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Peter Carey and the 'New/Old (clergy) Man'.

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The male characters in Peter Carey's writings have been characterised as 'new male' types. These males are supposed to reflect the contemporary themes of growing equality between males and females and a growing male awareness about sensitive issues and concerns. These 'new males' however are not the only characters depicted in Carey's writings - in many ways the characters are quite stereotyped and present a curious mixture of the 'old male' in a new dress. This is especially true for some of the very interesting 'old' clergymen types in *Oscar and Lucinda*[1].

It is the purpose of this article to examine the clergy characters in two of Carey's novels and to comment on the stereotyping of clergy in these novels and in Australian society, particularly noting any perceived link to the stereotype of the 'old male' and the 'new male' character, in relation to the stereotype of the male Australian character.

The two Carey books are *Bliss* and *Oscar and Lucinda*. *Bliss* only contains a peripheral character, while *Oscar and Lucinda* contains the major title character of Oscar and several minor characters.

a) Clergy Stereotypes

The English Anglican clergyman in Australia

Most Australian based denominations in the nineteenth century were Australian in name only. Like the country itself, the denominations retained and fostered links with the home countries. To ensure continuity with a certain type of Presbyterian minister, John Dunmore Lang selected candidates from Scotland. Similarly, the Church of England (in Australia, as it was officially known in Australia until 1981) chose men from England to supply its growing parishes. Bishop Frederic Barker was the Anglican Bishop during the actual period referred to in *Oscar and Lucinda*. Barker provided the evangelical foundation for the Diocese of Sydney. It is important to note that Oscar came from the evangelical tradition in England.

It has also been noted that even though the Anglicans in Sydney had an Anglican training college, (Moore Theological College established in 1856) they 'could not provide even a majority of the clerical force required for the effective running of the Diocese'. Consequently, Barker 'recruited from similar institutions in England'[2]. 'In England, there was a general over-supply of clergy. Every year in the 1870s, more than 700 deacons were made, the great majority of them Oxford or Cambridge graduates'[3]. Oscar could have been one of these graduates, he had attended Oriel College.

Of course, not all the graduates were interested in going to what was perceived as a dead-end location like New South Wales, even if they could not get an appointment in England. For many of Oscar's real-life peers, the attraction of New South Wales was the prospect of evangelical service. This was so for the first resident clergyman in Australia, Richard

Johnson, an evangelical burdened by the weight of the souls of a whole nation.

The challenge in Australia was to promote the gospel to the convicts, the free people and perhaps the native inhabitants. Oscar summed up all these parts in one phrase. His desire was 'to bring the word of Christ to New South Wales' (p.182).

Oscar's ideal however, received a prophetic blow while he was on his way to New South Wales. One of his fellow passengers, Mr Borrodaile (who it seemed could talk on any topic, even if he knew nothing about it!) tells Oscar that 'clergy were needed in New South Wales, that there were whole areas, dubbed "parishes", on the government maps, where the people grew up godless, the children never saw a school, and the blasphemies and curses were shocking even to a man of world like himself' (p.235). He also warned Oscar away from any service to the blacks. This would waste his time because they were people with a 'total absence of religious belief' (p.235). On arrival in Sydney, Oscar finds that mission work is definitely not a possibility, the Bishop has other plans. He sends him to Randwick to sort out the people who have strayed too far from his conception of the Anglican faith.

As well as the high idealists, there were of course, those clergy who had settled into New South Wales and established more or less a continued clerical environment similar to that of England. Lucinda's friend, The Reverend Dennis Hasset, the 'handsome vicar' of All Saints', Woollahra is an example of this type. The Reverend Mr Hasset was not interested in the saving of souls and seemed to have little interest in the dire straits in which the convicts were portrayed.

For Oscar, the corruption and falleness of New South Wales were the essence of his attraction. He did not want just an ordinary clerical life, to him it was essential that evangelical faith meant risk-taking. To go to New South Wales meant gambling with life. Faith in God is a wager, 'we must stake everything on the unprovable fact of His existence' (p.261). He had exhausted any opportunities in England, there was nothing of any significance or importance left, only a new venture provided the possibility of tackling the highest stakes.

The Australian clergyman

Oscar and Lucinda does not contain any Australian-born clergy, primarily because of the period in which it is set. In contrast, *Bliss* contains the incidental but fascinating character of the Reverend Des.

On first meeting Des in this novel, we are immediately struck by his informality. He attempts to make a joke and introduces himself to Harry Joy as Des. There is no room for titles in the land of equals. Des is described as having 'rough hands' and a rugged looking face. He lived by the code of 4Ps - 'Prying, Preaching, Praying, and Pissing-off-when you're-not-wanted' (p.43).

Des is not a man of ideas and intellect (though he has studied religion). He is more at home talking 'to men in sales yards and paddocks, in pubs or at the football' (p.43). Harry provides him with too much of challenge. Des is portrayed as a minister unable to talk about intimate things like death and Hell. This is depicted as ironic, especially to Harry, who expects a minister to be seriously interested in Hell at least.

The character of Des is first that of an Australian male and secondly a clergyman. He is too much the 'ocker' to fit the stereotype of a real clergyman. There is no pretension or overt spirituality. He at-

tracts 'slanginess'. Like the stereotype of the Australian male, he has a 'proper disregard for sartorial elegance' (p.43) Des has come from the bush, where men have basically good souls which do not need any saving. One is reminded of Henry Lawson's poem of *The Christ of the Never.*

Des is essentially a good bloke who enjoys mixing with other good blokes and talking about the football. This stereotype is quite removed from the reality of most contemporary Australian clergymen. According to a recent survey of clergy in Australia most clergy do not have any significant interaction with the society outside their church membership[4]. Clergy are not at the pubs and football fields, and if they are at a worldly function, it is usually for the purposes of evangelism - to take people out of the secular society into that of the church. Des is the opposite, he is more at home in the secular society and less so in the world of overt spirituality.

The Liberal

The Reverend Dennis Hasset provides an excellent example of the stereotype of the nineteenth century liberal clergyman. He does not believe in the miracles of the Old Testament (a blanket statement indeed!), has different views on the virgin birth, rejects the doctrine of verbal inspiration and accepts evolution (p.276).

Though, Mr Hasset is also a believer in the necessity of a church building for matters of faith, this would not place him with those who can be termed traditionalists - people who would normally hold to matters of orthodox faith, but who also hold as a matter of faith, an acceptance of the authority, historical faith and practice of the institutional church, especially represented by the faithful gathered in consecrated buildings, rather than a commonly held evangelical assumption that the church is a gathering of Christian people (the invisible gathering), who have no real need for a church building.

The liberal category would also include the Reverend Des, though Des hardly has any traditionalist leanings. He is a very contemporary example of the liberal stereotype. He is the liberal tolerant Aussie, who does not want to offend anyone. He believes in the God of Mateship, the God of G'day and Doing Good to Your Neighbour. He cannot cope with Harry's question about Hell and seems only able to tell Harry that 'This is the twentieth century, not the Middle Ages' (p.45). He does not have any conception of the doctrine of atonement. The sacrifice of Jesus is made real for him and other Australians by reference to more contemporary events like Simpson and his Donkey. Des is (perhaps unfairly) relegated in Harry's mind to the category of new age believer - people who really have seen flying saucers. He cannot tell Harry what to believe, because he does not know what he believes himself (pp.45-47).

The Conservative Evangelical

Oscar can be included in this category, however, though Carey draws Oscar as a conservative clergyman, he also provides us with some startling inconsistencies. Some examples are Oscar's attitude to gambling and the scene on board the ship concerning Lucinda's confession. Wardley-Fish (Oscar's gambling partner) first noted that Oscar was 'of a very literal and Evangelical persuasion' (p.106). He concluded that Oscar would have been opposed to gambling since 'Evangelicals were always most upset by gambling' (p.106). Oscar was termed a literalist because unlike the Reverend Dennis Hasset, he did believe in the Old Testament mir-

acles and also those of the New Testament.

One direct contrast to the conservative evangelical character of Oscar is the Reverend Mr Nelson, the minister at Gulgong who is criticised because of his Anglican vestments - they are 'ostentatious' (p.92). This view betrays a common stereotype of evangelicals. A belief that evangelicals are opposed to clerical garments because they believe them to be 'popish', worldly, useless, and a barrier to the presentation of the gospel to the ordinary informal Australian.

The other area usually associated with conservative evangelicals is that of pronouncement on matters of sexuality (unfortunately this is especially so today because of the active involvement of certain prominent members of fundamentalist and evangelical circles in the regular breach of their pronouncements!).

In *Oscar and Lucinda*, the Reverend Mr Dight highlights the moral stance of the clergy by preaching against the people who have been depicted as fornicators (Oscar and Lucinda) for daring to attend church on Christmas day 'this holiest of days' (p.406).

The Hypocrite

Here Oscar makes another entrance, though surely some of his inconsistencies can be explained as the result of a confusing and deprived background. Oscar was brought up in an environment of a fundamentalist Christian sect. Later he became the holder of an evangelical faith, yet he gambled, murdered another man (who he must believe is created in the image of God like himself) and near the end of the novel engaged in a 'one night stand'.

Gambling has usually been condemned by evangelicals. Recent moves toward establishing casinos in Victoria and New South Wales have witnessed a concerted resistance by evangelical groups. Though there has been Catholic opposition to casinos as well, this has been on a different level. Catholics have had to argue that there is substantial difference between a 'little flutter' at the local club or racetrack, and a large casino. Evangelicals however have been able to lump all gambling in the same basket.

Oscar's gambling is related to his literalistic faith. Rather than being 'upset', Oscar had no guilt at all. He knew that God would give him money at the races and thereby ease the dreadful burden that the Strattons had placed upon themselves. Now they would be released. God would do this just as he had told Moses to divide the land between the tribes of Israel: 'According to the lot shall the possession thereof be divided between the many and the few'(p.117). God would help to pay for Oscar's training and the Strattons (the English clergyman and his wife who had guided Oscar to his calling) would be relieved. Later, Oscar argued that gambling was the way God provided for him 'to accumulate money in order to dare the formless terrors of the ocean, to bring the word of Christ to New South Wales' (p.182).

In many ways, Oscar's attitude to gambling has more in common with the Catholic tradition, than with evangelical Protestantism. Patrick O'Farrell records an incident in 1923 where 'Bishop Phelan of Sale declared it (gambling) to be 'approved by God, Who ordered Moses to distribute the promised land to the twelve tribes by means of a lottery...'[5].

In *Two Flies Up A Wall*, the historian Ken Inglis is quoted recounting a joke he heard in 1959:

During a civic funeral at St Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney, Cardinal Gilroy says to the Anglican Archbishop, Dr Mowll (an evangeli-

cal): "You really should make better parking arrangements for these shows. The police have just ordered my car to be towed away." Mowll to Gilroy: "Hm. Last time I was over at **your** *cathedral, I came out to find my car had gone.* **Your** *lot had raffled it."*[6]

Certainly, Oscar's favourite form of gambling, betting at the race track has greater connections with Catholicism than with evangelicalism. John Dunmore Lang 'thought that the three never-failing accompaniments of advancing civilisation were a racecourse, a public house and a gaol. The first two, he considered, led inevitably and inexorably to the third' [7]. Though you may find evangelical 'sporting chaplains', it is hard to conceive of an evangelical actually blessing the horse racing fraternity.

The Impractical Clergyman (or practically useless!)

Oscar succeeds here as well, though most of the clergy portrayed in Carey novels are not depicted as practical people. Lucinda comments about Oscar 'He was not manually dextrous, that much was obvious ... He was ungainly, made bony angles, would hurt himself badly should he have ever needed to work in a glassworks'(p.353). Later mention is made of his 'thin milk-white arms' (p.359). Oscar was made for books and ideas.

The Reverend Dennis also comes in for Lucinda's criticism. It is with him in mind that it is commented 'She did not think of clergymen as practical people'. They had a certain 'uselessness' about them (p.143).

b) The Male and Patriarchy in Australia

In the Western tradition, patriarchy is usually seen to come from the time of the patriarchal fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (B.C. 1900 - 1600). The head of the family was the man. He led the worship, rituals and directed and dominated the lives of everyone, especially the women [8].

Reflections about the role and nature of masculinity and patriarchy in Australia have provided a constant stream of writing and debate. For most of this century the representation of the Australian male has been linked with the idea of mateship. Mateship and the bush myth have been key elements in some attempts to forge a national Australian consciousness. Russel Ward has been one of the key interpreter of these themes, even though he has now attempted to distance himself from the actual truth of their presentation [9].

Not withstanding the debate about the extent to which Ward and others really believe in the legend, the essence of Ward's book, *The Australian Legend*, is that Australia is a man's country. It is a place of legendary character. Men who give up their lives for their mates (like Simpson), who defend their right to a place in the bush and it seems preferred the company of other men to any women (though they would of course be able to relate to women if necessary). Men who like to have a drink, a flutter on the horses and a to 'have a go' at pretension. One commentator on religion in Australian society has noted that this typified Australian male 'despised the wowsers who wanted to take away these pleasures, and the clergy who seemed, by and large, less than manly' [10].

More contemporary writers than Ward have noted the dominance of the male in Australian society. Australian society has a reputation for being patriarchal. Ronald Conway notes however, that Australia (White Australia) 'began mainly as a society of alienated males' [11].

Conway has elaborated on the nature of Australian masculinity, particularly reflecting on the physicality of the Australian male and the impact of competitive sport (pp.24, 61)[12]. Conway is mainly interested in the state of the male today, but illustrates his works with reference to the stereotypes of previous years. He notes the impact of the bush legend in Australia, but prefers to draw a separate conclusion.

'The gut-forms of mateship once celebrated by Henry Lawson and C J Dennis have been replaced by a contemporary would-be virtuous distancing from direct contact by ideology spouted on behalf of this or that allegedly wronged social group ... Worst of all, even the clergyman may be turned into a humanist tout, invoking obscure barely relevant Old Testament tags on behalf of collectivist causes, meanwhile individual souls remain sealed books and group agitation has replaced the search for eternal light' [13].

In his writing, Conway provides an excellent example of the stereotyped interpretation of the male in Australian society. His male is lacking in intellectual, emotional and spiritual dimensions [14].

What are the similarities and differences in Australia between clergy stereotypes and 'old male' and 'new male' stereotypes?

The 'old male'.

For the 'old male', it seems that the differences are highlighted with respect to the clergy. Clergy were not depicted as physical workers, toilers of the bush. Compare the description of Harry in *My Brilliant Career*:

... he was a distinguished-looking man, and particularly so among these hard-worked farmer-selectors, on whose careworn features the cruel effects of the drought were leaving additional worry ... air of physical lordliness ... of the easy sunburnt squatter type of sweldom ... a man who is a man, utterly free from the least suspicion of effeminacy, and is capable of earning his bread by the sweat of his brow - with an arm ready and willing to save in an accident.[15].

- with the description of Oscar by Lucinda - 'He was not manually dextrous, that much was obvious' (p.353). Oscar was not a physical worker. The clergy were intellectual and hopefully spiritual. They were at odds with the physical Australian, who may have had a spiritual dimension, but did not present it in the established institutional manner.

One of the continuing points of debate is the nature of the relationship of women and men. Even though Oscar was not a manly man, he was still a man and thus was accepted in some of the company where even a manly woman found herself unwelcome. 'Fellowship' or interaction in the environment of the glassworks was denied to Lucinda as a woman, but opened to Oscar as the man in the house. The society of nineteenth century Australia contained many areas in which only men entered.

One critical link with the 'old male' is gambling. When distinctions are made concerning differences between the clergy and 'ordinary people' one difference usually noted is the attitude of clergy toward gambling. As I have already noted, in general, Protestant clergy are placed in the 'wowser' category - people opposed to even the idea of a 'friendly flutter'. Though the term wowser is used in *Oscar and Lucinda* (actually whether this word would have been in common us-

age during the period indicated in the novel is another question) in the context of gambling, generally it fosters conception of a rather different picture to the stereotype of the clerical anti-gambling figure. Oscar in fact becomes a gambler of great distinction and passion. He fits the stereotype of the 'average Australian' who would gamble on anything that moves. The existence and extent of gambling in Australian society is critical to Oscar's easy transfer from England where he had established his habit (but where it had been mainly conducted in the 'gentlemanly' arena of horse racing). Though Oscar thought that he was free of the habit, the new unrestrained environment of 'sinful' Sydney soon enabled him to embark again and also in new ways.

The depth of gambling in Australian society has been encapsulated in the social history/commentary *Two Flies Up A Wall - The Australian Passion for Gambling* by Peter Charlton. As I have already noted, Charlton also comments on the (usual) substantial opposition from Christian elements to gambling initiatives [16].

When defined as a clergyman, Oscar is clearly unwelcome. At the Chinatown gambling haunt, his 'exposure' as a clergyman by Lucinda is enough to end the game because of the fear of a Royal Commission. (p.301) However previously his 'disguise' enabled him to join in. In Ross Terrill's reflections on *The Australians*, he writes about his experience at the Melbourne Cup. 'As we pick our way through the champagne bottles and beercans, I recall Billy Graham's remark "Melbourne is one of the most moral cities in the world." Here at the Melbourne Cup the 'two great cross-class religions of Australia, horse-racing and beer, ... conjoin' [17]. Oscar really is an exception. You would find few evangelical clergyman worshipping at the racetrack or hotel.

Sexuality is also a strong feature of the depiction of clergy. It has already been noted that the sexual history of white Australia had an impact on the development of early attitudes. Clergy were in a special position with regard to sexuality. In the nineteenth century, clergy were stereotyped as the safe men; you could board your daughter with a clergyman without fear. The asexual clergy figures in *The Getting of Wisdom* illustrate this point. Either they married and deemed to be beyond lustful stages or unmarried and of course celibate (usually in the Roman Catholic tradition).

The 'new male'.

The 'new male' is closer to the stereotypes of the clergyman than the 'old male'. The main clergy characters in *Oscar and Lucinda* are depicted as having better relationships with women than with men. Reverend Dennis Hasset notes that 'It had not taken him long to discover that the women were by far the most interesting of the two sexes in the colony' (p.140). Hasset is exiled to a far flung corner because of the potential scandal he has created through his relationship with Lucinda and because of his unorthodox beliefs. The church is depicted as being unable to deal with diversity in sexual roles and relationships.

The 'new male' must be able to relate to women in an intimate way, without patronising. Oscar does not have any pretensions about his manliness. He is vulnerable - sexually, intellectually and spiritually. Because he is vulnerable he is removed from the church (essentially he is castrated by the church for his gambling). He can no longer be the protector of patriarchy.

Oscar is quite at home doing 'women's work' (house cleaning), more so than with any type of work associated with men in this period. He is described as a 'passionate man, an enthusiastic man, who would plunge into the jungle of ideas (pp. 359-60).

This representation is quite a contrast to the stereotype presented by Ronald Conway.

Both these clergymen (Oscar and Dennis) develop different attitudes about women because they relate to them in circumstances which are alien to most men. They also react against the treatment they receive from the institutional church. Clergymen like Oscar are normally the dominant representatives for the church and usually they are near the top of patriarchal societies like Australia. Dominant figures rarely suffer negative discrimination, so the actions of the church against Oscar help males to understand the discriminatory practices which have usually been directed toward women.

Many contemporary clergyman are like Oscar in their experience of women, but the main difference is that they are still very much part of the institutional church. They have links with the 'old man' and with the 'new man'. Some are developing more links in common with the 'old men', while others are moving further into new relationships, directions which may take them out of the institutional church, just like Oscar. In contemporary Australia, sex boundaries have been increasingly broken down and some denominations ordain women, but if a man still wants to have a distinctive occupation then there is no better place than most of the institutional churches[18].

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