THE TEXTS OF TOMORROW AND TOMORROW AND TOMORROW
AUTHOR, AGENT, HISTORY

“What about the story?” Ord asked. “It seems to have bogged down in world history. Did it ever get out again?”

(Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow 342)

I

This paper has a double aim: to draw attention to hitherto unrecognised textual problems that beset the second edition of the Australian novel Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow, and to explore a set of theoretical problems concerning the nature of the authentic historical voice, problems prompted both by that edition, and by the thematic concerns of the text itself. As such it is a fair illustration of the direction my work has been taking over the last few years and, perhaps, of what has become an increasingly insistent concern in critical work. If the seventies and eighties were the decades of theory, the last few years have seen something of a turn against theory, together with a much heralded return to the consolation of ethics. Attractive as is the prospect of consolation, though, it seems to me that there is something a little easy, not to say smug, in the return to the verities of another age. The poststructuralist critique of the legislative role of the concept of author, the pragmatist critique of essentialism, the various unfoldings of the ethically "natural"; all of this is too important — and, I would say, too persuasive — to be dismissed on the grounds that not a few of the advocates of theory have shown more flair for exaggeration and self-promotion than careful thought. The position taken here is that those kind of critiques do not destroy the subject, or the realm of ethics, or the real world (as far as the latter is concerned, it would appear that we can do that quite without the help of theory); rather, they prompt us to rework our understanding of them. To take the focus of the current essay, the question is not whether we ought to give up on the notion of the subject: that is just not a move available to us. Rather, it is in what ways do we need to reconfigure our account of subjectivity, in what ways do we need to reconfigure the process of identifying and constraining the subject within its textual inscription, if we are to take seriously the challenges textual theory has produced.

First published in 1947 with the title Tomorrow and Tomorrow, Marjorie Barnard and Flora Eldershaw's last novel was republished under the Virago imprint in 1983 with the authentic title restored, Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow. That change was in many ways emblematic of
the ambitions of the second edition, which were pre-eminently recuperative. As is now well known, the novel had suffered at the hands of the war-time censor in Australia; according to the anonymous account that appears on the back cover of the corrected edition, through the characters’ eyes:

we experience the terrible years of the Depression: years of rising anger that culminate, at the end of the Second World War, in civil disturbance and the threat of a Third World War. When first published in 1947 these stirring passages were seriously cut by the Government censor; now for the first time the full uncensored text is printed as the authors wrote it.

Welcoming the Virago edition, Jill Roe observed that the censorship had meant that “an authentic impassioned voice was muffled for a generation” (243). There could, then, have been scarcely a more appropriate site of intervention for a press like Virago which, after all, conceives its mandate precisely in terms of the rediscovery of the work of forgotten, marginalised or otherwise “censored” women writers. That process very quickly becomes, it would seem, one concerned with authenticity; it becomes a matter of locating, and keeping faith with, the original voice responsible for the text, of seeing through the accidents of history that have since befallen it.

Now at about the time of that Virago edition a standard critical move would have been to deride the very concept of an original voice or authentic text. Just as, the argument might have gone, the rediscovery of the original title, far from confirming the “voice” of Barnard Eldershaw, in fact displaces it with that of Shakespeare, perhaps the most overwritten and polyvalent of all (western) cultural voices, so the search for the text’s unified, uncompromised vision could only lead, if pursued with any rigour, to its fracturing amongst the numerous signifying codes and social rituals from which it is pieced together.

However, pleasantly iconoclastic as the dismantling of the claims of monologic authority may well have been, it was not a practice altogether free of difficulty, both of a pragmatic and theoretical kind. For the moment, a barest gesture towards them will suffice. The pragmatic difficulty is thoroughly political. However squamish we nowadays feel about talk of authentic voices, however naive may seem a discursive practice which apparently implies a belief in an a priori order of originary speaking positions, a libertarian politics inevitably, it would seem, finds itself championing as a matter of justice the restoration and reempowerment of voices suppressed or occluded within the dominant structure. That invocation of justice, though, can only have bite if we are persuaded that the suppression is substantive, that the voice exists as something other than, or at the very least as something more than, a mere trick of the endless circuit of symbolic exchange. Feminism, post-colonialism and Marxism alike, however well-credentialled in thought, find themselves cut adrift from the pressure that gave them impetus and point in the first place if unable to recall, with sincerity, a sense of justice thwarted. Each is undermined at the level of praxis if unable to maintain
faith in the continuing reality of the authentic voice.¹

Pragmatic considerations, in short, tend to the maintenance of what may well be judged a naive belief in an ontologically secure order of personhood. It is important to note, however, that the dogged deconstruction of every such belief that became something of an academic art form in the years following Blindness and Insight leads to an untenable performative contradiction every bit as naïve. As has often been remarked, there is an obvious contradiction in relying on the communicative security of a text while simultaneously contending that all claims to such security are suspect. To cut the argument short, one might recall Don DeLillo’s Orang Mohole: “All the key words in this explanation, by the way, are totally misleading due to the everyday quirks of language” (Rainer’s Star, 181). DeLillo’s joke — like much of Borges’ fiction, as indeed its exotic postmodern progeny — exploits the fact that we have the linguistic power to conceive and describe linguistically impossible worlds. Like any joke, one can appreciate it, rather than naively fall victim to it, only if it is understood as a joke. No language is possible where all words are “totally misleading.”

These two types of difficulty suggest that all was not easy after all in the all too easy discrediting of the idea that the key to interpretative practice is the production and identification of authentically coherent texts. Political and theoretical imperatives alike conspired to cloud the crystalline clarity of “the world of the innocence of becoming... of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin” (Derrida 292). Equally, though, a glib return to that world of truths and origins is, I would have thought, no longer possible. If the upshot of that is a moment of present indecision, it is one — or so I shall argue — that both Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow, and the textual career that befell it, exemplifies and intriguingly anticipates.

II

As the text is not as well read as it might be, a brief recollection of it may be useful. Although not published until 1947, the text was actually written largely in the years from 1940 to 1942, as a horrified response to the war, an analysis of the events that made it inevitable, and a projection of a possible, catastrophic, future. The narrative difficulty of melding the story of the past with one surveying the future is solved by telling both from the point of view of a novelist working in the twenty-fourth century. The text begins with Knarf, having just completed “his” historical novel about the twentieth century, contemplating the dawn of a day which will see him read from it to his friend Ord, an archaeologist, and on which a community vote is planned to test the people’s interest in a move to democratise their rigidly controlled society. Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow traces the events of that day: the public vote, and
the private reading. Knarf's novel, *Little World Left Behind*, traces the political and social events that led to the second war. There is little doubt about where his sympathies lie. As he explains to Ord:

The really curious thing about the nineteen thirties is that the world was never before, perhaps never since, so aware. The decade began in the depths of the Depression, something calculated to stir the social forces as even the first world war had not done, an object lesson brought into almost every home, certainly every working-class home. If ever event brought indictment against a social system, the Depression brought one against capitalism. (135)

For much of the narrative itself, it is precisely a "working-class home" that offers a focus, as the novel follows the career of Harry Munster, ex-Anzacs, from his failing chicken farm, to a job driving a truck in Sydney, from whence sacked on account of his unionism and unemployment for five years of the Depression, finally to find tenuous security operating an elevator in a city department store until his death in an air raid in the second war. Knarf's novel ranges over the lives of a number of other characters: Harry's family, acquaintances, fellow citizens of Sydney, icons of an entire society. The two novels (both *Little World Left Behind* and *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow*) also attempt an explicit, large-scale historical account of the events. At times sections of Knarf's novel itself are dedicated to this, at times he breaks into reading the domestic narrative of Harry Munster, and sketches in the background for Ord's benefit:

Knarf broke off. "You know all this as well as I do. The time of unrest, of strikes, and civil violence. The demobilised men who could not adjust themselves to a world that was neither the old one they remembered, nor the new one they hoped for; the uprooted people who remained helpless; the wolf packs of slave labourers; the mass of workers resenting and fighting..."

(Georgian House, 365; omitted Virago)

Those breaks are a crucial feature of the text. To anticipate: while allowing it to exploit the conventions of a realistic domestic narrative and so build up the profoundly moving account of Munster's life, they also grant the text the liberty to dispense with the standard constraint usual to such narrative, that it manifest a seamless empirical and psychological continuity. As Knarf says (one of many such occasions): "I can't read you all of this. The best I can do is pick out the voices here and there" (141).

Both textsend negatively. *Little World Left Behind* reaches a conclusion with a revolution that, for all its genuine intent, leaves Sydney destroyed and its participants to wander into the desert, where they perish. *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow* ends with the failure of the vote (most vote "indifferent"). But both end with a sense of possibility, too, albeit possibility conceived within a thoroughly patriarchal key: the embedded novel with Harry's son, Ben, a truck driver like his father, pausing in the flight from the burning Sydney to find an apple in an abandoned orchard, and to reflect on both the past (especially, to recall his father), and the
future; the other with Knarf's son Ren— one of the champions of the vote — finding at the time of his greatest disappointment a moment of communion with his father.

III

Much more could be said, but perhaps this is enough to give sufficient sense of the nature of the text for the moment. One of the most striking features of the text (and, oddly, the one least commented on) is the way in which the inner, domestic narrative is disrupted: temporally in the form of Knarf's cuts and leaps through the manuscript, and in terms of explanatory register, as it moves between the domestic and the social. At any rate, it is in stark contrast to the first book published by Barnard and Eldershaw, A House is Built, which was produced in an environment of epistemological innocence, an environment which no doubt contributes to its narrative directness, pellucid and unselfconscious. They wrote the book for the most transparent of motives: to compete for the inaugural (1928) Bulletin prize for the best new Australian novel; in short, for fame and fortune. With no established persona there was no demand to produce a text consistent with an already coherent voice, just as with the disembodied prize to target, there was no pressure to produce a text that would be coherently aligned with the reading practices of any one material configuration of the market. Prize secured, however, and all that changed. Editors and agents alike were quick to make it clear that writing was not just writing, produced by unknown hands for disembodied readers, but performed in an arena where those twin and complementary pressures — to write with an identifiable, coherent market as target, to write with an identifiable, coherent voice as source — were critical.

John Farquharson, the literary agent who took on Eldershaw and Barnard after the success of A House is Built, writes to the pair with the fake diffidence of the confidently worldly wise as follows (24 October 1929):

Just in case it might be of some little interest or help, I will tell you that any stories of strong human interest, domestic stories, love stories, and strongly written articles on more or less personal subjects on interest to men and particularly to women (such as "What have I got out of Life.", "Does Marriage atrophy?" etc.) are most easily saleable. (Barnard papers, MS 451, box 5)

It is not an unfamiliar formula, of course, and perhaps most interesting for the unargued view that writing that is not confined to the "domestic" or "personal" is unlikely to be of "strong human interest." Narratives that attempt a political, social or historical inclusiveness beyond that which is comfortably at home within the discourse of the family would be especially unwelcome, one supposes; a fate that, as we shall see, the ambitiously political and historical Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow all too well exemplifies.
It is not enough, though, to meet the market's habits with the right sort of story. The text must be readable in terms of identifiable voice, too, a requirement continually frustrated by the very fact that this is the product of a literary partnership. Corporate production inevitably undermines simple faith in the authenticity of any implied, univocal voice. Farquharson's solution was simple: invent a name which would allow the reader a site from which a voice might be heard. The name he hit upon, which in fact was not used by Barnard and Eldershaw, was unexpectedly suggestive. Thus, in a letter dated 13 November 1929: "It is usually found to be rather bad policy to have two authors names upon a title page. May I take it to be the wish of Miss Eldershaw and yourself that the name Faith Sidney shall be used to cover you both?" (Barnard papers, Ms 451, box 5). Barnard's full name was Marjorie Faith Barnard, Eldershaw's Flora Sydney Patricia Eldershaw, hence Farquharson's invention, "Faith Sidney."

Rather curiously, if no doubt unintentionally, the invented name points to the problematic, anticipated and perhaps precipitated by the marketing concerns put to them, that becomes insistently in their work, and that dominates Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow. What does it mean, to have faith in the uniqueness of the individual voice, or the authenticity of authorship? Alternatively, what does it mean, to have faith in the endurance of place — of the environment, of Australia, and (again and again) of a city like Sydney? Critically, what reconciliation is possible between the two, the mode of the voice, and the scale of enduring place; between faith in the name, and — if you like — faith in Sydney? More abstractly: what history can be true both to the demands of the authentic particular, and to those of social and environmental narratives which seem to be articulated according to utterly different temporal and spatial schemas? Is there possible common ground, or do the political imperatives — in this case literally of the polis — brush aside, devalue, or inevitably censor the identity of the uncompromised voice?

If this is indeed the problematic the text traverses, its history becomes its uncanny double: a voice compromised by the power of the censor, to be finally liberated in a climate of enlightened scholarship, an event that could well be taken as exemplifying Trinh Minh-ha's vision for cultural critique; that of "tracking down and exposing the Voice of Power and Censorship whenever and in whichever side it appears" (73). It is thus a history that confirms the censoring imperative of the political, but fosters hope for a utopia of presence, too (in a way not unlike, perhaps, the distinction the novel draws between the material scarcity of the twentieth century and utopian abundance of the twenty-fourth). As it happens, though, neither the event nor the novel are quite as they might first appear.

The story of the censorship promoted by the "uncensored" text is itself, alas, only loosely tied to the documented history. Contrary to the popular view, the text as a whole was not, as a matter of fact, the subject of the Censor's scrutiny (indeed, the first 248 pages of the Virago edition are a photographic reproduction of the corresponding pages in the 1947
Georgian House edition). The correspondence preserved is incomplete, however it is clear that the core problem was not that of political unacceptability to the government agencies of the day. Rather, the key issue concerned the ideological constitution of the literary: in the eyes of the publishers, the text refused to behave as a "literary" text ought. In a letter to Barnard of 22 March 1944, the chief worry of the manager of Georgian House, Edgar Harris, is that the literary quality of the story of Harry Munster and his family would be overwhelmed by the novel's speculative conclusion.

If this section of the book about which we are doubtful were allowed to stand, we believe that the book would have a brief life, though perhaps a hectic one. On the other hand, your picture of the years between the wars is so magnificently done that we feel that it is of permanent value, and should not be made to suffer by your speculations being confounded in a few months or a few years. (Barnard papers, ms 451, box 5)

What is "magnificently done" is precisely the domestic story, a story that could well exemplify Farquharson's most "saleable" themes: "What have I got out of Life?, 'Does Marriage atrophy?" (and, incidentally, it is just this dimension that attracts the anonymous Virago staff writer, who summarises the book as telling "the story of an Australian working man, Harry Munster, of his hopes, fears and loves, of his family, their friends and lovers.") Harris picks out the "speculative" as being the chief culprit, but it hard not to suppose he means anything that exceeds that personal narrative. It is not merely, as he contends, that the predictions might be false; rather, it is that they might be false because the text strays from the site of fiction, where — conventionally — "truth" is not at issue, to the discourse of political history. The letter continues: "Are you prepared to risk your reputation as front rank Australian creative writers for the sake of an ideology?" The dimension that Harris wants Barnard Eldershaw to give up is characterised by a focus on the large scale, the communal, the social. No longer the story of "an Australian working man," the text's ambition becomes the rendering of the mass dynamic, at times revolutionary, at times profoundly conservative, of an entire society.

Harris was not successful in persuading the couple but, it would seem, hit upon the idea of using the resource of war-time censorship to do what he could not. The correspondence shows that he dispatched the part to which he most objected — and only that part — to the censor, a total of 146 typescript pages of the section "Afternoon." The aim cannot have been to fulfil his obligations as a good citizen: the novel is in fact political from the outset. As Anne Chisholm, in her introduction to the Virago edition, bemusedly remarks, "although they confined their cuts to the fictional ending and aftermath of the war and the build up to the rising, the whole book is in fact provocative in the extreme" (Virago xii). It certainly is "provocative" throughout, but the point is that they had not "confined" their cuts to the fictional ending": that is all they saw. The censor did not see the whole book, but only that part with which the
publisher was unhappy; his action was strategic, and based on the assumption that enough would be deleted to provoke the artistic vanity of the authors, who would in turn withdraw the worrisome section in

The ploy was not successful. To be sure, the official responsible
diligently affixed a red censor’s stamp to each of the 146 typed pages
submitted, but he or she was, in fact, otherwise very sparing in the consumption of red ink. The standard view, promoted by Barnard in her
1970 account, and confirmed in Drusilla Modjeska’s influential Exiles at
Home, was that the text was “severely cut.” In fact, relatively little is cut,
choices made seem arbitrary, and the result gives the over-riding
impression of being the work of someone going through the motions
without being overly burdened by a sense of the national interest at stake.
Rather delightfully, the only area in which the censor is completely
thorough is in removing all references to the word “censor” itself.

No doubt disappointed, it may well have been the case that Harris
took the matter into his own hands, and added a series of additional cuts,
in an effort to put the matter beyond doubt. Along with the censor’s
markings in red ink, there are a great many in pencil, and blue and black
ink — some of which fall on pages not submitted to the censor. The red
ink deletions are wholly restricted to the submitted pages. Moreover,
where the two colours occur in the same passage, the red is inevitably
applied to a single phrase, clause or sentence, while the black extends the
deletion further. In any case, the typescript was returned to the authors,
who clearly were not the least bit interested in dropping the section, and
set about revising and recasting it, making further deletions and (in
Barnard’s hand) additions and substitutions. The resultant typescript,
now housed in the Mitchell Library, is not an innocent text bearing mute
witness to the power of the censor (a “mutilated body,” in Marjorie
Barnard’s fanciful 1970 account [329]); with its missing pages, alternative
versions, and many-coloured deletions, is rather more like — in the
words Knarf uses to describe history — “an enormous jigsaw puzzle”
(Georgian House 322; Virago 316).

IV

Can the textual jigsaw be solved? That was of course precisely Virago’s
ambition, but the evidence suggests, in fact, that the result falls a long
way short of inspiring confidence that this is indeed the “full uncensored
text.” The demonstration of this requires some space, and I beg the
reader’s forbearance as I move through the material. Let me begin by
returning to Knarf’s jigsaw. The typescript page at issue — not one of
those submitted to the censor — reads as follows:

“It is like an enormous jigsaw puzzle, I’ve fitted together a little
corner of it, but that has no meaning unless I at least sort out the
other pieces and arrange them so as to indicate the completed
pattern, however cursorily."

   Ord said gravely, "Do you know there aren't above a dozen people who would understand you when you say that. I only know by chance and the skin of my teeth that jigsaw puzzles were a fashionable craze four centuries ago and now are one with crosswords and diabolo. Is it true that you have given up this world for that one?"

   (Barnard papers, ms 451, box 2, 126 of "Afternoon")

   It is pretty deadly, and with relief one notes that the first two sentences of Ord's reply are scored out, and "asked" substituted for "said" (all in blue ink). The Georgian House edition, following these changes, thus reduces that paragraph to: "Ord asked gravely, 'Is it true that you have given up this world for that one?'" (Georgian House, 322). Virago, though, sees the work of the censor, and restores the plodding section on the historical ephemeralty of jigsaws — not quite, one might have thought, the sort of seditious material that would be likely to undermine the war effort. To add insult to injury, the Virago edition retains the hand substitution of "asked" for "said," thereby managing to produce a hybrid true of neither the original typescript nor the amended version, and actually weaker than either:

   Ord asked gravely, "Do you know there aren't above a dozen people who would understand you when you say that. I only know by chance and the skin of my teeth that jigsaw puzzles were a fashionable craze four centuries ago and now are one with crosswords and diabolo. Is it true that you have given up this world for that one?" (Virago 316)

   Overall, the "corrected" edition lists twenty-eight cuts restored. In fact only twelve of those were entirely the work of the censor. Six are the result of the censor's efforts being extended by Georgian House and/or the authors, while the latter constellation is solely responsible for another ten, five of which occur on pages not submitted for scrutiny.

   Sometimes the restorations effected by Virago make sense, but often, as was the case with the jigsaw passage, they are of doubtful value. The following passage, for example, is part of the Georgian House edition's description of pre-revolutionary Sydney:

   It was anybody's world. A few determined men who knew where they were going, whose minds were integrated and adamant, could possess it. It did not matter what their doctrine was, it was the force to create it that mattered. A saint or dictator could have snatched it, it was ripe to the strong and ready hand. But there was, still latent but continually growing, a rebellion as individual as the upsurge of the "nineties, against the very premises of society. There were men with two-edged strength, belief and disbelief, belief that had passed over into their blood, passion that had saturated their minds. They saw clearly, not necessarily the truth, but something. They had accepted as axioms that men could not change until their circumstances had changed, that wars could continue to grow while their roots in
the social system were left, that exploitation would continue while the means for it existed. (Georgian House 344)

It is easy to recall Marx: “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness” (181). The corrected text restored four sentences (excised in blue and thus presumably not by the official censor in the typescript) as follows:

It was anybody’s world. A few determined men who knew where they were going, whose minds were integrated and adamant, could possess it. It did not matter what their doctrine was, it was the force to create it that mattered. A saint or a dictator could have snatched it, it was ripe to the strong and ready hand. Australia was cut off from the world more completely than she had been for a century or more. To the north was the great semicircle of enemy-held islands. Europe was silent, communication with England and America was almost entirely in official hands. No travellers came, no letters passed except through the needle eye of officialdom, she was insulated from whatever ferment there were in the outside world. But there was . . . (Virago 340)

It is difficult to see much of a threat to security in the “censored” lines, particularly as the previous paragraph — nowhere queried — reads in part:

Regularly, eight times a day, news bulletins were poured over the city. News and propaganda were one and the same thing. The newspapers were in the conspiracy too. There was no way round. The smooth voices of the announcers, the smooth exhortations of the editors, the slick rationalizations of the foreign correspondents, were all the walls that the world had. (Georgian House 344; Virago 339)

The omitted material returns to the thematic of censorship taken up here, but cutting it seems less an act of censorship itself than a tactic to clarify the writing. Whereas the Georgian House edition makes the point once, the typescript, and the “corrected” edition, takes up the concern a second time, in a way which blurs and weakens the political thrust of the affected paragraph. Paradoxically, in short, the “censored” version is more clearly revolutionary than the “uncensored” version.

Sometimes things are much worse. For example, an extensive deletion runs from part way into page 18 to part way into page 21 of the typescript (pages not submitted to the censor). Pages 19 and 20 are missing altogether from the typescript; one assumes they were deleted in their entirety, and subsequently discarded. Now the “corrected” text sets about restoring the cut but of course is unable to furnish the lost material from pages 19 and 20. Quite extraordinarily, the anonymous editor solves the problem by moving directly, without comment, from the bottom of the typescript page 18 to the top of 21, thus:

The Finnish war, the ideological confusion and its stirring up of enmity between Left and Right, had its consequences. The Government, perceiving a cleavage, proceeded, under the cover
of the State of War, to sew it together in their own way. Parliament passed the National Security Act. It looked short and meek enough in the statute book, pages of dry legal jargon, but it severed at its root that democratic principle of government for which the war was, presumably, being fought.

"Then they made a cult of short hair and spent ten times as much at the hairdresser as ever they used to. This is one of the arguments that go round and round and never come to an end." (Virago 249)

Hairy indeed, and one hardly needs the hairdresser’s skills to sense the cut that mutely parts the two paragraphs: the narrative simply collapses. Turning to the twelve cuts that are indubitably the work of the censor, three seem selected merely because the word “censor” itself appears. Of the remaining nine cuts, in one instance (Virago 370) the restored cut is at the expense of an alternative version published in the first edition (Georgian House 376, but missing from the typescript) which is more streamlined and, if anything, politically more pointed. In another instance, the restoration is botched with comic misunderstanding. The typescript reads:

There was no ship of war in Sydney Harbour but out of sight, over the rim of the horizon, were the grey shapes of a fleet waiting like beasts of prey round an imperial rat hole.

(ms, 208 of “Afternoon.”)

The censor deletes “round an imperial rat hole” — again, a curious target for bureaucratic concern — which the corrected edition restores, in haste and nonsensically, to read “waiting like beasts of prey round an imperial rat-hole” (Virago 371).

A further six cuts are the combined work of the censor and the Georgian House editor and/or Barnard Eldershaw. In four of these, a revised version is included in the first edition. The corrected edition restores regardless, silently dropping the alternative — and every bit as “authentic” — material previously published. The two most significant instances are those of the armistice celebrations, and the description of the discovery of the plague.

The surviving typescript version of the end of the European war begins as follows:

But love, sacred nor profane, could not hold the sweep of events. After a long and costly indecision in Europe, while thousands upon thousands died on both sides and famine took its stealthier toll, Germany had been broken under assaults of the Russians, the aerial hammering of her cities, war exhaustion, and internal turmoil.

It was difficult to decipher at close range whether the capitulation were a military collapse or an uprising from within, a return to sanity, a loosing of new madness, a revolution, a victory or a defeat. So often had the optimists declared that Germany was on the brink of defeat, and so often had they been wrong, that the news that the fighting had stopped in Russia
beyond her strength to withstand. The structure of her conquered empire buckled and collapsed. Russia declared war, the long-maturing atomic bomb ripened and fell.

(Georgian House 363-64)

Two paragraphs — quite different from the much briefer, original typescript version, above — describing celebrations in Sydney's Martin Place follow. Quite clearly, the difference between the two versions is the date of composition. The typescript is dated "1940-42," and of necessity its description of the end of the war is based on prediction, although of course the enabling premise that this is the work of a twenty-fourth century novelist means it is written firmly in the past tense. The scenario adopted was that the end came via a confused victory of Russia over Germany in which the Allied nations played no part, plausible enough but not, as it turned out, accurate. By contrast the Georgian House edition, not published until 1947 (the delay was caused by paper rationing, not the censor), is clearly written with hindsight: the end of the European war, the defeat of Japan, the atomic bomb, the difficulties of demobilisation, and the detail concerning Sydney's Martin Place celebrations — obviously this could have been written only after the event.

The editorial difficulty raised is that this then becomes not the uncovering of the authentic text from the grasp of the censor, but of balancing the claims of two different, but equally authentic, texts: the original (1942) from the revised (1947) version. It would seem that the changes in this instance may well have been prompted by the censor's intervention, but became an opportunity for extensive rewriting. Finally, whichever is the most "authentic" voice — and it is difficult to see what objective ground there could be for such a judgement — it is plain that neither is represented by the "corrected" edition, which restores the earlier version of the aftermath and celebrations deleted in the typescript, but retains the Barnard amendment in the first paragraph of "from the East and West" instead of "of the Russians." The upshot is a very inauthentic contradiction: one paragraph asserts an east/west alliance, while the other explicitly denies it (Virago 357).

The typescript is at its most jigsawlike at the point that describes the plague, introduced into the US via the rescued crew of a Japanese destroyer. The incident comprises the earliest part of the section presented to the censor, but is renumbered and rewritten, to appear much later in the Georgian House edition. The censor's objections, as usual, are brief. The corrected edition lists over two pages of deletions at this point, but in fact only one sentence earns a red line: "To her armies in the field the command went out 'Take no prisoners!'" (ms, 135 of "Afternoon"). For the rest, it would seem that the extensive omissions were necessary if the incident was to be moved to a latter stage in the narrative and, by my judgement at any rate, the result is doubly successful. It is probably impossible to reconstruct the original typescript; the "corrected" edition makes a stab at reshuffling the pages, but the result is clotted and awkward, and moves without clear warning from a discussion between Knarf and Ord to Knarf's novel, whereas the universal practice of
Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow is rigorously to separate the two (Virago 319-22).

In the Georgian House edition, by contrast, the removal of the incident from this point makes good narrative sense. Rather than being buried amongst a welter of detail about the global war-time situation, it becomes part of the post-war deterioration, the literal plague that anticipates the ideological one that the last section describes. Placed immediately after the description of the victory celebrations, the necessity of weaving it into the causal chain of the twentieth-century narrative is side-stepped by the simple expedient of having the twenty-fourth century writer light upon it, just one page of the many that he may well have read: "After wars there had always been pestilence. This time it looked as if science had averted it or at least restricted the outbursts of typhus to those districts and peoples who were already so far gone in squalor and malnutrition as to be useless. But the seeds of an even deadlier infection slipped through the cordon sanitaire."

Knarf flicked out a page of the manuscript and began to read.

(Georgian House 366; omitted in Virago)

V

The comparison of the different texts prompts a number of somewhat related considerations. If you recall I began this paper with the thought that the very project that Virago sets out to achieve — to find the true, authentic text freed of the dead hand of history — is one that much recent theory would question at the most fundamental level. On this view, faith in the enduring, authentic text is inevitably undone by the mobility and relativity of all texts and indeed by the mobility and relativity of all signs. No sign is fixed, all meanings unstable. Taken to the extreme — à la Stanley Fish (Doing What Comes Naturally; Is There a Text) — the site of instability followed a steadily regressive path, from text to sentence, sentence to sign, sign to signifier, from whence the graphite or ink itself seems unreliable, its material endurance no more credible than that of any other cog in the signifying machine.

The theoretical objection alluded to at the outset — that any such account seems fatally trapped in a monumental performative fallacy — can be complemented by a more humble one. Whatever else a comparison of textual sources might show, it can only begin to get off the ground if there is a high degree of certainty about the stability of them. It is just a futile exercise to seek variants between texts if the texts themselves dissolve before our eyes. Under those circumstances, "rat-holes" may well become "rationales," breeding textual progeny with insatiable abandon. By contrast, I find myself wanting to say, quite simply, that the Virago edition gets it wrong. In praising the Virago edition Jill Roe writes that "close comparison of texts would be necessary to assess the full effects of censorship. But it is now clear that the effect was devastating and insidious" (242). My contention is that "close comparison" shows
nothing of the kind; while it is true that the “corrected” edition sets out
to restore the uncensored text, and although it makes changes based on
a consultation of the surviving typescript, an analysis of the different
texts makes it quite clear that the changes are more often than not ill-
considered and without unambiguous support from the typescript. The
Virago edition raises the question of authenticity in its most direct form,
but fails comprehensively to deliver on the most “unteoretical” of
grounds, the spade-work of the literary archaeologist or, in short, plain
textual scholarship.4

Satisfying as that conclusion may well be, it is not yet the whole story.
We do not now arrive at the text “as the authors wrote it” but at a number
of intertwining textual possibilities, each of which could boast authenticity.
“Plain textual scholarship” relies on the stability of texts at some
fundamental level, and yet in this case the most obvious candidate as a
marker of authenticity — authorship — remains illusory. Literary theory,
like much of twentieth-century philosophy, has proceeded on the basis
that language is the most fundamental and universal of explanatory
categories, and hence questions concerning authorship and the
authenticity of voice have been merged with the question of textual
(in)stability. The argument pursued here, however, leads to the view
that this is a critical confusion: textual stability does not prove authenticity.
Indeed, in my view, the two concerns — linguistic stability, authorial
presence — are fundamentally unrelated. If the Georgian House edition,
as a text, is the more compelling, it is nonetheless the product of a
confused history and (at least) four collaborators — not Faith Sidney, but
Barnard, Eldershaw, Harris, and the censor — and thus whatever
coherence we may feel inclined to ascribe would seem to function
independently of our discerning the identity of the “real” author.

It is perhaps not entirely a matter of sheer chance that this argument
concerning the material specificity of text as something other than the
guarantor of (and, conversely, as being reliant on) authorial presence
addressed here with respect to the publishing history of the novel is
reproduced within the novel itself. In the story I have told, Virago’s claim
to reveal the authentic voice is discounted, but not on the basis that meaning
is inherently unstable. Rather, I have contended that an adequate
“spade-work” at once relies on semantic stability and yet (in this case) is
quite independent of the identification of an authentic voice. Now, if
there is indeed a similar case constructed within the novel, a convenient
point of comparison might be on this very question of the relation
between “spade-work” and authorship. As it happens, the text brings
the two together quite literally. In the first section of the novel, “Aubade,”
Knarf recalls the impetus that set his novel in train, the archaeological
excavation of fragments of (what we soon realise is) the Sydney war
memorial. He visits the site accompanied by the archaeologist, Ord, who
takes a strictly professional interest in the outcome of this spade-work,
most particularly on the question of authorship:

[Ord] had embarked with great gusto on a controversy as to the
authorship of the Brooding Anzac with another archaeologist,
Lunda — a man, as he said privately, who had sold his honest trade of archaeologist to the arts by becoming also a writer. Ord, with a great display of pedantic learning, maintained that it was by a Dutchman named Hoff, who had been official sculptor or laureate and who had died sometime in the nineteen thirties in the narrow gulf between two great wars. . . . Lunda contended, with a more showy virtuosity, that it was by Raynor, an Englishman, famous for his bas-reliefs, the head of a famous academy. He lived on far into the troubled century, forsook his art for public affairs, became a guerrilla leader in the Blue Mountains, and there came to an unrecorded end. (17)

Knarf — intensely moved by the figure — takes a surprisingly sceptical, if not postmodern, view:

He didn't believe that either of them had sound evidence, this was just a game they played, building such patterns as they could conceive out of the fragments of evidence that they had. History is a creative art, a putty nose. You can make what you like of it. Event, immediately it is past, becomes a changing simulacrum at the mercy of all the minds through which it must seep if it is to live . . . (17)

That scepticism is, though, strictly bounded. He has no faith in the likelihood of, or indeed interest in, truly naming the author, and yet — paradoxically — "he had seen with his own eyes history pegged down at one point. He had trodden in the footsteps of another man's imagination and it did not matter at all that there were four centuries of time between them" (17). Resembling nothing so much as the history of the reading of Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow, Knarf and Ord here operate on the two sides of a disjunction: Ord toils on the project of exact historical reconstruction, a project which can unearth the material text, but struggles to move beyond that evidence to any persuasive identification of authorial source; Knarf on the other hand finds what he is confident is just that source, the univocal imagination of a single, coherent mind, but precisely at the cost of dismissing the spade-work of history. On the one hand historical fact, on the other imaginative apprehension; centrifugal encyclopaedism versus centripetal empathy, a disjunction isomorphic with that between the actual texts of the typescript and first edition, and Virago's dream of the innocent text, speaking with its own voice.

At heart, we might say, Knarf is a romantic, turning from the detail of empirical research to the higher truth of the creative imagination. It is not quite that, though. Knarf on numerous occasions does indeed call himself a romantic, but it is with a qualification that Coleridge or Schiller would have been at a loss to understand:

[The colossus] moved him enormously — because, he warned himself with the residuum of his mind, I am a romantic which is the synonym for an untrustworthy person, one who is emotionally avaricious, as Ord would say. (15)

In part this is no more than an extension of the disjunction. So, if Ord is critical of Lunda for selling "his honest trade of archaeologist to the arts
by becoming also a writer," we would expect him to take the more
categorical position, and find little truck with romanticism in any form.
Our habitual practice in reading keys us to side with Knarf, of course.
This is, after all, a novel, a work of the creative imagination, a text that
operates within an institutional practice which has consistently defined
itself in contradistinction to empiricism. Knarf is a writer, and so we
expect him to reinforce just that practice, to reassert the priority of the
imagination, of the realm of interiority, over that of mere contingent and
impersonal exteriority. We expect him, in short, to behave as Farquharson
and Harris expected their authors to behave: to eschew history, to
dismiss the pursuit of empirical evidence and defeasible truth claims, to
pursue the imaginative life beyond the rocks and stones of the everyday.

To an extent Knarf plays the part of the romantic without compromise.
He sees beyond the literal stone surfaces that Ord and Lund dispute to
a further level, a kind of *ding an sich*, where "his mind made what seemed
to him a direct contact with reality, dead knowledge came to life in him,
a world co-ordinated about this focal point" (15). And yet, as he
recognises, that moment of vision is not one that can be implicitly trusted.
His project — like that of Barnard and Eldershaw — is one of historical
reconstruction. He chooses what he calls "the antique form of the novel"
(44) but he himself is not a novelist, simply a writer. And, I am
contending, as the novel progresses what becomes increasingly at issue
within the realm of narrative is strikingly analogous to the issues raised
by the reconstruction of the text of the novel, where one tries to balance
(on the one hand) the claims of that "antique form," the novel whose
*modus operandi* is to tread "in the footsteps of another man’s imagination,"
to be the work of an author, with (on the other) the claims of the material
texts of history. Virago plumps for the former; by contrast, the examination
of the sources recovers the latter, but precisely at the cost of giving up the
dream of finding an innocent, single voice within the "mutilated body."

We can take this further by observing that the standard approach to
*Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow* has proved to be curiously
contradictory. The chief critical concern that prompted the Virago
edition was to recover the full, uncensored text; and yet it has been
accompanied by a reading practice that imposed its own systematic
censorship whereby *Little World Left Behind* was read, but not the larger
novel. All but absent is any reference to the narrative that frames *Little
World Left Behind*, the story of Knarf, the story of the vote, and (of
particular interest here) the story of Knarf telling his story to Ord. We
need to take more note of Ord’s reminder that “the way we say things is
so much more significant than what we say. The forms betray us” (80).

The idea of a frame narrative has been with us for a long time, of
course, sometimes as a device for linking a series of narratives, often no
more than a pretext for telling a story in the first place. In this case the
motivation seems to have been to allow Barnard Eldershaw to knit
together events that were — from the vantage of their (real) time — of the
recent past with an imagined post-war outcome. It allows the revolution
and destruction of the city to be portrayed in the same ontological
register as the account of the Depression and the early years of the war, a strategy so successful it is not possible to identify that point where the writing moves beyond its own present. The frame narrative, however, takes on a life of its own; operating in a mode of (fictional) metafiction, Knarf and Ord interrupt the reading to comment on it; on its form, its style, even its failures.

Often, the interruptions point to the fact that the novel is too big, too inclusive, to be read in its entirety. "Knarf picked up a sheet as if at random and began to read." (91). Or again, "I can't read you all of this. The best I can do is to pick out the voices here and there. . . . Here's a bit about the Domain, the Dom, on a Sunday" (141). Or, after another discussion, "Knarf turned many pages quickly. 'I can't read you all of this,' he said. . . . There's a piece here. Men talking in the dark. It doesn't matter who they are" (70-71). There is a kind of narrative double dealing here, of course, and Barnard Eldershaw do not scruple to hint—tongue in cheek—at passages of fine writing that Knarf is obliged to pass over. "Olaf died of pneumonia. Pity I can't read it now. I did it rather well, I think" (170). Or, speaking of the renegade war pilot Archie Castles' Quixotic flight from Britain to Australia:

Knarf broke off and lifting his eyes smiled at Ord, that quick, gay, self-comprehending smile, from which the mask of his middle age seemed to slip away. "The story of that journey is a tour de force. I have written it with great elan. It is almost a book in itself. I won't read it to you. It depresses me. A tour de force is always wrong." (Georgian House 345, Virago 341)

Beyond the humour there is a kind of realism at work in these omissions. Knarf and Ord have but one day, and clearly there is a limit to how much could have been read. Further to that, though, the formal incompleteness adds up to a style in which the ordinary, causal continuity of the integral self is regarded as less than indispensable, and in which history itself is too expansive to be written.

The two concerns—questioning psychological continuity and recognising the way history exceeds narrative space—are inextricably connected precisely because the norm of narrative is to cohere around an autonomous domestic site that, in fact, can be at most a merest fragment, a symptom of a larger pattern. Moreover, as Ord sees, "the straw that shows how the tide flows has no influence on the tide" (82). The imagination, or that mode of writing we—post-romantics yet—have come to understand as the "literary," thrives on the Life, the pattern of events brought to order by a controlling, intentional agent. Reading practice seeks relentlessly a sense of agency. Within this practice to interpret a text, as indeed to read an event, is to see it as something that we might have produced, to be able to construe it as falling within the organised itinerary of a life, as having an author (Alexander Nehamas has persuasively made this case in "Writer, Text, Work, Author," 1987). The scandal of this text—as its first editor was quick to see—was that it insists on an alternative reading practice, which seeks global explanations for global events. As Knarf puts it, moving from the
discursive order of "the soft tissues of life": Beyond this again I see an enormous sweep of event, not mechanic, not planned, but the logical outcome of the vast aggregate of human planning. Beyond its authors' control, probably beyond their apprehension. (Georgian House 272, Virago 270)

Author and agency: reading the text of Harry Munster's life, reading Knarf's novel, reading Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow "as the authors wrote it," are practices that both presuppose and yet erode the comfort of such concepts. At odds with the convention of coherent character—the trail of event and emotion that conceals around and takes meaning from the one enduring consciousness—interruptions transform Knorf's narrative into an episodic structure where events tend to be recounted in relation or as reactions to some external social stimulus (the first black-out, the news of war, the retreat from Sydney) rather than as the outcome of the characters' past selves. At times the results can be a little unsettling. There seems little to prepare the reader, for example, for Sid Warren's transformation from taxi-driver to leader of the revolution, or Ruth Munster's from not much at all to Warren's lover, or the anarchist-pacifist professor to a defender of a twentieth-century manuscript. It is a process of which, though, the text has Knarf fully aware: "For the sake of clarity, and to get the desired effect economically, I use and reuse the same characters instead of creating new ones" (205). In a sense Knarf is remaining true to the novelist's principle that insists on the explanatory priority of the individual life—but it is a life reduced to a name, that may be used and re-used for convenience to give the effect of cogency, but without a determining focus of agency other than that of the history that produces it. To tell the story of the individual life requires a boundary, an edge between that to which the life is author, and the inchoate mass that lies beyond it. For Knarf, though, no "life" in these terms exists: "Any story, if you let it spread, covers the whole world... I can't even tell the story of Harry and Ben without having it spread over the world. It took the world to make their story. There's no logical place to draw the line" (Georgian House 322, Virago 316).

Narratives—no matter how inclusive—must draw lines, however, and the position Knarf finds himself in is that in constructing his history, and in particular in trying to understand that history through the rhetoric of agency, his writing (like his reading) becomes increasingly arbitrary, motivated not by the inner necessity of the characters but by random choice. "It's as if I pushed my oar into the mesh of a submerged net and dragged it to the surface" (203-04). The oar could have gone anywhere, any part of the net could have been brought to the surface. Knarf continues: "Life's an endless reticulation. I'm not aiming at a pattern. A pattern is jejune and naive." To which Ord objects: "How do you know the reader is going to play your game? He'll probably run round in circles looking for the plot and feel disgruntled because he doesn't find it." Earlier in the day he was a little more charitable: "Simultaneous assault. Co-operation of the reader, the broken circuit, raw material of pattern, commentary by juxtaposition" (90). Co-operation is necessary because
the raw material needs work to produce narrative sense. "Juxtaposition" alone can never direct "commentary"; after all, as Donald Davidson remarked, any two things are alike in any number of ways (257). Rather, juxtaposition can prompt, can provide the raw material on which the reader works. The text is a "broken circuit" until a reader, any reader, closes it, but that must mean the text can be closed in any number of ways, too. To put that a little differently: the text both insists on the priority of character and the protocols of novelistic realism, and yet — most notably in the meta-narrative interludes — recognises the illusory nature of those protocols, as being the product of a narrative appetite for bounded coherence that is continually undermined by an interest in global explanation. The novel at once relies on a sense of pre-formed agency, readily accessible to view, and recognises that to construe agency is, in some way, always to invent it. In a like way, the text both claims its own autonomy as a work produced and controlled through the agency of the authors' imagination, and yet recognises that it is a "broken circuit," that it cannot mean without the "co-operation of the reader." It operates simultaneously within realism's steady faith in the convention of a priori linearity, and yet anticipates Elizabeth Ernarth's characterisation of the postmodern text as one that makes "the act of reading and interpretation the subject of the book" (22). We can, like Virago (and like Barnard in 1970), invent the innocent, uncensored text, the text of the "authentic, impassioned voice," but we cannot find it.

In this light the procedure that works via interruption and omission, the fact that Knarf doesn't read all of Little World Left Behind, is symptomatic of a necessary incompleteness, of a necessary shortfall in the agency of authorship. Indeed, through the course of "Afternoon" it is often the text's first reader, Ord, and not Knarf, who controls the movement through the text:

"What about the story?" Ord asked. "It seems to have bogged down in world history. Did it ever get out again?"

"The story goes on, but as the book rises to its crisis it shifts into the major theme of the whole community. It is people in a context and the context grows more and more important. They are only little fishes in a maelstrom."

"I'm fond of fish," said Ord, obstinately, determined to get Knarf off his high horse. "What happened to that poor fish, Ally?"

(Georgian House 347, Virago 342)

It is an exchange that typifies the unresolved problematic that fuels the text. To account for history in terms of an individual life is the staple of realism, but it is a process that leaves untouched the type of explanation which might make sense of global phenomena. On the other hand the kind of generalising economic and political narrative that seems powerful enough to engage the social works on a plane where no one life is indispensable. To work beyond the discourse of the life, though, is to work freed of the discourse of ethics, but it is precisely from within it that we characteristically draw a sense of justification, of why there is a pressing need for explanation at all. As Ord puts it, thinking of the
individual in relation to the wider movements of history, "he does not matter, but" — and this is the catch — "if he does not matter, nothing matters" (82). Moreover, freed of the organising heuristic of an imagined life, there is little that might work as a cogent boundary to explanation. Evidence simply accumulates exponentially; more and more raw material, but less and less sense of a non-arbitrary path through which we might negotiate it, or from which a decisive explanatory pattern might be blocked out. Little wonder Ord complains that the story becomes "bogged down in history." It is a mode of explanation at once compelling and yet unsatisfying:

Knarf seemed to have lost interest again. He was turning the pages of his manuscript. The general having become untenable, he was in flight to the particular.

(Georgian House 273, Virago 271)

The final twist is that this return journey is not quite a return at all. The "particular" Knarf finds is not that of the life uncovered, but of the vacancy of a proper name, a broken circuit, incomplete without the imposition of agency that is conceived independently of the name itself. For all that the text champions the cause of the imagination, it is always coloured by a sense of failure. The constructive work that moves beyond the chaos of history is premised on the possibility of the imaginative apprehension of a controlling mind, but that transformation of the raw material into coherent sense does not reflect the discovery of agency, merely its invention. The episode of the twenty-fourth century community vote offers a pointed example: the vote is measured by a machine that promises an empiricist analogue of imaginative apprehension by accessing the thoughts of the assembled crowd. The result, though, is inconclusive: most have no view, and the apparatus is unable to reach any sense of the thinking that underlies this. In short, there is no mechanical procedure for seeking within the accumulation of material evidence the authentic, uncensored agent — and yet ranging over the material conglomerate seems to inevitably produce an appetite that demands access to just that agency. Literature (to borrow Ord's phrase, 80) is "a hungry mouth," a form of desire that must perforce produce what it would ingest, and as such falls precisely on the problematic terrain on which Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow is located. It insists on the readability of history, but recognises that its own narrative mode is in a crucial way antithetical to that project. Equally, that narrative mode is understood to be something other than a vindication of the romanticist belief in the a priori, autotelic self: faith in history ensures that the "hungry mouth" that would identify the author can but work on faith, too.

University of Western Australia

Ian Saunders
Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow

—. Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1980.


See, for example, Tania Modleski, *Feminism Without Women*; Sabina Lovibond, "Feminism and Pragmatism"; Terry Eagleton, "Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism"; Christopher Norris, *What's Wrong with Postmodernism*; Benita Parry, "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse"; Anne Maxwell, "The Debate on Current Theories of Colonial Discourse."

See Ian Saunders, "The Most Difficult Love: Expectation and Gender in *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow.*"

In 1970, Barnard claimed: "I knew nothing of the censoring until the eve of publication. We were then faced with an alternative, to accept the book in its altered form or forego publication altogether" ("How *Tomorrow and Tomorrow* Came to Be Written"). The typescript makes it clear that this was not in fact the case, as I go on to show. In the 1970 piece she also asserts that the ms was submitted to the censor after the war, and that the third "tomorrow" was dropped because there wasn't enough space on the spine. Memory seems unreliable here: in fact the book was inspected in 1944, and the spine could happily accommodate, if not quite "the last syllable of recorded time," more than a few additional "tomorrows."

In addition, the Virago edition suffers from transcription errors. The two most damaging occur at the moment of Harry's death (the reference to his son's death is omitted: see Georgian House 330, Virago 327), and at Ben's survey of the burning city (the reference to the night he met his father at the war memorial is omitted: see Georgian House 423, Virago 415).

**Works Cited**


