Part Three, ‘Globalisation and Citizenship’, looks beyond Australia to questions of citizenship more generally in a globalised world. What does citizenship mean when goods, ideas, finance, people and pollution flow across borders? As more and more decisions are made at a supra–national level, is it time to consider global citizenship? Stephen Castles suggests that the workings of international non–government organisations provide one model of such global citizenship.

Gary L. Sturgess argues that we are currently witnessing the fragmentation of concepts of citizenship, with people able to cope with both a variety of memberships and with governance that goes beyond the nation–state. He also warns that nation–states can be expected to find this process highly threatening and that, as far as they are aware of it, they will resist it.

The interesting grab–bag of articles in Individual, community, nation will force the reader to reconsider the meaning of Australian citizenship, and in 2001 that can only be a good thing.

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A former Labor Minister recently fulminated against economically unprofitable courses, courses ‘usually called something or other “studies”’. In this climate it is perhaps fortunate for Yvonne Sherwood that she is based at the University of Glasgow, rather than an Australian university, because her study of the biblical book Jonah quite happily, even profitably, exists at an intersection of no less than three ‘something or other “studies”’: Cultural, Biblical and Jewish.

Jonah is one of the shortest books in the Hebrew Scriptures, four chapters long. It begins with the word of God coming to Jonah, telling him to go to the people of Ninevah and cry out against their wickedness. Instead Jonah takes ship to Tarshish, the biblical equivalent of travelling on the Titanic. God sends a storm and to quiet it the sailors throw Jonah overboard. Jonah is swallowed by a big fish and spends three days and nights in its belly. The fish then spews Jonah onto dry land, and Jonah goes to Ninevah and proclaims its imminent destruction. The people of Ninevah repent, and God decides not to destroy them after all. Jonah, angered by God’s decision, leaves the city and sits down to watch what will happen to it. God causes a big plant to grow to provide Jonah with shade, but on the next day sends a big worm to attack the bush and cause it to wither. Jonah is also angered by this and asks to die. God responds by asking why, if Jonah is concerned for this plant, he, God, should not be concerned for a city of one hundred and twenty thousand persons and also many animals. And there the book of Jonah ends, without waiting for Jonah’s reply.

Sherwood provides a genealogy for this short, strange book, a history of the way it has been interpreted and used. She begins with four mainstream, or academic and Christian, interpretations. The first, the reading of the Church Fathers, picks up a saying of Jesus recorded in the gospels of Matthew and Luke, that the only sign the current generation will be given is the sign of Jonah. Jonah and Jesus are then read as typological twins, although twins who resemble ‘Danny de Vito and Arnold Schwarzenegger in the Hollywood movie’. Since Matthew and Luke gloss Jesus’ saying differently, the Church Fathers are free to interpret Jesus and Jonah’s twinship in a variety of ways. Despite this freedom, the twin reading is soon overtaken by a reading that sees Jonah as a stereotypical Jew, unable to understand the universalism of God’s love that reaches even to the Ninevites. In this reading the Hebrew Scripture is ‘not merely the Old but the Exhausted, Paralysed, Infirm Testament, given to senile mutterings’. The third reading, ‘knocked out on John Calvin’s anvil’, looks at the monster within the self or the state and warns against disobedience. The fourth reading uses Jonah to provide biblical biology in the wake of The Origin of the Species, as Jonah and the whale becomes Jonah and the canis carcharias or white shark.

Of these four readings Sherwood argues that the second, anti–Semitic reading has flourished longest, as it enables Christian theology to deal with tensions in its relations with Judaism. The core of Sherwood’s book is summed up in her statement that, ‘after the Holocaust
the anti-Semitic reflex is unbearable'. So Sherwood examines ‘the Backwaters of Jewish Studies and the underbellies of Cultural Studies’ to discover alternate readings of Jonah.

What the Jewish and popular readings of Jonah share is a Jonah-centred perspective. These readings laugh with Jonah, rather than at him, and sympathise and validate his anger with God. Jewish readings praise Jonah’s patriotic particularity; the Ninevites whom God spares are those whom God will later use to destroy Jonah’s nation — no wonder Jonah protests! In the Jewish tradition God’s protection isn’t certain, and Jonah is a forum for fears and troubling questions. Popular readings put the undeniably weird big fish at the centre of the text, and early popular readings belong to the Carnival tradition in which the world is turned on its head for a time. Twentieth-century popular readings, however, expose and defrock God, and Jonah becomes a text about alienation.

*A Biblical Text and its Afterlives* is a rich book. The breadth of the material on Jonah that Sherwood has collected is phenomenal. Jewish readings include the tenth-century *Midrash Jonah*, the fourteenth-century *Book of Splendour*, the 1956 play *It Should Happen to a Dog* by Wolf Mankowitz, and the painting *Jonah at Haifa Port* by Eugene A beshaus. Popular readings include the fourteenth-century Middle English poem *Patience*, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century paintings, *Moby Dick*, an essay by George Orwell, a poem by Aldous Huxley, the television program *Northern Exposure*, and the *Hamlyn Children’s Bible in Colour*. George Gershwin and Monty Python camp in the footnotes.

In Sherwood’s analysis these various sources rub elbows and argue and exhilaratingly debate the text. At one point Sherwood expresses the desire to introduce John Calvin to the Michel Foucault of *Discipline and Punish*, a desire that I wholeheartedly endorse. There is only one point at which a potentially educational confrontation is avoided. Sherwood responds with some horror to a reading of Jonah by Rosemary Radford Ruether and H. J. Ruether that sees Jonah as a Zionist and the Ninevites as Palestinians. Sherwood reads this colonising of the Jewish text using tools provided by Edward Said in *Orientalism*, when an equally interesting discussion could have taken place between the Ruethers and the Said of *The Question of Palestine* or *Blaming the Victims*.

Sherwood’s writing style is colourful, even quirky, rich in simile and metaphor. Scholars are weighed down by footnotes worn like concrete shoes; Jekyll–Jonah is overwhelmed by Jonah–Hyde; John Hooper’s book of Jonah advocates a zero-tolerance policy; the Jonah–Christ figure is killed off by his evil twin Jonah the Jew; the *Midrash Jonah* begins to suspect that fish–belly prisons are too comfortable, that they have too many televisions and snooker tables. At times this highly spiced language leaves the reader with indigestion and a desire for an equally nutritious but slightly blander dish, possibly porridge. (Sherwood’s writing style is also infectious.) But I have to admire a writer who uses a quote from a Scottish writer to illustrate a ‘quintessentially Yiddish sense of life’ and blithely admits to her cheating in a footnote.

As Cultural Studies *A Biblical Text and its Afterlives* is an unqualified success. As Sherwood points out, Western culture lives in and among the words of the Bible; and the story of Jonah and the whale is one of the texts that everyone seems to know. Sherwood challenges the common view of the Bible that sees it as occupying a transcendent zone and as speaking an eternal message. Using Cultural Studies and New Historicism Sherwood provides Jonah with a genealogy and more than makes her case that in reading the Bible interpretation always precedes the biblical original.

As Biblical Studies *A Biblical Text and its Afterlives* prompts more questions than it answers. Sherwood’s own reading of Jonah, part three of the book, follows Jewish and popular interpretations by seeing Jonah as a Rubik’s cube or a Mensa puzzle rather than a join-the-dots picture. After reading this book preachers will never again be able to use Jonah as a simple tale about God’s universal love and the need to obey God no matter what. Sherwood certainly succeeds in countering popular and academic images of a bland and certain Bible.

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