

SUBVERTING THE IMPERIAL PERSPECTIVE: A STUDY OF PETER CAREY'S JACK MAGGS

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ABSTRACT

Carey's popularity rose with the world canvas with the publication of Jack Maggs. Like the Australian writers Judith Wright, Hal Porter, Thomas Keneally, and Patrick White, Peter Carey explores the convict past in two of his masterpieces, viz., Jack Maggs (1997) and True History of the Kelly Gang (2000). Here, an attempt is made to study Jack Maggs which is published in 1997 in Britain and Australia; and in 1998 in the United States. Like Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea (1966) which subverts Jane Eyre, Carey deliberately subverts Charles Dickens's Great Expectations, the myth of imperialism, the realist Victorian Master Narratives and the thematic concerns by investigating into the colonial renditions. He addresses socio-historical, cultural, political and literary issues within the postcolonial context. He expounds the inner conflict of Maggs, his struggle against his deluded belongingness to England and his later unification with his incognito Australian roots. The representation of identity as fluid can be determined by the changing historical and social milieus. This paper probes into the gentle pronouncement of the novelist who, at last, frees Maggs from his past ridden consciousness to his present enlightenment.

KEYWORDS: Peter Carey, Convict Past, Jack Maggs, Australian Identity

INTRODUCTION

The convict past has an enormous impact on the evolution of Australian history and literature. Charles Dickens, a distinguished writer of English Literature has a profound impact on Australian literary works with the theme of 'convict history'. Ever since For the Term of His Natural Life (1874) by Marcus Clarke to Jack Maggs (1997) by Peter Carey, Dickens influences the Australian works, viz., David Allen's play, Modest Expectations (1990), Nicholas Paul Hasluck's short story, Orlick, and Carmel Bird's postmodern gothic romance The Bluebird Café (1990).

Great Expectations (1860-1861) is a major source to three significant Australian works, namely, Michael Noonan's 1982 sequel, Magwitch; The Australian Broadcasting Corporation Television Series, Great Expectations: The Untold Story (1987), directed by Tim Burstall; and Peter Carey's Jack Maggs. Besides Great Expectations, Dickens includes the story "(T) he convicts return" (76-83) in the work The Pickwick Papers (1836-37).

Great Expectations, the Victorian bildungsroman, exposes the realist writing of the nineteenth century, whereas Jack Maggs the postmodern and postcolonial writing of the twentieth century. Great Expectations has three volumes with multiple strands of plot and subplot. The focal point of this genre and its first-person narrative mainly revolve around the transition of the protagonist Pip. His initial frustration and conflict with his desires and the Victorian values of an established order make him resign from the society he lives in. To Dickens, Pip is 'the center', and his benefactor, Abel Magwitch 'the other' whose fate is destined to crime, punishment, disaster, exile, and death. Magwitch is depicted as worse than the hardened criminal, Compeyson. Dickens proffers an inferior and volatile identity to Magwitch, firstly with the name itself Mag'witch' referring to some 'evil', and then with a gruesome appearance and rough language, he confirms his lowly cultural and social milieu. He accords an unstable identity to Magwitch changing his identity to Provis, to Mr. Cambell and to finally Abel Magwitch.

Dickens formulates the persona of Magwitch as: "A fearful man, all in coarse grey, with a great iron on his leg (...) who limped and shivered, and glared and growled; and whose teeth chattered in his head as he seized me by the chin." (GE 2 Ch I). Pip repeatedly considers him "negro-head (...) his negro-head (...) loose tobacco of the kind that is called Negro-head (...) fill it with negro-head (...)" (GE 306, 310, 311, 325 Ch XL, Ch XLI). When Pip discerns that his benefactor is Magwitch, he feels ashamed to accept him "If I had loved him instead of abhorring him; if I had been attracted to him by the strongest admiration and affection, instead of shrinking from him with the strongest repugnance; it could have been no worse" (GE 305 Ch XXXIX). Dickens even deprives Magwitch of the passionate revelation of the past "I am not a going fur to tell you my life, like a song or a story-book. (...)" and he has a blind eye on the hard convict turmoil of Magwitch who is suffered "everything (...) – except hanged. (...)" (GE 325-6 Ch XLII).

Magwitch, 'the victim', 'the silenced and victimized persona' and 'the dark terrible other' is an embodiment of the frozen imperial perspective that distorts the truth about him. This distortion ventures Carey to explore the unexplored reality about his eponymous protagonist, Jack Maggs. In an interview with the Boldtype, Carey states that Great Expectations is a work that denotes how the English have colonized the Australians' ways of seeing themselves. Experimenting with the mode of postmodernism and shifting his narrative from the Eurocentric point of view - Pip (now Henry Phipps) to the antipodean Magwitch (now Jack Maggs), Carey heralds a new era in exploring the psyche of the underprivileged convict and his magnanimity to re-define the convict past of Australia and the sense of Australianness. This shift of focalization and inversion of the characters welcomes polyphony in the set text. Critic, Annegret Maack quotes the commitment of Carey:

I wanted to reinvent (Magwitch), to possess him, to act as his advocate. I did not want to diminish his "darkness" or his danger, but I wanted to give him all the love and tender sympathy that Dickens' first-person narrative provides his English hero Pip. (...) My Henry Phipps is not in any sense the same person as Dickens' Pip. They have both inherited money from a transported convict, but their actions and their characters are very different (Gaile, *Fabulating Beauty: Perspectives on the Fiction of Peter Carey*, 230).

Hence, Carey assumes self-appointed responsibility to create a counter-discourse in which the underlying assumptions of the original are abrogated and appropriated. He eliminates 'witch' metaphorically and literally out of Magwitch. To Carey, Maggs is 'the center' and Phipps 'the other'. Carey in the Author's note of Jack Maggs, admits that he stretches history to suit his own fictional ends. Employing postmodern and postcolonial perspectives, Carey revises the canonical European

text and generates an alternative interpretation and understanding for the Australians and their history.

The texts of colonial literature distort the realities by inscribing the words 'inferior', 'otherness or doubleness' and 'deviant' on the colonized ones. Whereas, those of Post-colonial literature particularly focuses on the way the colonial experience encrypts an 'obsession', 'a mania or nostalgia' on the psyche of the subjects.

As with much post-colonial writing, this self-conscious narrative calls into question the reliability of written texts as embodiments of any kind of truth. We are also made acutely aware of the novelistic process in action, of the transformative power of writing and the written to reveal and veil. (Woodcock 8: "Jack Maggs" 132)

The plot of Jack Maggs is interwoven with four narrative threads. Carey provides an appealing postcolonial and postmodern angle to the original novel by infusing complex narrative structure and characterization that inverse the Victorian notion of 'fixed' identity and narration as well. The first thread of plot counters as a manuscript for the plot of *Great Expectations*. The second involves the (hi)story of Tobias Oates, the author of *The Death of Jack Maggs* who is a prototype for Dickens. Oates' negotiations and manipulations with Jack Maggs to become a famous novelist form the crux of the novel.

The third is the epistolary extroversion of the (hi)story of Jack Maggs, his past identity of England, the hard convict punishment in New South Wales, the vicious treatment of England towards its transported convicts; and the present events that happen on his return to London and the exploited mesmerism-sessions with Oates and his final transcendence from the false expectations on Phipps to the great expectations for his Australian race. The fourth is that of Carey's. It includes the three conflicting histories by replacing Magwitch with Maggs and Dickens with Oates with a new revelation that it is Oates (Dickens) who, in fact, has victimized Maggs.

The narrative of Jack Maggs begins at 6 p.m on 15 April 1837, the year of Queen Victoria's succession with an illegal return of the convict Jack Maggs to London after twenty-four years of exile in Australia, and the plot continues for a period of three weeks. Jack Maggs is desperately obsessed with London as "home... That's what I want. My home" (5) and his belongingness to it. The meticulous research and keen observation of Carey in depicting 'London' and its social context prove his masterly re-invention of the Victorian text.

Though Carey ornaments his language with the Victorian phrases such as 'It was a Saturday night', 'six of the clock', 'hooded eyes', 'looked out the window' and 'an overgrown mouth opening to devour him', he in fact, dismantles the imperial perspective. The critics, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin affirm that language becomes the medium through which "a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of 'truth', 'order', and 'reality' become established" (7).

Carey uses language as an effective medium of communication to bring out the injustice perpetrated against the Australian convicts. The moral decay of London in betraying its own people is evident when Maggs, a denizen of the Australian colonies, knocks the door of his foster mother, Ma Britten who says to him " 'you 're a dead man if they find you'" (4), and Maggs' reply " "That's a nice homecoming." " (4). Maggs is forced to detach all its ties from England. Ma Britten even warns Maggs that he should not bring any trouble to her:

‘You worried I might have a bone to pick with you, Ma?’ ‘Aren’t you worried someone’s going to hang you, Jack?’ (5). Here, Ma Britten symbolizes ‘imperial England’ and Maggs ‘the colonized Australia’. Maggs wants to be united with his homeland: ‘I’m retired (from crime). I come here for the culture... The opera, the theatre, I got a lot of time to make up for’ (5). The tone of Maggs is apparent: “There is no doubt that Jack Maggs planned to keep his promise, but the morrow held events he could not foresee” (5). The authorial strand of Carey contextually intervenes with the narrative strand of Jack Maggs in depicting the present life of Maggs in London and his convict past in New South Wales.

On serving the hard punishment in Australia, Maggs aims at rejuvenating his relationship with his surrogate son, Henry Phipps. The long stay in New South Wales could hardly make Maggs accept it as his ‘home’. His ardent passion for English identity that “I’d rather be a bad smell here than a frigging rose in New South Wales” (230) and his reiteration “My son is an Englishman . . . ‘I am not of that race.’ . . . ‘The Australian race’ ‘The race of Australians.’ (312-13) suppresses the formulation of his ‘new identity’ of Australia.

Jack Maggs even proclaims at the risk of his life “I am a fucking Englishman, and I have English things to settle. I am not to live my life with all that vermin. I am here in London where I belong” (128). He is caught in the willing suspension of disbelief that the convicts of New South Wales can hardly be recognized as ‘Englishmen’. His nostalgia for England prompts Maggs to abandon his two sons in New South Wales considering them inequal to Henry Phipps. He hopes high for Phipps. Maggs is brooded in the thought that Phipps is the Victorian gentleman with his superior education and English identity. When Maggs reaches Phipps’s house in The Great Queen Street which he glorifies as “the place in which (he) did invest... High Hopes... (the place where) all these long years later, (he) become(s).....an Englishman” (74 & 322), he identifies the uninformed absence of Phipps that grieves him to: “It is a most melancholy business to be solitary in the place in which I did invest such High Hopes, but I do trust my disappointment will be brief” (74). Maggs being disappointed by Phipps’s absence takes the identity of a footman to himself and joins Percy Buckle’s house which is adjacent to Phipps’s house, and thus keeps a constant watch on Phipps’s arrival.

The middle-aged Percy Buckle, a Clerkenwell grocer is ambitious in maintaining his acquaintance with the eminent writers of those times and has a literary collection, the complete set of Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall*. Through the house of Percy Buckle, Carey mirrors the Victorian era, its persona and realms of interests- the social life, clothing, the hair-style of footmen, the hierarchy of servants in the household, the procedures of service at table, hall-marked silver things and putrid London lodging houses. Since Percy Buckle inherits property from his relative, he claims the title of the gentleman to himself. Through Maggs, Phipps, Oates and Percy Buckle, Carey passes a scathing comment on their delusion about Victorian gentleman which leads them to deny their true identity and function within the imaginary discourse. Carey intervenes into the narration and proffers a superior identity to Maggs affirming that Buckle is “no more a gentleman than the man who was presently entering his household in disguise” (9).

Buckles’ invitation of Tobias Oates for dinner triggers the main plot of Jack Maggs. Oates, the author of comic tales and creator of Captain Crumley and Mrs. Morefallen, and an enthusiastic dabbler in mesmerism is a self-made man inventing “a respectable life for himself” (182). During the dinner with the gentlemen who are trained at Oxford or Cambridge, Oates feels intimidated and leaves his identity of “a man of letters” and becomes a “common conjuror, a street magician” (136) to get their approval. He exhibits his bourgeoisie psyche by “solemnly gazed upon the surgeons as if he had been appointed to

sit in judgment on them” (135). Maggs is treated inferior by Percy Buckle and his servants. The convict punishment mutilates Maggs’s appearance. Oates treats Maggs in an utmost lowly manner.

The inmates of Percy Buckle’s ascertain Maggs as a complicated, terrible man with “bruised, even belligerent quality” (1) in his demeanor. The servant, Peggy Mott tells Mercy that Maggs “looks like a murderer” (15). Mercy Larkin, the maid says that Maggs may even “pick a pocket for Tobias Oates” (18), but in reality, it is Oates who steals the memories of Maggs. Maggs is respected in New South Wales but now in Buckles’s household his life is reduced from being

“a man of substance” (20) to the life in a “stuffy attic which was to be his home awhile. (and sleeping on a) little crib (20-21) and people “rushed about him, ignorant of who he was” (31).

Maggs at times secretly goes to Henry Phipps’s house and grieves “For this, he labored? To stand in Henry’s hallway like a thief, his breeches smeared with London soot?” (35). When he overhears Oates mentioning a thief-catcher named Partridge who can supposedly find any man in England, he believes Oates “as trustworthy as a Newgate Bird” (30) and agrees to the hypnotic sessions of Oates on condition that Oates helps him in finding Henry Phipps. Maggs becomes a victim to *tic douloureux*. Oates healing the painful “twitching palsy in his cheek” (8) hypnotizes Maggs to plunder his criminal past.

In the Prologue, Carey includes *Du magnetism animal* (1820) which is known as ‘animal magnetism’ by Armand Marie Jacques de Chastenet and Marquis de Puységur, the pre-scientific founders of hypnosis. This aspect concerns with the concept of hypnotic ability which extracts the information from the unconscious state of the person.

Maggs hardly comprehends the secret intentions of Oates and makes himself “susceptible to magnetism” (28). Oates convinces Maggs that he maintains some notebooks for Maggs’s benefit. By presenting “the dark of the convict’s past, groping in the shadows, describing what was often a mirror held up to his own turbulent and fearful soul” (91), Oates, in fact, deceives Maggs with his two sets of books which are “‘transcriptions’ and they are fabricated by the writer to hide the true nature of his exploration” (91).

When Maggs removes his shirt during the first trance, the sight reveals the hard tortures of the previous exiles: “The footman turned. As Lizzie Warriner raised her eyes, she gasped at the sea of pain etched upon the footman’s back, a brooding sea of scars, of ripped and tortured skin” (86). The mesmeric sessions on Maggs concretize Oates’s ambition to become a “cartographer” (90) of the criminal mind:

I have them all here inside my cranium. But what you have brought me here is a world as rich as London itself. What a puzzle of life exists in the dark little lane-ways of this wretch’s soul, what stolen gold lies hidden in the vaults beneath his filthy streets.

(. . .).

‘It’s the Criminal Mind’ said Tobias Oates, ‘awaiting its first cartographer’(90).

When Buckle discovers Oates’s exploitation of Maggs, Buckle asks “Did you never imagine yourself in his position?” to which Oates replies, “‘Buckle, dear Buckle. It is my business to imagine everything”” (88). It exposes the masterly trading skills of the colonial writer, Oates who assumes himself as “the archaeologist” of Maggs’s history and “the surgeon” of Maggs’s soul” (54). These hypnotic sessions probe into the self-discovery of Maggs. Carey reveals the fact in an interview with Andreas Gaile that Maggs’ obsession for England reminds him of his childhood memory:

Australian history is filled with denial and false consciousness. I grew up thinking that we were English; my grandfather called England home. And somehow, when we imagined the convicts and soldiers, we always placed ourselves on the soldier's side of the experience. We thought the convicts were nothing to do with us. Later I came to believe that the convict experience was central in the formation of Australia. And, you know, the convict experience makes itself felt in so many things, not least the very particular nature of our lovely idiosyncratic Australian English (Gaile, 7).

Not only Maggs, but even Oates is also entrapped in his unsettling delusion, i.e., his mesmerism through which he tries obtaining the inventive powers of the imagination, in order to create a safe warm world where he hasn't been denied as done in real life. Oates's contradictions about his identity and his constant confirmation about "his position in the world" (26) seem to be "unsettling" (26). He steals the fascinating episodes from people's lives and invests them for his becoming into a "(...) a novelist who might topple Thackeray himself. And it was this ambition; always burning bright within him (...)" (44). With all the revelations of Maggs, Oates writes a novel titled *The Death of Maggs*. Maggs records his memories in his diary. Here, Carey exchanges the roles of the characters – Oates, the writer turns into a thief and Maggs, a thief turns into a writer.

Recollecting the past, he writes letters from right to left with 'the great albatross quill' (74) and in a disappearing ink to Henry Phipps:

"sqqihp yrneH raeD (...) He watched these fresh lines fade (...) until that is, they became invisible." (74).

". . . you will read a distinguished story on the mirror's handle.

Well, Henry Phipps, you will read a different type of story in the glass, by which I mean – mine own." (74)

Carey portrays Phipps's character through the views and perceptions of various others. With the letters received during his exile, Maggs assumes Phipps to be a well-educated person with "a tender heart and to obey the laws" (75). He determines to "weave (Phipps) a nest so strong that no one would ever hurt his goodness" (287). But in fact, Phipps sends a fake portrait of George IV saying that it is his. Phipps never writes to Maggs. It is Victor Littlehales, Phipps's guardian and an Oxford tutor who writes letters full of lies. Mrs. Halfstairs, the housekeeper of Buckle's speaks about Phipps that he is an extravagant man with full of "Japes and high-jinks" (12). He drinks and spends his time in the notorious clubs. Constable, the colleague of Maggs says that "he too had known Henry Phipps, known him in the most personal and private sense" (167). Maggs gets disappointed when he knows that Albert Pope has committed suicide because of Phipps and Phipps has not had any remorse for his involvement in it. Phipps has neither repentance nor realization. He hardly realizes the goodness of his benefactor, instead, he finds "the very notion of him vile" (164).

When Oates reveals the criminal past of Maggs to Buckle, Buckle to shares the similar pathetic suffering of his older sister. Buckle sympathizes that Maggs has severely suffered for his crimes, and so needs peace to start his life afresh.

However, as the narration proceeds, Mr. Buckles's character is taken into focus. Mercy Larkin, the maid in Buckle's house and her mother are saved by Buckle from prostitution. Mercy believes in her protected identity only in Mr. Buckle's household and hopes that he will someday marry and give her a respectable identity. But Buckle benefits her insecurity and treats her only as a sexual object who is expected to "Turn over . . . and raise (her) sweet white bottom in the air" (116).

The experiments of Oates on Maggs and Maggs' subsequent outbursts change Buckle more into materialistic and desirable for power over others. When Maggs enacts quarantine by bolting the doors and windows with an improperly inserted nails, Buckles gets angry with him, and further develops hatred towards him.

Maggs says to Mercy that "I am an old dog (. . .) who has been treated bad, and has learned all sorts of tricks he wishes he never had to know. . ." (72-73). The narrative present unfolds the travails of Maggs. Maggs says to Mercy Larkin that "You would not be judging me. (. . .) A girl like you cannot imagine what it was, to live in such darkness (317). The agonized memories by the King's soldiers in Moreton Bay and the hostile response of Phipps make Maggs lament that "I am to die before I meet my son" (323).

Besides the narrative present, Carey intermittently unveils the pathetic childhood of Maggs as a picaresque character through the letters of Maggs to Henry Phipps. In England, Maggs is a derelict right from his childhood. He, in his tender age, is taken by a benefactor named Silas Smith to a midwife named Mary Britten for his further care. Mary, an abortionist really 'did not want' (76) Maggs but brings him up because Silas Smith pays to her. Ma Britten promises Maggs that he will be admitted to a school by Silas. But his childhood promise shatters when he is, in fact, taken to work in the chimney.

Despite his hard experiences in Chimney, Maggs remembers "how I was starved and thin and wrinkled like a rag etcetera, how she washed me, wrapped me in piece of clean grey blanket and persuaded me to take a little barley water" (77) and "At five years old I could scrub a floor as good as any char. By six I could wash and sort the bones and offal, placing them upon the table in the manner she liked" (94). Though Maggs thinks Mary Britten as his mother liking "the feel of her strong arms" and, he would have done "anything to get it" (94), he is never reciprocated the motherly care by her. Mary Britten and Silas Smith exploit Maggs, Sophina (Silas's daughter) Tom (Ma Britten's son), and encourage them for criminal activities such as "a series of clever burglaries without never laying fingers on the goods" (153). They cause the death of Sophina and Tom, and Maggs is made a prisoner for 'the term of his natural life' (324).

Maggs and Sophina find Ma Britten's house with aborted embryos in basins full of "blood in quantities enough to frighten any child" (211). Yet, they are powerless to stop Mary Britten who has "a force of nature, the Ma - her long arms, her wild hair, her skin always smelling of snakeroot and tansy. (. . .) She was the queen of England . . ." (92-93). Ma Britten even aborts Sophina who is impregnated by Maggs. Tom shows the dead fetus to Maggs and Sophina at the drain.

This pathetic incident affects Maggs that he "Cannot write more" (241). Regardless of Maggs's feelings, Oates exploits the context of Sophina's death for his novel: "I write that name, Jack, like a stone mason, makes the name upon a headstone, so her (Sophina) memory may live forever" (280). Maggs is horribly tortured by his alter-ego or a phantom.

Though Maggs requests Oates not to harm him further, Oates continues his cruel practice of cartography by inflicting pain on Maggs which denotes the dominion of colonialism. Oates suggests Maggs that his problem is due to his "Phantoms... who cause(s) (him) such distress" (46). Thus he transforms Maggs's body into a text:

Here, Carey points out the flexibility of the colonial writers who attribute non-physical identity or position to the colonized ones such as Oates states "Don't you see what I now possess? A memory I can enter, and leave. Leave, and then return to" (87). It witnesses the colonial exploitation of the colonized nations. Maggs understands Oates's usurpation of his life and thoughts as theft: "You are a thief," he says that "You have cheated me, Toby, as bad as I was ever cheated" (305-6)

and he remains as “the captive of someone whose powers were greater than he had the wit to ever understand” (147). The trials of Maggs to know the version of Oates about his life indicates Maggs’s determination for the true representation of his life. By interconnecting Maggs’s insistence on telling his own story and Oates’ insistence on his novel, *The Death of Jack Maggs*, Carey creates meta-fiction, a fiction about making of fiction. Carey comments on the blending of truth and fiction through the authorship of Oates who uses Maggs’s body as an example.

Here, Maggs’s own story serves as an embodiment of the truth against Oates’s biographical account of Maggs. Carey adopts intersecting authorship or multivocalism to focus on the multiple perspectives and objective reality. He closely knits the author with the character and the character with the reader which blurs fiction from reality. Characters think that they are subjected to the mind of another author. It leads to a determined overtone within the text. Lizzie states her moving forward on a set course very traditionally in chapter 83 that “she understood that her life had always been traveling towards this point” (306). Maggs also comes to this sort of realization in chapter 73 where he glimpses the manipulating author of his fate:

The pages were very wet, and the ink in some places washed away, but he began his search from the beginning of the note-book and very soon, on page three, he was rewarded: M would not go mad.

(. . .)

(. . .) He knew his life and death were not his own (273).

Here, Lizzie’s conventional idea of moving forward on a set course is different from Maggs realization and his transmutable existence. Though Oates and Maggs, the sub-authors seem to control each other, Carey admixtures their artistic ability into his authorship. The critic, Woodcock states that Carey uses interpolation to explore the “ambivalence of (. . .) dualism, the covert strengths of the periphery, the hidden weakness of the center” (109).

Tobias Oates is an interpolation of Dickens. The norms of the Victorian society, the preference for colorful waist-coats, the troubled relationship with the fathers (117), their love for acting, the success with the publication of their first novel, the details of their first son who is just three months old, the adulterous love for his sister-in-law (Oates for Elizabeth (Lizzie) Warriner and Dickens for Mary Hogarth), the sad demise of their sisters-in-law on 7 May 1837, their financial worries, materialism, hypocrisy, child prostitution, the homosexual relations between the footmen where one’s unfaithfulness causes the other’s suicide.

On reading the first chapter of *The Death of Maggs*, Maggs realizes that he is “burgled, plundered” (32) by Oates who does not include the financial and social progress of Maggs in Australia, the plot of Phipps to kill Maggs, accompaniment of Mercy Larkin with Maggs to Australia and the unfulfilled intention of Maggs. Oates fails in his promise of destroying his written text. Instead, Oates envisions the end of Maggs’ story with Maggs being burned alive in his mansion when he is surrounded by his family even before the publication of Oates’s novel, and thus he could not ever read “That Book.”. Mercy Larkin reads it when it is amended in 1861, the date parallel to *Great Expectations*.

Oates dedicates *The Death of Jack Maggs* to the ignorant and cruel Buckle as a homage “(...) of that page which reads: Affectionately Inscribed to PERCIVAL CLARENCE BUCKLE, A Man of Letters, a Patron of the Arts” (328). This inscription appears to be insincere as “ Mitchell’s librarian has noted on each index card the ‘v. rough excision’ of that page” (328). At the end of the novel, Maggs wins over Oates by making him give up his notebook on the River Severn, “Jack then

hurled the book high out above the Severn. As it flew up into the mist, its pages opened like a pair of wings" (282).

At the river Severn, Maggs's powerful control over Oates that "'You are just a character to me too, Toby'" (280) features the meta-fictional rebellion of character against author just as Maggs writes about Oates into his journal (26). Carey emphasizes that "it was the Criminal Mind now controlled Tobias" (304). The critic, Kathleen J. Renk commends Carey for satirizing the "Imperial Gothic novel while criticizing the writer/ conjurer who plunders marginalized lives to make art." (63).

Carey sustains the order of the Victorian system in the end. Though Mercy Larkin, who owns seven copies of the novel which she later donates along with the letters of Jack Maggs to Henry Phipps for the collection of Mitchell Library in Sydney, she never featured in it. She replaces the dedication to Percy Buckle with the inscription "To Mercy from Captain E. Constable, Clapham 1870" (328). By rejecting the Western practice of myth-making, Mercy reclaims ownership of her story that was presented as not her story by Oates. This advocates that every text is open for free interpretation and that the author's intention may not exactly be perceived by the reader.

Carey's portrayal of Dickens holds a sense of ambivalence. He offers not only a counter-effect to the scenes of violence, both in terms of the traumatic experiences of Maggs's childhood and his time in Australia, but also the amount of mental cruelty that this novel holds, thus one can regard Jack Maggs as a book full of abuse, and much of the abuse takes Oates as a target. Oates undergoes many painful situations in his life. When he and his wife burn the body of Lizzie, he saw "the wraith of their dead child folding and unfolding in the skirts of fire" (326). This moment makes the readers sympathize with Oates who has lost his lover and their unborn child, and later his wife who despises him. When Oates fears for his life, he finds himself embracing Maggs's body. This scene, a moment of mixed intimacy and otherness between Maggs and Oates envisages the vision of Carey for the state of reconciliation between Australia and England.

In an interview, Carey states that he is initially very angry with Oates and that he has taken time to find any desirable quality in the ambitious young Englishman to be liked by the readers (Koval 1997: 667). But at the end, Carey arouses sympathy for Oates who finds himself tenderly close to the convict's body. When Oates, at last, admits his lies and the "pain that he had planted in the other's mind" (203), Maggs realizes that he has never encountered any Phantom before he met Oates (266). In the end, Carey frees Jack Maggs from his illusions and leaves Tobias Oates to his own fate.

Carey employs the playfulness of postmodernism in sketching the trauma of Maggs, Oates's cruel exploitation of Maggs, the betrayal of Henry Phipps and Buckles, their plots of murdering Maggs to get hold of his property and the brave selfless act of Mercy in rescuing Maggs from the bullet shot of Henry Phipps. Maggs's delusion for Phipps that "My son is an Englishman" (312) and his indifference towards his children in Australia that "I am not of that race" (312) is shattered in the spoken discourse with Mercy Larkin.

The act of Phipps's shooting and his decision to be a soldier of the regime shatters Maggs's illusion, and consequently his modest personality and emancipation of self-spring up by harmoniously integrating him with his home country. Maggs who desperately denies his Australian identity transcends himself into a new understanding of his place where he is "a respected citizen surrounded by a loving family" (Hassal, Australian Literary Studies 135). Maggs, Mercy Larkin, and Mary Britten return to Australia and settle in Wingham (327).

Mercy accepts the responsibility of Maggs's two sons (Richard and John), and the five children who are born from their relationship as further members of 'That Race' (327). Carey nurtures the point of John Barth stated in the essay "Post-modernist Revisited" where he defines the postmodern impulse as the aspiration toward having the ways of both illusionism and anti-illusionism. He delineates Maggs as a self-determined person who detaches himself from the colonial illusionism by formulating his new identity through the self-conscious mode of realization.

CONCLUSIONS

Jack Maggs and Mercy Larkin prove that Australians can ever blissfully live by strengthening their bond with their country. Through the refusal of Maggs for the colonial authorship of Oates and the claim of the antipodean authorship for himself Carey depicts Australia as a land of freedom and maturity. The critic Ankhi Mukherjee commends that "Carey's novel is best described as a departure from its putative origin – not a return to (the past), or a return of (the repressed), but a return from the London and the social order pickled in Dickens's novel, with a desire to make real its substantial but un-lived-out life" (Contemporary Literature, 117). Thus Carey re-constructs a fluid identity to Jack Maggs and his home country by strengthening the sensitized attachment of the transported convicts with their homeland.

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