20); and in which a library in the Collingwood area is named the Carringbush Public Library. These categories are in fact quite different from the ontological categories informing a Lukácsian aesthetics of representation, and potentially open the way to a quite different politics of writing.

The problem of the status of fictive signification is not adequately confronted by the academic distinction between the aesthetic and the documentary, a distinction which presupposes the possibility of an unmediated representation of factuality. Nor is it adequately confronted by the court's solution of a complex ontological problem by legal fiat (a
solution which led to the farce of the ABC's filming the television series *Power Without Glory* on the basis of advice from the Attorney General that the novel had been found by a court of law to be fiction. The arbitrariness of the separation of discourse into two inherently distinct realms can be easily demonstrated by reference to a book which claims to give a purely factual, documentary account of John Wren: Hugh Buggy's *The Real John Wren*.  

In the Preface and the Foreword to this book five guarantees are given as to the epistemological privilege of the narrative. The first concerns Buggy's authority as an author: unlike Hardy, who relied on "gossip," he was an intimate friend of Wren. The second is that "the author Hugh Buggy was, during his career, regarded as the doyen of journalists. He was a writer intensely interested in the first fifty years of the twentieth century and the canvas he painted was immense. He had the ability of being able to translate into his writing a vivid portrayal of the events of that period." *Ut pictura poesis*: Buggy is a better novelist than Hardy. The third credential is a social guarantee of truth: "How corrupt can a man be when he could count amongst his close associates the following friends..." (there follows a list including the President of the RSL, the Catholic Archbishop and the Governor of Queensland, two Australian Prime Ministers — Scullin and Lyons — E.G. Theodore, Archbishop Mannix, Dr Evatt, and Arthur Calwell). And the author of the Preface, John Wren Jr., goes on to ask: "How can Hardy substantiate his allegations when you evaluate the calibre of the people I have mentioned?" The fourth guarantee is that of education and religion. Hardy's charge of adultery against Mrs Wren is untrue because she "is a highly educated and God-fearing lady. She has led a spotless and saintly life, and I am certain that she would gladly face death rather than commit adultery." Finally, the Foreword by Arthur Calwell — signed "Deputy Leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party" — tells us that "this book is not a biography of John Wren... rather it is a presentation of the facts — which means the truth — in answer to the scurrilous and vicious attacks to which he was subjected from time to time over the years."

The book is therefore authorised by the highest levels of Australian society as the discourse of truth. In fact there seems almost to be an excess of guarantees; and a reading of the book quickly makes it apparent why this should be so. The first reason is that Buggy's facts largely have their source in John Wren himself: "It was in his rare reminiscent moods that he told me many things which threw a different light on some of the fantastic stories that have been told about him"(2). The second reason is that this discourse of factuality is even more novelistic than *Power Without Glory*. Buggy specialises in the evocative cliché, the mixed metaphor, essentialistic characterisation, scenic condensation, and narrative teleology. A small sample:  

It was Melbourne Cup Day, 1890, and the stage was set for the triumph of the great Carbine. Colonial aristocracy in full flower — top-hatted, arrogant and ostentatious — moved on Flemington with all the pomp of a regal progress. Democracy in its blue serge
suit, its wing collar, and its hard bowler hat gazed with respectful awe on the debonair gallants and the chaperoned lovelies.

Nobody, least of all the gentry, gave the sandy-haired youth a second glance as he dodged the spanking turnouts. They were not, of course, clairvoyants. They did not know that they had just passed the opening chapter in one of the greatest success stories Australia has known. (7-9)

The discourse of the real, in other words, is a discourse. It follows certain conventions and its criteria of validity are internal to it, not located in the transcendental realm of the real. In this case they overlap with novelistic criteria — to such an extent that one is led to wonder whether Hardy might not himself have written the book, in a characteristically tortuous act of parodic self-punishment. This use of narrative models derived from fiction is true even of more respectable historical accounts of Wren. Niall Brennan, for example, writes as follows of the methodology used in writing *John Wren: Gambler: His Life and Times*: “What I have done is to try to get an impression from a survey of all available material and when it has begun to assume a consistent pattern, then I have tried to tell the story in a broad outline; not in microscopic detail which is always tedious, but with some attention to the aim of a narrative.”16 Brennan’s version of the founding of Wren’s fortune through his win on Carbine is in fact taken almost word for word from Buggy; but the worst of the purple prose is edited out, leaving an apparently dispassionate and objective account. In other words, the verisimilitude established in this text involves a second mediation of a story deriving ultimately from Wren. Brennan constructs a highly mediated narrative in accordance with narrative conventions and ideological rules, and in this process becomes a mirror image of the novelist Frank Hardy. To Brennan’s accusations of ideological bias, of having distorted the truth about Wren, Hardy replied in a review article that Brennan’s book was “a distorted image in the mirror of Brennan’s own pre-assumptions,” and that Brennan had naively accepted Wren’s own “image projections.”17

In this play of mirrors the real is endlessly deferred through its reiterated variant intertextual production. No discourse has an ultimate epistemological privilege (including this one), and it is Hardy’s recognition of this that is partly responsible for the structure of repetitions characteristic of the later texts: a structure that works to fill that space in *Power Without Glory* which was supposed to be filled by the real, and that succeeds only in doubling and displacing it into further acts of writing.

It is clear that *The Hard Way*, which recounts the myth of the publication and prosecution of *Power Without Glory* and which was written explicitly as an act of exorcism, is both a compulsive repetition of that novel and a key mediation between it and the later texts. The first of these (although its date of publication precedes that of *The Hard Way*) is *The Four-Legged Lottery*. Through the use of a dual time scale which opposes the narrated time, the story of the gambler Jim Roberts, to the
hesitant, arresting movement of the narrative time of Paul Whittaker producing the manuscript in prison, the novel foregrounds writing as its theme. In a number of ways, too, it implies an equivalence between the manuscript and *Power Without Glory*. The narrator occupies the place Frank Hardy would have occupied had he been convicted of libel in 1951: his writing material is supplied by the same character (the Bush Lawyer) who, in the prison scene in *The Hard Way*, promised to supply the material to Hardy if he were sent to Pentridge. When the manuscript is smuggled out of the gaol, Whittaker writes: “The book is an established identity. Unknown people are taking risks for it; treating it with respect. This has given me a strange sense of recognition, and I write with more confidence.”

This repeats the account of the printing and distribution of *Power Without Glory* by strangers who ran a constant risk of violence from the Wren machine. And Whittaker’s crime is embezzlement, which is equivalent to the crime attributed to Hardy by a drunken prisoner. Told that Hardy was in gaol for writing a book, the drunk replied: “Uttered a crook cheque, did yer. Hope yer beat the rap” (*The Hard Way*, 16).

The crime for which Jim Roberts is hanged is the murder of a corrupt SP bookie, who is of course equivalent to the corrupt tote operator John Wren: with one slight difference. At the moment of the murder, “something clicked in Jim’s mind and Pittson became a symbol of all the frustrations and disappointments of his life. Instead of an adversary weak and full of fear, he imagined himself confronted with a powerful, evil enemy. He must destroy that enemy or be destroyed” (*The Four-Legged Lottery*, 218-19). The significant difference here is that the power of the enemy is now “imagined,” recognised as a fantasy. In other ways, however, the novel is deeply dependent on fantasy structures. In *The Hard Way* these lines from Lawson are used as a straightforward denunciation of incarceration: “If the people knew what the warders know . . . and felt as the prisoners feel — if the people knew, they would storm their jails, as they stormed the old Bastille” (76). In *The Four-Legged Lottery* this becomes: “If decent citizens knew the revolting sexual abnormality practised in the jail they would tear down the jails and reform the prison system” (117). In an anticipation of the rape of Commissar McKakie by the warders in *The Outcasts of Foolgarah*, the gaol becomes Sodom, a mythical site of homosexual rape. Its function is to displace the erotic intensity of the homosexual attachment (“mateship”) between the two protagonists, each of whom is a projection of Hardy, and one of whom — like Morel in *But The Dead Are Many* and Ross Franklyn in *Who Shot George Kirkland?* — is both punished by death and redeemed by an act of writing.

*The Outcasts of Foolgarah* is perhaps the most successful of Hardy’s novels, and it is least under the shadow of *Power Without Glory*. Only in the Author’s Note, which recounts the fifteen year saga of threatened censorship and non-publication, does it allude to the earlier text.

It is structured on a Marcusean model of repressive tolerance and the revolutionary potential of social outcasts (the source of Beasley’s description of Hardy as “the laureate of the lumpen proletarians” and of
the novel as a parody of Power Without Glory, “its miasmic by-product”). Its rhetoric is indeed populist rather than Marxist, but it largely avoids the folkloristic sentimentality of Hardy’s short stories. In its use of scatological language and imagery, its scurrilous characterisation (“Sir William Bigears”), and its foregrounding of the signifier through the phonetic reproduction of strine and the use of rhyming slang, it approximates closely to the genre of Menippean satire. The opposition of the “affluent society” to the “effluent society” picks up precisely the categorial structure that Bakhtin isolates as defining the carnivalesque; but unlike the inversions of medieval carnival, and unlike the other dual structures in Hardy’s texts, this opposition is not so much a mirroring as the structure-in-contradiction of class conflict.

But The Dead Are Many is equally close to a Bakhtinian model: in this case that of the polyphonic novel. This is so in quite a literal sense: the book is built on the model of a fugue, weaving voices (or “subjects”) in relations of contrapuntal complementarity or conflict so as to create a sustained ambiguity as to the source of utterance. Analytically one can reconstruct three more or less distinct levels. The first is the narrative of Morel’s journey into suicide. Initially, at least, it is unclear whether this is a text written by Morel (it switches between first and third person reference) or whether it is a “fictional” trace written by Morel’s alter ego, Jack. This level is interwoven with a set of third person texts which are in fact transcriptions from fragmentary autobiographical documents, but which are inserted in such a way that they could be “unwritten” remembrances subordinated to the predominantly first person structure of the first level. These two levels occasionally blur together in Morel’s consciousness (“Am I catching a train or in the garden of the psychiatric hospital balancing a notebook on the knee of a faded check dressing gown, writing without conviction”), and they merge with the third level, the bracketed editorial interventions by Jack, relating to the time of writing, and the increasingly obtruded unbracketed narrative of Jack’s pursuit of the dead Morel.

It seems likely that it is Hardy’s status as a social realist that has made it difficult for critics to appreciate the implications of this deliberately ambiguous polyphonic structure. John Docker, for example, writes in an otherwise sensitive and perceptive paper that Hardy “is being naively pretentious and has created a great deal of unnecessary and slightly ridiculous machinery for himself.” He makes the obvious but irrelevant point that the technique of novelistic counterpointing is at least as old as the epistolary novel, then continues: “More importantly, the use of different voices allows Hardy to break with the social realist tradition of the omniscient narrator.” He nevertheless concludes by insisting on the different novel Hardy should have written. Cecil Hadgraft similarly denounces the failure of But The Dead Are Many to be either an account of political infighting or, curiously, a conventional spy thriller. And he, too, is uneasy with the shifts in the source of utterance:

These do not make for easy reading: narrative and statement and comment change places abruptly and even confusingly. An
additional complication is that third-person narrative is intermingled with these two others. Then it almost becomes a guess who is writing — the author, or the character standing outside himself, or another character. The overall effect of the obliquity is a mild sort of obfuscation, a slight blurring, as of our difficulty in understanding one another.25

The authority and the location of the speaking voice are of course a cornerstone of the realist tradition. In breaking with this convention, *But The Dead Are Many* can be seen as a kind of unwriting of *Power Without Glory*. "Morel" (which "imitates" the name Paul Mortier) is of course the most novelistic of all proper names (Frédéric Moreau, Proust's Morel, Paul Morel in *Sons and Lovers*); and the doubling of Morel by Jack, and of Buratakov/Bukharin by Morel, represents a formal subversion of the unity of novelistic character. Thematically, too, there is an unwriting of the myth of the publication of *Power Without Glory*. Morel lives off his reputation for his one great achievement as a communist, a hunger strike which brought him to the edge of death and which forced the government to lift the ban on the Party; and this, of course, is equivalent to Hardy's inability to exorcise the effects of his first novel.

The most recent attempt to carry through such an exorcism is *Who Shot George Kirkland?*, in which Ross Franklyn — Hardy's pseudonym before the publication of *Power Without Glory*, and the counterpart of "Frank Hardy" in *The Hard Way* — debates the question of the factuality of the adultery scene in his novel *Power Corrupts*.26 This story was given to him by an informant, Alan Hall, who was probably an undercover agent and perhaps an agent provocateur; and Franklyn decides that the reliability of the adultery story is linked to the question of the reliability of another story told by Hall about his shooting of a gangster called George Kirkland.

The novel is divided into two parts, "Ross Franklyn recalls"/"Ross Franklyn recalled," the second of which concerns the recovery of the manuscript of Part I after Franklyn's death, and the extension of the quest by his biographer. Three modes of time are juxtaposed: the two times of writing, the time of memory, and fictional time.

Chapter headings date the use of each mode according only to its content, so that no narrative markers distinguish the status of any narrative segment. This means that, for example, an utterance attributed to Hall, standing independently and dated "1923," is entirely ambivalent. It is either an authorial reconstruction of an actual or possible event, or Hall's actual or reconstructed account of the event. And the only information the reader can use to try to fix the source and status of the utterance is negative: the fact that it is cross-textually undermined by evidence that Hall is a compulsive liar and internally undermined by the excessively positive and "literary" version it gives of Hall.

The interplay of discourses is reinforced by a complex structure of intertextual reference. The title of the novel is verbally the same as that of the manuscript of Part I; chapter epigraphs in both parts are drawn from
the text of Part I; one of the preliminary epigraphs is taken “from a manuscript found in the National Library amongst the papers of Ross Franklyn, the author, who died in 1978”; another is ascribed to “Poisson,” who turns up later as a character in the novel; and the protagonist of Part II quotes from his honours dissertation on Ross Franklyn which corresponds to “a thesis written by R.H. Cavenagh, The Fiction of Frank Hardy,” to which “the author” gives acknowledgement on one of the unpaginated title pages. On a broader level the novel repeats other Hardy texts. Passages from The Hard Way are transcribed or closely summarised, but with the alteration of slight details: the gambling win that allowed Power Without Glory to be type-set is reproduced almost verbatim, but in the later text the odds are given as 50/1 rather than 33/1, and the win as £500 rather than £200 (40; cf The Hard Way, 128). (In a 1976 article in The Age, Hardy is quoted as giving the odds as 66/1 and the win as $1,300; this story should be compared with that of Wren’s win on Carbine, obviously the product of the same imagination.) Hall is referred to as “something of a Peter Pan,” which picks up and transforms a statement in the earlier text that “I haven’t missed a Cup since Peter Pan’s second win” (59; cf The Hard Way, 154). In this process of rewriting, The Hard Way is in fact deleted: Franklyn writes as though that book had never existed, that act of exorcism never been performed. There is a similar form of rewriting of Power Without Glory: a long extract from that novel, dealing with Mrs West’s adultery with a construction worker, Bill Evans, is reproduced as a chapter of Who Shot George Kirkland?, dated “1917,” and with the single change that “Bill Evans” is now called “Bill Egan.” There is an imitation of But The Dead Are Many in the reference to “The Living Are Few, my failed novel about the Communist who committed suicide because he had cast himself in a role he was incapable of playing” (84) and in the way Franklyn’s suicide closely follows that of Morel. And in both parts of the novel the parodic voice of The Outcasts of Foolgarah is played off against other stylistic formations.

A major aspect of the rewriting-with-difference of earlier texts is the play of repression and revelation of proper names. Alan Hall’s name was suppressed in The Hard Way, as was that of Evans/Egan’s wife, a figure whose mysterious appearance at the court was never explained. Evans’ name was repressed during the trial by one of Wren’s associates (a lapsus which the defence eagerly seized on); the second-degree fictionalisation of his name in Who Shot George Kirkland? re-produces a name that was always problematic as the signifier of an absent signified. Conversely, the name of the trade unionist George Seelaf figures prominently in The Hard Way, but is here deliberately suppressed.

The major thematisation of the status of the proper name concerns, of course, George Kirkland. The narrator of Part II finds evidence that Alan Hall, who claimed to have shot Kirkland, had indeed shot someone, but his victim’s name was “Thomas Hamill.” It seems possible, then, that “Kirkland” could be the fictitious name of a real person — that is, that it occupies the same ambivalent realm as the central proper names in Power Without Glory. After further research, the narrator uncovers the newspaper report of this shooting, which is quite different from the more
dramatic and self-serving story told by Hall. He then manages to uncover a trace of the existence of George Kirkland; but, like Hardy's fourth category of signification, this real proper name is inserted in an entirely different story. When he finally discovers the story of the shooting of George Kirkland, the multiplication of resemblances, differences, and obscurities makes it clear that the relation between name and story will never be adequately reconstructed. The story of this quest acts as a fable which is overtly thematised throughout the novel. Ross Franklyn discovers retrospectively that "the fictional world of the novel had become more real to me than the factual material I had gathered" (38). In later life "increasingly the real and the unreal merged in my human relationships: the events in my actual life blended with my obsessions and dreams to become recreated in my writing" (38). And he concludes that there is an "irreconcilable feud between literature and reality" (1) and that "truth does not live in verified facts, nor is it the opposite of falsehood; that fiction is not the opposite of truth, nor is it the equivalent of lies" (178).

A final thematic strand concerns a personal level of guilt, and this can be extended to cover the structure of repetition that is operative in all the novels. Ross Franklyn had stayed "relatively sane... only because I blotted the story out of my mind for nearly thirty years in a classically Freudian way" (75). What he had repressed was the act of aggression directed against Ellen Wren/Nellie West and against the father-figure Wren/West. The narrator of Part II quotes a rumour, dating from 1950, that Franklyn was in fact Xavier, the supposedly dead son of Mrs Wren/West and either Wren/West or "Bill Evans" (120); that he was, in other words, a character in his own novel, and one whose name, as Brennan points out, is both unusual and identical in the text of the novel and the text of the real.28 Franklyn's crime was to have challenged the "menacing forces" (177) of West—a challenge repeated by his biographer, who masquerades as his son and becomes his "ghost" (142). There is a further twist to this, however. On the assumption that the adultery story, despite its having been written as fiction, was in fact true, it is conceivable that West/Wren might have used the trial as a way of publicly punishing his wife—in which case Ross Franklyn/Frank Hardy would have been acting as his unwitting accomplice (176). Franklyn therefore has no alternative but to deny the truth of the story, but thereby becomes guilty of having labelled an innocent woman. This double bind repeats the dilemma of the trial, where the prosecution and the defence were compelled both to affirm and to deny the same proposition.

From The Hard Way to Who Shot George Kirkland? Hardy's texts can be read as compulsive repetitions of two aspects of Power Without Glory: the heroic myth of repression and victimisation (repeated by Hardy in propria persona some years ago in a self-pitying interview with Bruce Molloy),29 and the unresolved question of the ambivalence of fictional signification. Power Without Glory is in itself a radically incomplete text which has been continuously rewritten and transformed in the later books. Its problematic status as a text is confirmed by the scandal of its academic reception. It has been virtually absent from the orthodox literary histories,
and when it is mentioned it is to be relegated to the status of a document, that is, to precisely that referential function that the later texts contest or problematise. Academic critics have imposed a normative closure on the text, and in the same methodological movement have reduced Hardy to the status of “author” of *Power Without Glory*. They have failed to analyse the extended process of constitution of the text in its reception and its rewriting: above all, its constitution as a political text in the *cause célèbre* of the trial and in the effect of the ABC series.

In order to write the social history of this political text it would be necessary to take into account not only Hardy’s own rewritings but the politically conflicting readings and rewritings through which it is constructed as a heterogeneous text. Here I can give only a sketchy indication of the main ideological positions which contribute to this process. Schematically, I would isolate four groupings. The first is that of New Critical liberal-humanism, which, in addition to the literary historians quoted at the beginning of this paper, would include critics like Semmler and Hadgraft and cultural policemen like Max Harris. The second grouping, centred on *Quadrant*, is the Catholic Right together with lapsed Communists like Weller and Lockwood. From this perspective, *Power Without Glory* is read as a political tract directed specifically against the Movement, and it is measured against a criterion of fidelity to the historical record (as though that record were not itself tendentiously constructed). Hardy is “placed” as a Stalinist hardliner, the author of only one other significant text, the notorious *Journey Into The Future*. This group has the virtue of a declared interest in the political effects of texts. Its interventions consequently occur in two major waves: one in the early 1950's, when *Power Without Glory* was an issue in the literary politics of the Cold War and the Labor Party split (and when, as Brennan observes, “Wren’s Catholic anti-Communist mates did more than anything else to ensure the continued sales and success of *Power Without Glory*” because “Hardy the Communist was a more dangerous figure in their eyes than Hardy the crashing bore who had laboriously turned out a vast and tedious work of questionable fiction”), and a second wave in 1976 as a reaction to the ABC’s serialisation of the novel for television, which was correctly perceived as marking the demise of *Quadrant’s* version of the historical record.

The third main grouping is that of the Right and Left wings of the Communist Party (and later the SPA). Here the fate of Hardy’s texts coincides initially with the heroic myth of struggle against the suppression of democratic rights. Hardy himself gives the strongest version of this insertion of the literary into the general political struggle in *The Hard Way*. The later fate of his texts is inseparable from the faction fighting between the two wings of the Party, peaking in 1957 and 1968. The publication in 1969 of Hardy’s “Stalin’s Heirs” articles committed him to the Left, “revisionist” wing of the Party; but his increasing alienation from Party politics has meant that his later work had little political resonance (Aarons’ review of *But The Dead Are Many* is mainly anecdotal and avoids the theoretical problems the text poses). The brunt of comment comes from
the Right. Jack Beasley's *Red Letter Days*, for example, is a savage personal attack, accusing Hardy of opportunism, class treachery, and plagiarism. It is noteworthy that Beasley's distinction between the "publicistic message" of *Power Without Glory* and its status as "literature," as well as that between its "public image" and its "real quality," reflects an insecurity about the political status and function of texts — an insecurity repeated in Jack Lindsay's question (mirroring that of the liberal-humanist literary historians): "Is it merely a document of great importance for the inner history of Australian politics and sports, or is it also a work of art in its own way?"

The responsibility for shifting the kinds of question asked of Hardy's texts would seem to lie most strongly with the fourth ideological grouping (in which my own work is situated), the New Left. Here, however, interest in Hardy has been belated and mostly unsatisfactory. John Docker's "study in context" of *But The Dead Are Many* is an excellent account of the stylistic and ideological weaknesses of the novel, but fails to move beyond seeing it as "a propaganda tract written on behalf of a victorious inner Party faction," and therefore as "analysis untransmuted into art." Tim Rowse's review of *Red Letter Days* indicates the instability of political criteria in Beasley's reading of Hardy, and refers to the need for "a critique of language and narrative that may make us query the necessity of realism." This project has only recently begun with Peter Williams' attempt to replace immanent and genetic readings of Hardy with a concern for the labour of intertextual production performed by the texts and for their political and institutional appropriation.

Williams' argument for the pertinence of work "on the production of texts and the production of readings of them, which together constitute the structuration of textual 'meaning' through the reiteration of cultural codes" is in line with my thesis that the significance of the text is inseparable from its historicity. *Power Without Glory* is constructed as a text in a contradictory network of private and public readings: in the trial and the attendant publicity; in its serialisation for television; and in Hardy's own rewritings. There is no single, finite text external to our relation to it. Nor is there a closed corpus unproblematically defined by the trademark of its "author." If Hardy has devoted so much care to the "dismantling and splitting" of the author-function, it is surely presumptuous of critics simply to insist on the straightforward unity of this function.

The boundary of the text, then, and its mode of signification are socially imposed; and on this basis the text is constituted heterogeneously within the process of Australian textual politics. It is made up of different modes and levels of intertextuality, each with a specific degree of cognitive privilege which is also socially ascribed. To say this is not to discard the concepts of "text" and of a specifically "literary" mode of discourse, nor does it involve a rejection of operations of evaluation. Rather, it means taking the structured field of evaluations and the critical concepts used to produce them as objects of analysis, and thereby integrating them into the textual process. Such a deconstruction of "the text" should lead us to focus
on the interplay between text and system and on the social determinants of this process. Hardy’s work has a particular value as a case study in that, standing as it does outside the orthodox canon, it challenges the ideological premises on which that canon is constructed, and indeed received conceptions of “literary history” itself.

Murdoch University

2 The Oxford History of Australian Literature, p. 23.
4 The Oxford History of Australian Literature, pp. 130-31.
13 Brennan, p. 206.
15 Hugh Buggy, The Real John Wren (Melbourne: Widescop, 1977). Subsequent references will be included in the text.
16 Brennan, p. vii.
18 Frank Hardy, The Four-Legged Lottery (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1958), p. 90. All subsequent references will be included in the text.
23 Frank Hardy, But The Dead Are Many: A Novel in Fugue Form (Sydney: Bodley Head, 1975), p. 29.
26 Frank Hardy, Who Shot George Kirklend? A Novel About the Nature of Truth (Melbourne: Edward Arnold, 1981). Subsequent page references will be included in the text.
28 Brennan, p. 206.
31 Brennan, p. 208.
34 Beasley, pp. 60, 62.
36 Docker (see note 24), pp. 61, 55.
38 Peter Williams, “Interventions and Obsessions: The Work of Frank Hardy,” Southern Review, 14 (1981), 168-91, and “Plagiarism and Rewriting,” unpublished. Peter Williams kindly made copies of these articles available in time for me to take account of some of their insights in this paper.
39 Williams, “Interventions and Obsessions,” p. 172.
40 Williams, “Interventions and Obsessions,” p. 172.

ERRATUM

In the poem “Evening Song” by Adrian Smith (Southern Review, 14, 3, November, 1981), the third to last line should read:

the hour quickens and blackens to its heavy roots