# Breaking the Golden Rule: The Public Discussion of Religion—An Australian Case Study

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## Introduction

For many, the "golden rule" of conversation—that is, the injunction to discuss neither religion nor politics in public—has been touted as a path to success; or, at least, a strategy for surviving one's first meeting with potential in-laws or business contacts; a recipe for maintaining social harmony by avoiding possible sources of conflict. In Australian mythology, however, such a prophylactic has long seemed unnecessary: the laid-back and secular self-image of many Antipodeans suggesting that Down Under conflict and conversation are more likely to involve sporting triumphs and losses than either theology or government. Religion, in particular, has not featured prominently in Australia's popular consciousness. Until recently, that is.

In her 2005 book, *God Under Howard: The Rise of the Religious Right in Australian Politics*, political philosopher and religious studies academic Marion Maddox argues that the past decade in Australia has seen the emergence of right-wing religious influence at the highest levels of the country's federal politics; but that Australians, in general, have been slow to recognise or devote analytical and critical attention to this phenomenon. Re-elected for a fourth term in October 2004, for instance, Prime Minister John Howard is frequently described by Australian journalists and political commentators in terms of his early family and childhood associations with the Methodist Church; while Methodism, in turn, is often invoked as an explanatory paradigm for Howard's conservative social policies. Yet Maddox maintains that assessments of this nature reveal a simplistic understanding of religious trends and a failure to identify their complex, but very real, influence on contemporary Australian politics.

In short, according to Maddox, the "golden rule" of conversation has not served Australia well: "We do Australia's soul no service by forcing religion out of visible public life into unanalysed undercurrents" (Maddox 2005: 312). In *God Under Howard*, she begins to redress this lacuna, this absence of sophisticated discussion concerning religious influences in Australian society, by tracing Howard's peculiar blend of social conservatism and economic radicalism to roots in American right wing religious fundamentalism and by systematically documenting Howard's skill in reformulating this tradition for Australia's historically more secular environment—"playing down" explicit religious language, for example, "in favour of neutral-sounding terms like 'family', 'commonsense' and 'mainstream'" (Maddox 2005: 202).

Maddox's analysis is primarily political in nature; whereas it is the purpose of this paper to suggest a linguistic approach to breaking the "golden rule"—to discussing religion in public. In particular, I will introduce some key aspects of Conversation Analysis (CA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), in order to demonstrate the usefulness of linguistic tools in analysing religion. Like Maddox's treatment, this discussion will focus on a peculiarly Australian phenomenon—a well-known public dialogue between a church and pub in downtown Sydney, Australia, during the 1980s and 1990s, known as the Broadway Exchange. However, the principles and methods presented here may be applied readily and fruitfully to a wide range of social, political and religious contexts.

## The Broadway Exchange—An Overview

Like many Christian churches around the world, St. Barnabas Anglican Church in downtown Sydney, Australia, has been regularly posting pithy messages on its roadside billboard—inviting church attendance, or at least reflection on religious questions—since the 1920s. Unlike most churches, however, St. Barnabas was favoured with a long-term partner in this process. In the mid 1980s, the Hotel Broadway (situated directly opposite St. Barnabas Church on a busy six-lane road known as "Broadway") began responding to the church's signs with humorous messages posted in the front window of the hotel. Indeed, the Broadway Exchange—as this dialogue became known—continued for twelve years: each month, rector of St. Barnabas Church, Rev. Robert

Forsyth[1], posted a new message on the church billboard; and every month, without fail, publican Arthur Elliott's reply would appear within days. Light-hearted and entertaining, the Broadway Exchange attracted the attention of innumerable passers-by throughout the 1980s and 1990s—including pedestrians, motorists and students at the nearby University of Sydney—capturing the imagination of Sydney-siders and the local print and radio media. The Sydney Morning Herald (SMH), in particular, covered the exchange on several occasions, including a front-page feature article in 1990.

The Broadway Exchange came to an end in 1997, when publican Arthur Elliott sold the Hotel Broadway in order to retire. Comprising by then over two hundred and fifty signs, Arthur's dialogue with Rev. Forsyth had become part of Sydney folklore—provoking speculation about collusion between the church and the hotel; prompting interest in and debate over the relevance of Christianity to contemporary Australian society; and inspiring innovation in church communication practices. However, as Michael Holquist (1981) notes "nothing is more fragile than the word" and most of the Broadway Exchange signs have since been lost, with neither publican nor minister keeping thorough records of the exchange. In this discussion, I will therefore focus on seven sets of signs, five Sydney Morning Herald articles, and perhaps the least well-known of all the Broadway Exchange texts—a booklet published by Arthur in 1992 entitled "The Publican and the Priest," which sketches a history of the exchange and re-tells a number of Biblical narratives in Australian working class vernacular.

## The Broadway Exchange—The Signs

> [...] one forgets that authority comes to language from the outside, a fact concretely exemplified by the skeptron that, in Homer, is passed to the orator who is about to speak.
>
> The specificity of the discourse of authority [...] consists in the fact that it is not enough for it to be understood [...] it must be uttered by the person legitimately licensed to do so, the holder of the skeptron.
> (Bourdieu 1991:109-113)

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1. Rev. Robert Forsyth, the rector of St. Barnabas Church at the close of the Broadway Exchange, has since been promoted to the role of Bishop within the Anglican Church in Sydney.

Developed in large part by Michael Halliday and other linguists working in Australia from the late 1970s to the present, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) provides a valuable framework for understanding language as a meaning-making process, rooted firmly in particular social and cultural contexts. Within this broad perspective, Halliday suggests that language—and individual texts or utterances—simultaneously produces three kinds of meanings:

1. *experiential meaning*—that is, what people usually think of as the meaning or the content of a given clause or utterance. Here, texts may be seen to function as representations of experience and analysis focuses on transitivity, or the types of processes involved (Halliday 1985:106);
2. *interpersonal meaning*—in which the same clause or utterance may now be seen to function as a form of social exchange, constructing relations between the speaker and listener, or the writer and reader. Analysis here focuses on the grammatical system of "Mood," including speech roles, polarity and modality (Halliday 1985:68ff); and
3. *textual meaning*—which involves the ways that given texts or utterances are arranged *as* texts or messages. Thematic structure here provides the focus for analysis (Halliday 1985:37).

A thorough analysis of the Broadway Exchange in terms of these three types of meaning falls outside the scope of this paper. However, I will touch on the construction of interpersonal meaning through the church and hotel signs—considering, in particular, the relationship(s) enacted by Rev. Forsyth and Arthur Elliott, since this dimension of meaning proved to be the focus of most media representations of the Broadway Exchange. Despite media opinion that the "Broadway Exchange" constituted an ideological battle over Christianity, I will demonstrate that the Hotel Broadway signs posed no real threat to the Christian discourse promoted by St. Barnabas Church. Rather, they constituted a challenge to the Church's traditional authority on matters relating to religion and were a prelude to the publican's own articulation of Christian discourse. In short, the Broadway Exchange signs may perhaps best be read as Arthur Elliott's bid for the skeptron.

Although by no means a true conversation, the Broadway Exchange was at once a form of dialogue between Rev. Forsyth and Arthur Elliott, and a series of public proclamations by St. Barnabas

Church and the Hotel Broadway. In this respect, the church and hotel signs constituted both a public and a private exchange. Gunther Kress (1985:46) maintains that "writing is the medium of the domain of public, social and political life while speaking is the domain of private life"—and the Broadway Exchange comprised elements of both of these modes. For example, the grammatical intricacy (that is, the number of clauses in a given sentence) of both church and hotel texts is low, suggesting a proximity to the written mode; whereas, low levels of nominalization (that is, the recasting of verbs as nouns) in the signs reflect patterns of spoken language.[2]

The dialogic format of the Broadway Exchange is also generally indicative of the spoken mode. However, the significance of this format extends beyond a simple classification of the mode of language used in the exchange. Berger and Luckmann (1966:72-4) argue that "Institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors" and close analysis reveals that the structure of the Broadway Exchange forges and institutionalizes particular interpersonal and power relationships between St Barnabas' Church and the Hotel Broadway.[3] Suzanne Eggins (1994: 193) observes that "The most striking indication of power is in who gets to be speaker in an exchange, and for how long." Of the twenty clauses that comprise our sample of the Broadway Exchange texts, eleven were produced by St. Barnabas Church (55%) and nine were the product of the Hotel Broadway (45%). In this respect, it is a fairly balanced exchange, with church and hotel each making approximately the same overall quantitative contribution to the larger text.

Yet, Rev. Forsyth was reported as claiming that St. Barnabas Church was "the leader" in the Broadway Exchange (SMH: 13.10.97). To the extent that each of the church signs was displayed before the corresponding hotel sign appeared, we may certainly acknowledge

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2. For a succinct account of register theory, including grammatical intricacy and lexical density, see Eggins 1994.

3. Owing to its dual nature as both public and private exchange, the Broadway Exchange functioned simultaneously in (at least) two semiotic contexts: as a dialogue between two individuals representing different social institutions, and as mass communication with a much wider reading public. Current restrictions of space prevent a detailed audience analysis or extended consideration of the institutionalised relationships generated in the domain of mass communication. However, further study in this area would prove useful in assessing the capacity of both church and hotel to employ mass media effectively.

that the Church played a leading role in the exchange: hotel signs were posted as responses to church signs, not the other way around. However, Eggins (1994:193) also proposes that "A second area [...] in which Tenor dimensions[4] are realized is seen by looking at what speakers do when they get the speaker role, i.e., who gives? Who demands? And are these reciprocal rights? When there is a lack of reciprocity, there we find status relations." A more detailed, qualitative examination of speech functions[5] within the church and hotel signs is therefore required in order to determine whether indeed—and if so the extent to which—the Hotel Broadway "followed" Rev. Forsyth's lead or whether the hotel signs undermined the church's authority and subverted its message. Table 1 provides a summary of the speech functions realised in our sample signs.

**Table 1: Speech Functions.**[*]

| Speech Function | St. Barnabas Church signs | | Hotel Broadway signs | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Command (initiating) | 2 | 20% | 1 | 14% |
| Question (initiating) | 2 | 20% | 1 | 14% |
| Answer (responding) | — | — | 1 | 14% |
| Statement (initiating) | 6 | 60% | 4 | 58% |
| Acknowledgement (responding) | — | — | — | — |
| Total Initiating | 10 | 100% | 6 | 86% |
| Total Responding | — | — | 1 | 14% |
| Total | 10 | 100% | 7 | 100% |

* This table is modelled on that used by Eggins (1994: 151).

In keeping with Rev. Forsyth's view that St. Barnabas was the leader in the Broadway Exchange, all of the church signs represent initiating moves. Indeed, none of the sample signs record the church producing a responding move. However, a majority of the hotel signs also constitute initiating moves, with only one response. Thus, far from simply following the church's lead, the Hotel Broadway signs posit a challenge to the church's leadership: rather than submitting to the church's traditional authority to define and act on the world, the

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4. In this context, Tenor relates to the social relations enacted by participants in a given exchange and includes power, affect and frequency of contact. For further discussion, see Poynton 1985.

5. For more information concerning speech act theory and classifications, see Austin 1962 and Searle 1965, 1969. For a discussion of speech functions, see Eggins 1994.

hotel makes its own set of statements, poses its own questions, and issues its own commands, thereby setting itself up as a rival to—rather than follower of—the church.

Deidre Burton (in Coulthard et al, 1981:69-71) defines "opening moves" as "informatives, elicitations or directives which have no anaphoric reference to the immediately preceding utterance [...] essentially topic-carrying items which are recognisably 'new' in terms of the immediately preceding talk." Conversely, she explains that "supporting moves" serve to further a topic already presented, while "challenging moves" impede the development of such a topic. In this respect, all of the St. Barnabas signs should be understood as "opening moves," since they make no reference to signs posted by the hotel. By contrast, none but the last of the Hotel Broadway messages are without reference to the church signs; despite their status as initiating moves, the hotel signs must therefore be considered as reactions to those posted by St. Barnabas church.

In the first set of signs, for example, the church issues an invitation or command to "Hear John Smith[6] this Sunday 7.15pm." The hotel responds by issuing a similar invitation or command to "Hear Jack Smith every day." In the second of our sample signs, the church asserts: "Jesus bowled over death," to which the hotel rejoins: "Lillee[7] bowled over arm." The third pair of signs displays a similar pattern, with St. Barnabas claiming that "God has rights too" and the hotel maintaining, in response, that "Jeff Fenech[8] has a good right too." The fourth set of signs in our sample features this statement by the church: "Anyone wrapped up in themselves make a very small package," which the hotel counters with "Good things come in small parcels." In the fifth set of sample signs, St. Barnabas maintains: "He'll be back,"[9] in response to which the hotel asks simply, "When?" By contrast, in the sixth set of signs, the church asks this question: "If God offered you heaven or hell, which would you choose?" The hotel answers: "I'd choose a helluva good time in heaven." Lastly, the final St. Barnabas

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6. John Smith is an Australian evangelist, who was a popular speaker at churches and evangelistic events during the 1980s and 1990s.

7. Dennis Lillee, a well-known Australian cricket player during the 1970s and 1980s, still ranks among the world's leading fast-bowlers.

8. Jeff Fenech captained the Australian boxing team at the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

9. Simultaneously referring to the "second coming" of Jesus Christ and Arnold Schwarzenegger's oft-quoted line from the film, The Terminator: "I'll be back!"

Church sign says: "God bless you and farewell Arthur! Now who will we have to argue with?" The Hotel Broadway sign simply proclaims: "To the Rev, it's been nice known' yer!" Table 2 represents a summary analysis of the Hotel Broadway "moves" as they relate to the church messages.

## Table 2: Hotel Broadway Moves

| St. Barnabas Church | | Hotel Broadway | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Turn | Speech Function | Turn | Speech Function | Preferred/ Dispreferred | Move |
| 1 | Command | 1 | Command | Dispreferred | Rejoinder: challenge: counter |
| 2 | Statement | 2 | Statement | Dispreferred | Rejoinder: challenge: counter |
| 3 | Statement | 3 | Statement | Dispreferred | Rejoinder: challenge: counter |
| 4 | Statement | 4 | Statement | Dispreferred | Rejoinder: challenge: counter |
| 5 | Statement | 5 | Question | Dispreferred | Rejoinder: challenge: rebound Or Support: track: clarify* |
| 6 | Question | 6 | Answer | Preferred | Rejoinder: challenge: counter |
| 7 | Command | 7 | Statement | Dispreferred | Opening move |
| 7a | Statement | — | — | — | — |
| 7b | Question | — | — | — | — |

\* This sign may be interpreted and classified in more than one way, and will be discussed in more detail below.

Six of the seven hotel signs constitute *rejoinder moves*, reacting to messages posted by the church; while only the final sign represents an *opening move*. According to Eggins and Slade (1997:207), rejoinder moves initiate speech sequences that "interrupt, postpone, abort or suspend" previous utterances—whether in a *supportive* (for example, by

temporarily delaying completion of an exchange, without expressing disagreement) or *challenging* manner (for example, by overtly declining interaction or questioning either the truth of an assertion or the speaker's right to make it). Within the category of challenging rejoinder moves, Eggins and Slade (1997:212) also differentiate between *rebounding moves*—which query "the relevance, legitimacy or veracity of another speaker's move" and therefore require him/her to "justify or modify [his/her] initiating opinion"—and *countering moves*, which confront a previous speaker with "an alternative, counter-position or counter-interpretation of a situation raised" by that speaker.

As Table 2 illustrates, all but one of the hotel's responses to the church constitute challenging rejoinder moves—with the vast majority of these serving to counter the church's messages. Clearly, despite following the lead of St. Barnabas Church when posting signs each month, the Hotel Broadway is also an assertive interlocutor, willing and able both to challenge the church's messages and to offer its own independent contributions. Key notions from the field of Conversation Analysis (CA) prove useful in further exploring this dimension of the Broadway Exchange.

Derived from ethnomethodology, but concerned primarily with how language is both shaped by and a shaping force in diverse social contexts, CA is a field of linguistic study developed by Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson. Again, a thorough analysis of the Broadway Exchange in terms of CA falls outside the scope of this discussion[10]; however, one key CA category—the notion of adjacency pairs—is salient and will therefore be considered briefly. Schiffrin (1994: 236) defines the adjacency pair as "a sequence of two utterances, which are adjacent, produced by different speakers, ordered as a first part and second part, and typed, so that a first part requires a particular second part or range of second parts." Within this general framework, second pair parts may be described as either "preferred" (in the case of anticipated or desired responses) or "dispreferred" (in the case of alternative or undesired responses).

Although none of the Hotel Broadway signs directly contradict the messages promoted by St. Barnabas Church, Table 2 demonstrates that 86% of the Hotel signs represent dispreferred second pair parts, which challenge the church in some way. Of these, five signs are countering moves, with the remaining sign being somewhat more

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10. For a succinct introduction to Conversation Analysis, see Schiffrin 1994.

ambiguous, interpretable either as a challenge/rebound or a supportive move. According to Eggins and Slade (1997:28), "Dispreferred responses tend to be longer as respondents may seek to apologize, explain or otherwise justify their dispreferred response [...] Dispreferred responses are therefore linguistically more complex, and involve non-compliance or conflictual action." The Hotel Broadway signs contain neither explanation nor apology for their non-supportive role, suggesting what Eggins and Slade (1997:213) have described as "a certain independence on the part of the speaker."

While it is not possible to determine the objectives of a given writer in making particular linguistic choices, the effects of such choices on an overall text can often be identified. For example, Arthur Elliott's choice to unapologetically withhold support from St. Barnabas Church in all but one of his signs, yet not to openly contradict the content of the church signs, has the effect of challenging the church's authority without seriously undermining its message. In this way, the hotel establishes itself as an archetypal Australian larrikin in relation to the church—constantly, though good-humouredly, questioning authority.[11] Indeed, the function of the hotel signs appears quite similar to the equally Australian practice of cutting down "tall poppies."

## 4. The Broadway Exchange—Media Representation

Although recognising good humour in the Broadway Exchange, most media representations nevertheless portrayed the relationship between Arthur and Rev. Forsyth as conflictive—a battle between a publican and a priest; a sinner and a saint. The Broadway Exchange was first reported by the Sydney Morning Herald in the lead-up to the 1990 Australian Federal election. In the context of very public leadership challenges within the Australian Federal Liberal Party, between current Prime Minister John Howard and Andrew Peacock, St. Barnabas Church posted the message: "Jesus—the true leader who really rose from the dead." Arthur's reply, "A bit like Peacock," referred to Andrew Peacock's success a few days earlier in reclaiming the job of Federal Opposition Leader from John Howard, who had wrested the post from

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11. Richard White (1981:136) describes the "larrikin view" as characterized by "a populist disrespect for pomposity, authority and red-tape." Moreover, he suggests that "a very decided disinclination to recognise authority" has been identified as part of the Australian character since 1880.

Peacock in 1985. Other descriptions of Andrew Peacock circulating at the time had likened him to "a soufflé which could not rise twice" (in Skeehan 1996); and, by countering this view in his sign, Arthur brought the Broadway Exchange to the attention of the Australian media. The SMH commented on the church and hotel messages in its popular "Column Eight" section, introducing the exchange to a wider audience while expanding the relationship between Rev. Forsyth and Arthur Elliott to include the readership of one of Australia's major newspapers. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Broadway Exchange was reported a further four times by the SMH.

The second SMH article (Glover 1998), entitled "The Publican's Puzzled—but who isn't?" commented on the inadequacy of Arthur's response to one of the church signs. The St. Barnabas sign read: "We can't build a good society just on selfishness and tolerance;" the pub's sign replied: "Eh?" The SMH article, which identified with the publican's perceived confusion, included Rev. Forsyth's exegesis of the St. Barnabas message before favourably comparing its traditional values with a critique of the New Age movement, represented at the time by Sydney's first annual Festival of Mind, Body, Spirit.

The third and most prominent SMH article (Meade 1990), written when Arthur's daughter was married in St. Barnabas Church, was entitled "Why did the Publican Cross the Road?" Providing an overview of the Broadway Exchange, the front-page feature story focused on the relationship between Rev. Forsyth and Arthur and was accompanied by a photograph of the two men leading Louise Elliott across Broadway, from the church to the hotel. Depicted as "generals in the Broadway war of words" and "friendly rivals," Arthur and Rev. Forsyth are said to have declared a "temporary truce"—just long enough to celebrate Louise's wedding. After years of duelling messages, Arthur is reported to attend his first service at St. Barnabas Church (chosen by Louise "for the family connection"); although the article also references the publican's religious motivation for initiating the Broadway Exchange:

> Part of Arthur's message war is to bring religion back to the people, he said.
> "I like to remind people that Jesus was a real man," he said. "I even said to Rob once, 'If Jesus walked down Broadway he'd come into my pub and have a drink and meet the guys' and Rob agreed with me." (Meade 1990).

The penultimate SMH report was a smaller notice, again in "Column Eight" (11.6.91), announcing St. Barnabas' Feast Day (birthday to both the saint and the Sydney church, founded 130 years prior) and publicizing a celebratory lunch at the hotel: "Today Arthur is turning on birthday biblical fare—bread and wine, bread rolls and fish, and counter lunches of saintly sausages ("with haloes of bacon"), communion curry, and Big Barnabas Burgers. The Rev Robert Forsyth, of St. Barnabas's, will be an honoured guest."

The final SMH article (Clennell 1997) comprised another prominent feature story, entitled "City Publican Signs off from a much-celebrated war of words." At once detailing its development ("a battle which has been elevated almost to folklore status") and proclaiming its conclusion ("a final truce has been called"), this article recognises Arthur's lead role in the Broadway Exchange: "The St. Barnabas Anglican Church across the road from the hotel has been posting signs outside its doors since the 1920s but it was when Arthur decided to reply to one in 1985 that the battle of the wordsmiths began." The article is accompanied by a photograph of Rev. Forsyth pulling a beer inside the Hotel Broadway[12] and two smaller images showing the final signs in the exchange.

Graeme Turner (1966:88) maintains that "media texts [are] moments when the larger social and political structures within the culture are exposed for analysis." A detailed discussion of the media representation of the Broadway Exchange considering a wide range of media texts (including newspapers and radio talk-back programmes) and highlighting Appraisal systems, visual imagery and other aspects of the sub-editing process would therefore provide valuable insight not only into the phenomenon of the Broadway Exchange but also into the organisation/ideology of Australian media and society. However, I will focus in this discussion on the SMH's appraisal of the Broadway Exchange.

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12. Although space restrictions prevent any detailed analysis of the visual imagery used in these articles, this conclusion to the SMH coverage of the Broadway Exchange is strongly evocative of the Australian "mateship" tradition described by Russell Ward (1966:233): "There were between us bonds of graft, of old times, of poverty, of vagabondage and sin, and in spite of all the right-thinking person may think, say or write, there was between us that sympathy which in our times and conditions is the strongest and perhaps the truest of all human qualities, the sympathy of drink. We were drinking mates together."

Based on Martin's model (1995a/b), Eggins and Slade (1997) have developed an Appraisal system that provides for the description and classification of evaluative meaning into four sub-categories: *appreciation* (of text/process), *affect* (emotion), *judgement* (of behaviour) and *amplification*. Although Eggins and Slade caution that Appraisal analysis is highly dependent on culture and context—concurring with Iedema et al (1994) that such cultural specificity may result in disagreement about the category to which some terms belong—their system is nevertheless an extremely valuable starting point for analysing the appraisal patterns used by the SMH to evaluate the Broadway Exchange.

Table 3 summarises SMH appraisals of the Broadway Exchange. Where possible, I have distinguished between the phenomenon of the exchange itself and the relationship between Rev. Forsyth and Arthur Elliott. However, the similar ratios for these items in Table 3 suggest that the SMH does not always make this clear distinction.

### Table 3: SMH Appraisal of the Broadway Exchange

| ITEM APPRAISED | CATEGORY | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Judgement | Amplification | Appreciation | Affect | | |
| Broadway Exchange | 5 | 7 | 2 | — | 14 | 38% |
| Relationship between minister and publican | 6 | 4 | — | — | 10 | 27% |
| Arthur Elliott | 2 | — | — | 2 | 4 | 11% |
| Hotel Broadway signs | — | 2 | 2 | — | 4 | 11% |
| Reverend Forsyth | 1 | 1 | — | 2 | 4 | 11% |
| Louise Elliott | — | — | — | 1 | 1 | 2% |
| Total | 14 | 14 | 4 | 5 | 37 | 100% |

The aspect of the Broadway Exchange most frequently appraised by the five SMH texts is the phenomenon of the exchange itself, closely followed by the relationship between Rev. Forsyth and Arthur. There are substantially fewer appraisals of particular billboard signs

or individual participants in the Broadway Exchange, suggesting that the SMH's main interest lay with the relationship between the church and the hotel—between the priest and the publican—rather than the content of the exchange *per se*. However, when counted together, there are also a significant number of appraisals relating to Arthur and the Hotel signs—indicating that the hotel's behaviour held greater interest for the SMH than that of the church. This would seem to be confirmed by the titles of the SMH articles, each of which features the publican as both Subject and Theme[13]—that is, as "the starting-point for the message: [...] what the clause is going to be about" (Halliday 1985:39).

*Judgement* and *amplification* are the two types of appraisal most frequently used in the SMH texts. Eggins and Slade (1997:130-133) describe *judgement* as the category by means of which behaviour is evaluated either in terms of social sanction or social esteem—according to its morality, propriety, normality, and capacity. James Joyce has suggested (in Peterson, 1993:175) that "literature deals with the ordinary" while "the unusual and extraordinary belong to journalism," and the appraisal patterns in these SMH texts would seem to confirm his view. Each of the SMH Judgements comments on unusual aspects of the Broadway Exchange, thereby establishing its newsworthiness. *Amplification*, on the other hand, represents a means of categorizing the lexical tools used by speakers in moderating their attitudes. According to Eggins and Slade (1997:134), *enrichment* is a particular form of amplification that adds "an attitudinal colouring to a meaning when a core, neutral word could be used."[14] Since, as sociolinguist John Gumperz (1982:130) has observed, people typically categorize interactions in terms of frames or "schema" that are "identifiable and familiar" to themselves, an amplification analysis may reveal more about how the SMH views the world as an appraiser than about the particular items appraised.

The first SMH text contains only one appraisal item—"opposing author"—a token of judgement that introduces the Broadway Exchange (more particularly, Arthur's role in responding to the church signs), to the newspaper's readership as something unusual and worthy of note.

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13. Theme and Subject are significant in terms of Halliday's third category of meaning: textual meaning. See Halliday 1985 and Eggins 1994.
14. All of the instantiations of Amplification in these SMH texts are examples of Enrichment.

The second article develops this notion of "opposition" between St. Barnabas and the Hotel Broadway, using enrichment to introduce a metaphor of war ("battle of the signs," "duelling messages") between Rev. Forsyth and Arthur that is echoed in each of the remaining SMH texts. The third SMH article judges the Broadway Exchange in terms of a battle ("generals," "war of words," "Arthur's message war") but focuses particularly on the "temporary truce" between Rev. Forsyth and Arthur at the time of Louise Elliott's wedding. In doing so, it marks a turning point in the SMH coverage—rather than judging and amplifying the competitive relationship between the Church and Hotel, appraisal in later texts centres on the (un)usuality of their relationship as "friendly rivals," indicating a very Australian type of "mateship." Following on from this, the fourth SMH article contains only one judgement of Rev. Forsyth's attendance as the "honoured guest" at the Hotel Broadway St. Barnabas Day celebrations. Similarly, the final article concludes the SMH appraisal of the Broadway Exchange with judgements about the longevity of the relationship between the Church and the Hotel ("12-year war of words waged").[15]

Thwaites et al (1994:156) observe that "Newspapers tend to represent world events in terms of economic crisis or warfare, resolved through the decisions of authorities [...] or the actions of groups which are, for the most part, male." The patterns of amplification and judgement in the SMH texts tend to confirm this view, using enriched lexis to establish conflict between St. Barnabas Church and the Hotel Broadway, and orienting readers to focus on the unusual actions of the two (male) "generals" in the exchange (10.11.90). Thwaites et al (1994:95) also note that the tendency to report events in terms of conflict functions to eliminate doubts about the significance of those events, whereas representing two sides of a story effectively serves to restrict interpretations of that story: "alternate views on the issue are excluded. Either one side or the other is 'right,' and the issue remains fixed in the terms offered by these two groups." SMH appraisals of the Broadway Exchange reflect both of these patterns, representing a simplification of the actual events that fails to recognise the social and ideological diversity inherent in the exchange.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has often focused on media discourse—in particular, identifying and critiquing representations of

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15. In a society dominated by built-in obsolescence, almost anything that lasts for twelve years might be considered unusual and worthy of note!

inequality, dominance and social power.[16] Unlike Conversation Analysis, which intentionally restricts discussion of context to the immediate interaction under consideration, CDA routinely situates and examines texts within their broader social contexts—including intertextual relations.[17] According to Jay Lemke (1995:37):

> Basic to the textual politics of any text are the discourse patterns that [...] stand opposed to it. There are very few matters in a complex and diverse society about which there is only one discourse. Each different social or political point of view, each school of thought constructs its own discourse formation; it speaks of the matter in its own way. Although many discourse formations try to seem autonomous and self-sufficient, attempting to create the ideologically functional impression that they are simply presenting their viewpoint in the most natural way possible, it is always possible to detect in them what Bakhtin called their implicit dialogue with other points of view, other discourses on the same subject.

Despite the strong undercurrents of diverse discursive practices within the Broadway Exchange, the SMH represents the exchange as a relatively straightforward conflict, skirting around the ideological content of the exchange and focusing instead on the processes and relationships involved—only infrequently referring to the ideas that actually underpin the dialogue between Rev. Forsyth and Arthur Elliott. In this respect, the SMH coverage of the Broadway Exchange represents a form of "selective contextualisation" (Lemke 1995:104), which significantly restricts its intertextual potential.

For Lemke (1995:166), acts are made meaningful when construed "in relation to some other acts, events, things (which we then call its contexts). The relations we construct to some (and not other possible) contexts select and emphasize some of the possible meanings of the act." The intertextual field within which the Broadway Exchange acquires meaning is potentially extremely vast, ranging from the Bible to billboard advertisements, science fiction files to sporting heroes, Australian history to the New Age, etc. However, as Turner argues (1996:124), the breadth of this intertextuality will vary according to "the range of discourses at the disposal of the audience." Or, as Pierre Bourdieu maintains (1984), the cultural capital of an audience

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16. For a succinct introduction to CDA, see Van Dijk 2001.
17. For a helpful discussion of intertextuality within discourse analysis, see Fairclough 2003.

determines the meaning(s) it will find in certain texts. Consequently, reading the Broadway Exchange in the context of SMH reports will likely facilitate a particular range of interpretations; whereas the readings generated by a consideration of the exchange in relation to other intertextual realms may differ significantly.

Although a full analysis of the theological position expressed in Arthur's booklet falls outside the realm of this discussion, it is therefore important to recognise this element of the Broadway Exchange when considering its meaning(s). For, as Cohan and Shires (1988:141) point out:

> While a discourse may seem to have obvious connections to one institution, one site of cultural power, it is not limited to that institution, just as a word is not tied to a specific context. The signifying values change from one discourse to another and, within a discourse, refer differentially to their locations in other discursive sites [...] what matters is the position which a discourse holds in an institution, and how that discourse functions differently across institutions.

In the case of the Broadway Exchange, the Christian discourse functions as a very prominent and natural aspect of the St. Barnabas messages; whereas, in the Hotel Broadway responses, it appears as no more than an echo of the church signs—one of life's less significant elements, which should never be taken too seriously. The ideological position expressed by the Hotel Broadway signs may be a very telling indication of Australian reverence for its sporting heroes and, in the light of the SMH appraisals, may be interpreted as evidence of the hotel's disregard for Christianity. However, Arthur's booklet demonstrates that the Christian discourse held an important position in the institution of the Hotel Broadway, albeit functioning somewhat differently to its role within the Church. Arthur (SMH: 10.11.90) claimed that churches had lost the ability (or inclination) to communicate with the "common people," and that the goal of his "message war" was "to bring religion back to the people." In short, *The Publican and the Priest* offers a very different but important context and set of meanings for the hotel signs. Commensurate with Arthur's expressed hope (1992:5) "that my mates, friends and all people who are considered to be 'ordinary' or 'average' will learn something about the bloke called Jesus," the booklet articulates several important Biblical narratives and expresses an ideology much closer to that of St. Barnabas Church than do any of Arthur's signs.

In view of this, Arthur's reaching across Broadway to steal the skeptron from St. Barnabas Church (or, at the very least, to seek to share it) cannot appropriately be seen as a negation of the Christian discourse. Rather, in Mulkay's terms (1998:214), it represents a means of dealing with "the problems of multiplicity and contradiction, incongruity and incoherence which are built into our organized patterns of social action and which persistently threaten to disrupt the course of our serious social activities." By entering into humorous dialogue with Rev. Forsyth, Arthur refused to accept the existence of a simple, unitary world—insisting on and articulating the presence of many voices and many potential meanings. Where the serious discourses of both the church and the SMH appear incapable of accommodating diversity, Arthur's signs turn what Mulkay (1988:215) described as "problems to be overcome" into "resources to be exploited, added to and enjoyed." And, in doing so, Arthur took up the skeptron—not to destroy truth—but "to make people laugh at truth, to make truth laugh, because the only truth lies in learning to free ourselves from the insane passion for *the* truth."[18]

## Conclusion

As both my review of the Broadway Exchange and Marion Maddox's analysis of contemporary Australian politics demonstrate, religion is a powerful element in Australia's "national mix" (Maddox 2005: 317)—albeit an element long overlooked by the highly secular Australian media. However, as Maddox observes, "We pay a political price for religious naivety" (Maddox 2005:143). In the case of the Broadway Exchange, this price may have been inconsequential—failure to recognise the religious motivations of a Sydney publican, whose discourse brought laughter to passers-by and newspaper readers. But, as Maddox has so powerfully illustrated, failure to recognise the religious motivations of a Prime Minister, whose conservative social and economic policies have reshaped Australian life is a much steeper price to pay. Perhaps now is the time to invest in political and linguistic analyses of religion; to break the golden rule and "talk religion" in public?

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18. Eco (1980:491). Emphasis mine.

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