exact standard, had trouble viewing them with equanimity. As an explanatory device for much of Gellibrand’s life the figure of the paladin is inadequate. It is lop-sided for a start; everything in this book is judged from Gellibrand’s perspective. As the possessor of this ideal, Gellibrand is immune from criticism except where his own reluctance to push himself forward hindered promotion opportunities. This self-abnegation does attract his biographer’s ire.

The inadequacy of the paladin image is best shown in Gellibrand’s public service career after the First World War. He was successively Public Service Commissioner in Tasmania, Police Commissioner in Victoria between 1920 and 1922, and Nationalist Member of Parliament for Denison from 1925 to 1928. It is fair to say that honest and well-intentioned as he was, Gellibrand was only a moderate success in the short periods he occupied any of these positions. He had a history of not working happily in bureaucracies. It is insufficient to say as Sadler says of Gellibrand’s time in the Victorian Police Force, that ‘he was conspired against and blocked at every turn by lesser, ignoble men who sought to misuse him and disrupt his life for their own purposes.’ This is to ignore Gellibrand’s own inability to compromise at the right moment, to concede where necessary or alternatively to push on rather than resign. Crucial lapses in health, wartime had taken its physical and emotional toll, played their part in upsetting Gellibrand’s plans, but so did some personal failings.

Gellibrand died in 1945. His last engagement with public life had been to lobby, unsuccessfully for the most part, for various changes to Australian defence policy, especially the need to greatly expand the militia. His health, and perhaps a sense that his time was past, reduced his effectiveness once again. Yet if his achievement was not all that his biographer thinks that he was capable of, it was still considerable, especially during the First World War. It is those years which will most interest readers of this life.

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In her preface, the author claims to have written a biography of Frank Hardy. That she has not done so, we are indeed fortunate; for the biographical aspect is subsidiary to the more important tale she tells. This book is fundamentally a social history of *Power Without Glory*. She reconstructs and analyses the changing constellation of people,
forces and interests involved in the production and contestation of a novel which was to become a fascinating and multifaceted part of modern Australian history. Hardy is (merely) the most significant individual in this saga.

In chapter three Armstrong shows that the idea for the novel was not the brainchild of an individual but of members of the Victorian executive of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). These almost certainly included Ted Hill and Ralph Gibson. The party offered Hardy the job of writing the book and he accepted. It was necessary to have an individual author to fend off the inevitable charges of ‘communist conspiracy’. As in much of this tale, certainty is hard to come by and Armstrong demonstrates considerable restraint in the claims she makes about the genesis and writing of the novel.

Chapters four to six cover how the book was researched and written, typesetting, printing, binding and distribution. The historical background to all this is critical. Communism became a significant force in Australian politics and trade unions from the 1930s and into the war years. During this period religious sectarianism and political conflict were still thickly interwoven. Archbishop Mannix and Bob Santamaria led the Catholic opposition to growing Communist influence with the formation of the Movement. An offshoot of the Movement was Industrial Groups whose main role was to counteract Communist influence in the unions. The CPA believed, probably wrongly, that John Wren was a supporter of the Movement. The attack on Wren, his associates and family in the novel; was conceived as a way of undermining the Movement and Industrial Groups and exposing the corruption and greed that was perceived to be inherent in capitalism. While conservative Catholics attacked Communism in the unions, the Menzies government put up the Communist Party Dissolution Bill in April 1950 and this became law six months later. All of this meant that deeply felt personal and political passions pervaded the atmosphere in which the book was written and published.

Just as Hardy used the story of Ellen Wren’s adultery to attack her husband, John Wren used his wife to bring criminal libel charges against Hardy. Armstrong establishes that there were no reasonable foundations on which Hardy could base the incident of Mrs. West’s (Wren’s) adultery. But there were so many other allegations that rang true that it soon became impossible to distinguish fact from fiction. In an extraordinary interview in 1992, one of Hardy’s barristers, John Starke, revealed that they used this confusion to throw as much mud as possible in the knowledge that at least some would stick (pp. 90-91).

In Geoff Easdown’s review Armstrong is praised for exposing the sordid truths about Hardy as a person (Herald Sun, 15 November 2000, pp. 59-60). We all have feet of clay and Hardy’s were probably bigger and uglier than most. But the sharp lines of Easdown’s moral judgement smother the sensitive complexity of the text.
Hardy did make anti-Semitic comments and jokes but he also had close Jewish friends. They were upset by the jokes, but did not doubt the sincerity of his friendship. Countering the comments of Easdown, Armstrong shows that Hardy’s achievements were just as significant as his shortcomings. His support of the Gurindji, involvement in the anti-Vietnam War protests and partnership with Fred Hollows in fighting eye disease amongst the poor are just three of many progressive causes in which Hardy’s contribution was most commendable.

There is the occasional blooper: ‘One needed to be wary of reading as “fact” certain aspects of Hardy’s autobiographical fiction’ (xvii). Indeed! The sources of some very interesting quotations on page thirty are not supplied. Finally, it is understandable that the author relied upon newspaper reports of the proceedings in the committal hearing, but the Supreme Court is a court of record and this account should have been used in the discussion of the trial itself.

Armstrong’s book is a detailed, balanced, sensitive and fluently written reflection on the power of an idea. Over time this idea became a novel, a court case and major political controversy, a television series, and ultimately a part of Australia’s social, political, legal and literary heritage. The author has extended the boundaries of our knowledge of Hardy and his novel whilst acknowledging that these can never be broken completely: ‘It is unlikely that any one person, including the author himself, was aware of every link in the chain of events that brought the novel into being’ (p. 72). In its conception and execution, this novel was a massive collaborative undertaking which was all the more impressive given the prevailing personal and political tensions. The qualities of this book are as great as the debates and arguments it will ignite.

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The story of Australian soldiers in the Great War has always enjoyed popular appeal. Two of the key texts underpinning this popularity, C. E. W. Bean’s multi-volume Official History and Bill Gammage’s The Broken Years, continue to mould popular attitudes to this subject. Any wide-ranging study of private records of Australians in this war, then, offers a good opportunity to re-assess both Bean and Gammage’s