But we have to be careful not to leap to this conclusion too quickly. As Robert Clark points out in the last ALR, the internationalisation of television, arising from technological and commercial imperatives, is already afoot. The failure to develop our own Pay TV system would more likely still see such systems beamed into our loungerooms from offshore. To the extent to which there are positive spinoffs from such systems, it is obviously enhanced if they are developed locally rather than imported from overseas. Again, the technological and economic benefits from the extension of the optical fibre cable network are considerable, and Pay TV provides a major stimulus to their development. Australia has missed too many technological boats to opt to let another one go by.

More importantly for my purpose here, a blanket judgment about what is and isn’t crud, and what therefore is and isn’t good for Australian audiences, is very difficult to make. To place ‘crud’ in a subordinate position to so-called ‘quality’ forms in terms of innovativeness, diversity, export potential or, indeed, political subversiveness is to miss the whole point of the cultural theory whose significance I’ve noted above. Programs like Roseanne, Married With Children, The Simpsons, Acropolis Now!, Donohue and Sex cannot simply be written off as audiovisual chewing gum in the way in which the older paradigm of cultural studies would have done.

Perhaps the safest, if not the sexiest, conclusion to be reached about the pros and cons of the introduction of Pay TV, is that economic rather than cultural arguments should perhaps be paramount. On this view, the likelihood of deriving benefits for the local industry and the national economy from Pay TV will depend upon devising appropriate policies for the broadcasting sector overall. This requires considering the successes and the failings of the current free-to-air system and its regulatory apparatus.

Australian broadcasting content rules have been criticised as being bureaucratic and elitist, but one positive effect has been that industry output, particularly in the area of drama, has been quite out of proportion to our population and economic position by world standards. Moreover, in the areas of soaps and sport—those two most derided of genres—Australian product has proved to have considerable export capacity. This suggests a continuing need to safeguard Australian production for industry policy as well as cultural reasons. However, there would need to be changes in the forms of such regulations in order to allow for specialist programming, or narrowcasting.

One unique and successful aspect of the Australian television industry has been its mixed pattern of ownership (public and commercial) and its mixture of mass-market and minority programming. It has thus been more flexible in incorporating the demands for American programs than many of the European public monopoly or duopoly systems. At the same time it has been more successful at maintaining a commitment to diversity, innovation and quality than the wholly commercial American system. This suggests that the decision in the amended Broadcasting Services Bill to link the introduction of pay to the introduction of community television, and keep the option open for public broadcasters to enter the sector, will perhaps prove to be an adroit one.

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Foucault of Many Colours

Michel Foucault, by Didier Eribon, translated by Betsy Wing (Harvard University Press 1991), $44.95. Michel Foucault Philosopher, by Timothy J Armstrong (Harvester Wheatsheaf), $38.50. Reviewed by Peter Beilharz.

Who is Michel Foucault? Or rather, who was Foucault? They are, in fact, two very different questions, or at least questions with different answers. Foucault is, for many today, the voice of critical theory. For undergraduates in the 1990s he is the equivalent of Marcuse in the 1960s: the theorist as rebel, defiant, nay-saying. His best-known work—‘the prisons book’, Discipline and Punish—has many parallels to Marcuse’s best-seller, One Dimensional Man (1964). Most strikingly, both are books which paint a black world with a red stripe, or adorn it with a black flag. Both are libertarian attacks on a world cast as totalitarian.

People today talk of a Foucault effect. In the work of some Anglo followers, Foucault’s interests in power and in institutions become enabling. They do good work, on medicine, on welfare and psychiatry. For others, Foucault becomes a spray-on, a new hero, Bob Marley sans dreadlocks. Foucault thus becomes an excuse for thinking. But this he was not, did not intend to be.

Foucault is a pop-star, and he was a celebrity. But he also had a history, a biography, a process with a subject, a context which is typically ignored by the zealots, as though his ideas arrived by post or by immaculate conception. History, of course, demands some labour, and some thinking. Of this Foucault was certain, but not all his followers would take the advice as friendly.
Didier Eribon is an editor of *Le Nouvel Observateur*. He takes Foucault's advice and that of his forebears. His is the first biography of Foucault—amazingly, for while the Foucault industry grinds out scholarly and unscholarly guides and monographs by the ream, no one has thought before to locate Foucault, to make him human by telling his story. But this is more. Eribon's book is brilliant, absolutely brilliant. It is a personal story and an intellectual history, a tragedy with its comic moments and a layering of different cultural registers. It is an achievement of the first order.

Eribon reconstructs the story with loving detail; the childhood, the overbearing *paterfamilias*, the late blossoming from the provinces to Paris, Foucault's leading inspiration in thinkers such as Jean Hyppolite and Georges Dumézil, his friendship with the marxist Louis Althusser, the almost inevitable membership of the French Communist Party, the inevitable break with it. Then follows his partial relationship with psychiatry, as a psychologist, his lifelong love affair with Nietzsche, teaching in Uppsala, Warsaw, Hamburg before becoming a big shot in Paris, historian of madness, come-lately militant photographed with Sartre and megaphone in the streets. Acclaimed publicly for his cranial powers, Foucault remained marginal for his politics and his sexuality, his intellectual concerns with the lower depths growing into personal commitments as well. Ensnared by the antipsychiatrists, he distanced himself, supporting the victimised lawyer of Baader-Meinhof without extending his support to the client.

Absent from Paris in 1968, Foucault's political stocks were low, but now, in a position of power and influence, he became the public figure of the civil libertarian—writing petitions for good causes and against the outrages of the world, scuffing with the police in the demonstrations which are part of Parisian everyday life. Who then is Foucault? If he is, today, a stand-in for Marcuse then he does not deserve it, but c'est la vie. We all suffer. Who he was, Eribon begins to unravel.

Who he was, in a symbolic sense, emerges in one light as the Jean-Paul Sartre he constructed his work against. Eribon recounts a good story of misrecognition after Sartre and Foucault had been seen on television together—Foucault walks into a restaurant and someone shouts, "There's Jean-Paul Sartre". Foucault's response: "I'm not sure it was a compliment." Yet for all their differences, Foucault's part in recent French culture was that played earlier by Sartre, and their later political association was no accident. When Sartre died, his old enemy Althusser paid tribute to him as "our Jean-Jacques" Rousseau. This accolade could just as well have been given to Michel Foucault.

But surely there's not just one Foucault? To each their own. My first stay in Paris was above a butcher shop run by Denis Foucault—no relation I guess. So there must be more than one Foucault. The English Foucault has emerged, more recently, less as a libertarian than as a reformist, less defiant than put—at some stage—to argument about sites of struggle and even to policy formation. Foucault the Englishman is, of course, like all things English, more sensible and comprehensible than the obscurantist French. But Foucault's French followers today too are interested in mundane matters like life insurance, town planning and hospital administration, as well as in Nietzsche and the body.

Foucault's premature death in 1984 saw, among other events, a major intellectual wake held in celebration in Paris in 1988. The proceedings can now be read in *Michel Foucault Philosopher*. Contributors include American pragmatist-postmodernist Richard Rorty, Foucault's old friend and intellectual collaborator Gilles Deleuze, and even some old Althusserians brought out of mothballs: famous folks discussing famous ideas. For Foucauldians this is a treat like an old and forgotten photo album: the intensity of the forensics may seem a little arcane. Uncharacteristically, the few elements of humour here are teutonic. Manfred Frank opens his paper on the very serious issue of discourse by reminding listeners of Lichtenberg's aphorism: according to Lichtenberg, the hollow sound which is made when a book hits a head is not always caused by the book. Frank continues to discuss discourse by remarking of its semantic origins that the Latin verb *discurre* means 'to run hither and thither', which is what the contributions to this book proceed to do. There are more Foucaults here than you can poke a stick at.

Foucault became notorious for his willing cultivation of various personalities: "Do not ask me who I am and do not ask me to stay the same". As Richard Rorty indicates here, there are also North American faces of Foucault: Foucault as a liberal, as Dewey with Nietzsche in his pocket. Certainly Foucault's interest in government raises anew a whole series of questions which liberals have been puzzling over for years in the quiet gloom of that discipline called political science. Also noteworthy is Foucault's relative indifference towards psychoanalysis; he says to Jacques-Alain Miller, "One of these days you'll have to explain Lacan to me". Unlike the rest of the modern world, Sophie Lee and Salt'n'Pepa, Foucault seems actually to tire of people talking about sex, which is in itself a good enough reason to think about reading this book.

But the best story told in this volume is that by Richard Rorty, one which makes you want to go and read Rorty instead. Rorty crossdresses Foucault as Dewey, the dissident liberal, partly to resemble himself. Unlike Foucault, Rorty has no desperate need to keep changing clothes or identities. Rorty shares Foucault's unease with the world we have made. But he is also uncomfortable with Foucault's one-sided appraisal of modernity.

The story Foucault tells—modern society as the prison—is compelling, but it is only part of the story. Foucault, like Rousseau, cannot resist the romantic exaggeration of the negative; like Nietzsche, Foucault was a philosopher who claimed the privileges of the poet. But unlike Nietzsche, Foucault did not turn his back on suffering. Thus the libertarian pole repels politics back into liberalism, more explicitly into social democracy. The outsider no longer stands at the door, but enters the house of power. Read this way, Foucault looks increasingly like Max Weber—sober but compassionate, sceptical yet optimistic, viewing our fate as the
struggles of the day rather than the polar ice of night.

The problem here is not with Foucault but with us. The problem now is whether there exists a sufficient will to think Foucault in this way, against the dominant current of fin-de-siecle nihilism which too many folks take postmodernity to mean. Black's still hip, as it always has been for bohemians—but it may be better now for radicals to fade to pink, even against a background almost certainly turning a greyer shade of blue. Little wonder Rousseau wept—only he was crying for himself. Foucault's message, by comparison, is dry-eyed. There is still hope that we can do better.

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Darwin by Adrian Desmond and James Moore (Penguin/Michael Joseph). Reviewed by Jose Borghino.

This massive 828-page blockbuster opens with a rhetorical rollercoaster. The preface smacks more of a Hollywood adventure movie (I was reminded of the first 15 minutes of Raiders of the Lost Ark) than the normally staid and aesthetised prose of 'straight' science:

It is 1839. England is tumbling towards anarchy, with countrywide unrest and riots. The gutter presses are fizzing, fire-bombs flying. The shout on the streets is for revolution. Red evolutionists denounce the props of an old static society: priestly privilege, wage exploitation, and the workhouses. A million socialists are castigating marriage, capitalism, and the fat, corrupt Established Church. Radical Christians join them, hymn-singing Dissenters who condemn the 'fornicating' Church as a 'harlot', in bed with the State.

Even science must be purged: for the gutter atheists, material atoms are all that exist, and like the 'social atoms'—people—they are self-organising ... The science of life—biology—lies ruined, prostituted, turned into a Creationist citadel by the clergy. Britain now stands teetering on the brink of collapse—or so it seems to the gentry, who close ranks to protect their privileges.

At this moment, how could an ambitious thirty-year-old gentleman open a secret notebook and with a devil-may-care sweep, suggest that headless hermaphrodite molluscs were the ancestors of mankind?

The 'gentleman' in question, of course, was Charles Robert Darwin: Cambridge-trained, once destined for the cloth, well-heeled and 'imper-turbably Whig' as Adrian Desmond and James Moore, the authors of this biography, describe him. The son of a Shropshire squire, Darwin can rightly be included with Marx and Freud in a troika of 19th century thinkers whose work still profoundly affects our value-systems today.

Despite some moments of boys-own bravado and rhetorical swashbuckle, the rest of the book rarely redeploy the cinematic gusto of the preface. (Just as well, I can hear Darwin say—he would have been greatly troubled by the sensationalist tone of the above excerpt, the repetition of 'gutter', and the salacious metaphors.)

Darwin is an entertaining and (in the best sense) journalistic work which deliberately distances itself from the previous biographies that Desmond and Moore see as "curiously bloodless". By contrast, they try to "re-locate Darwin in his age" by writing a "defiantly social portrait", and they largely succeed.

The science in the book is fairly synoptic—which is understandable for a populist work; but too often Desmond and Moore assume a detailed knowledge of 19th Century British history. At one point, for instance, we are told that Cambridge, where Darwin was studying in 1831, was "gripped by election fever". The historical importance of this particular General Election is emphasised and we are told that the two Whig candidates for Cambridge were defeated, but the narrative immediately swerves towards Darwin's preparations for his voyage on HMS Beagle. It takes more than 10 frustrating pages (and six months of narrative time) for Desmond and Moore to let slip parenthetically that the Whigs had been returned to power. This is not suspense, it's an editorial slip—especially when all that was needed was a three-word sentence, 'The Whigs won'.

Desmond and Moore have utilised the flood of primary material recently unleashed by the Darwin Industry: Darwin's secret notebooks have been transcribed and his published Correspondence has reached Volume 7 of the 14,000 known letters from and to him.

This new material reveals a fascinating picture of science as an institution