FICTIONAL WORLD OF PETER CAREY

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Certificate

I hereby certify that the thesis *Fictional World of Peter Carey*, submitted by Ms. Maria Claudette Gomes for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English of Goa University, has been completed under my guidance. The thesis is a record of the research work done by the candidate during the period of her study and has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree or diploma.

13/10/07

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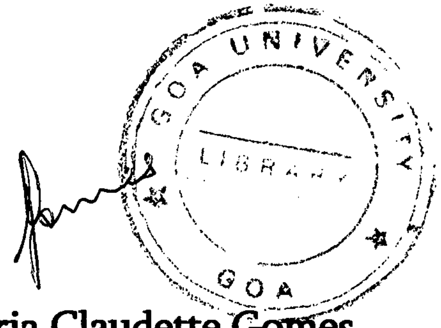
Dated: 13/10/07

Declaration

I, Ms. Maria Claudette Gomes, hereby declare that the thesis entitled *Fictional World of Peter Carey* has been completed by me under the guidance of Dr. Nina Caldeira, Reader, Department of English, Goa University. This work has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or other similar titles.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Dated: 13.10.07

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Introduction

Exploring the Fictional World of Peter Carey

The aim of this study is to demonstrate how certain thematic and structural patterns run through the fiction of Peter Carey. While the present attempt is not to enforce a reductive reading or to fit his fiction into a framework, a detailed reading of his fiction reveals certain concerns intentions of the novelist, predominantly the construction of an Australian identity. The identity evolves out of Australia's historical processes. The matrix out of which Carey constructs Australian identity largely stems from the convict penal heritage of the first wave of English colonists. The early English convicts, for the sake of survival in inhumane surroundings were adept at fabricating lies, and in time turned out to be adroit too at the art of story-telling or spieling. The history of the nation created in Carey's fiction is trapped in the prison of the past, the penal past. However, the nation's history rendered aesthetically in Carey's fiction is largely based on models of truths and lies, i.e. truth value is suspended in a bid to debunk the narratives of colonial histories. Carey does take cognizance of the Australian Aborigines. There is definitely a consciousness of their rich cultural past which was destroyed by the English colonizers. The contribution of the immigrant peoples to the construction of national identity too is reflected in his fiction. The spectre of the penal past from which the Australian cannot escape and the realization that he no longer belongs or is acceptable to England, forces him into accepting the new landscape and conjuring a heaven out of hellish circumstances. The thesis

statement is ***the aesthetic rendition of Australian National Identity in Peter Carey's fiction is best echoed in Australia's historical processes.***

Having nine novels to his credit till date, Carey has presented a world that is strange and out of the ordinary. It is this world that this study is going to explore and examine. The present study will restrict itself to the study of six of his novels, namely, *Bliss* (1981), *Illywhacker* (1985), *Oscar and Lucinda* (1988), *The Tax Inspector* (1991), *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* (1994), and *Jack Maggs* (1997). The objective of my thesis is the exploration of the fictional world of Peter Carey with a view to corroborate the above stated thesis statement.

In the reading and exploration of Carey's fiction, a few striking features loom large. The dominant issue is of ***national identity***, a theme largely acknowledged by the author. As a corollary to the theme of national identity is Australian history, imperialism and its effects that in fact are the major factors that shape the national identity of Australia. He comes forth with a strong indictment of modern urbane Australia and the imperialist forces of Western capital that have been the cause for anarchy reigning in societies, especially in Australia. In reviewing Australia's history and culture he attempts to bring out in the open the lies and myths that form such a great part of the ethos of the country. Apart from these issues, themes such as entrapment, solitude, family violence, etc. are also explored.

i) Rooted in Homeland: The Man and His Works

Having received the Booker prize twice and the Commonwealth prize too, he has also successfully secured every major Australian literary prize at least twice. Peter Carey remains one of Australia's most celebrated living writers. Presently a visiting professor for the creative writing course at New York's Hunter College, his work has drawn the attention of many critics. Paul Kane, editor of *Antipodes*, once remarked:

> It is a mark of Carey's writing that the stranger the fiction the more encompassing the vision, since what is strange, what exists on the margins of normalcy, can only be known with reference to the whole-that is, to the familiar and strange together. Carey wants to take in all of humanity, or at least all that is available to him, and place it before us such that the strange is made familiar and the familiar made new.[1]

Rooted in his homeland, Carey is committed to the cause of his nation and its people. When Carey was awarded his second Booker for his novel on Australia's prominent outlaw, Ned Kelly, his achievement was acknowledged all over Australia and abroad clearly categorizing him among those Australian authors who 'evoke their own past' with a view to demythify the notion of Australia as a mere 'cultural wasteland' so as to come to terms with the present. All through his narratives, Carey employs the postmodern mode of

multiplicity and fissures to challenge 'fixations' of any kind. Realizing that acceptance of the penal past would be more authentic than its denial, Carey presents 'other' and multiple possibilities of Australia's past. For example, Carey reworks the Imperial account of the outlaw Ned Kelly in a bid to present other versions of Ned Kelly's life, apart from the one narrated by Imperial forces. To the Australian whose descent arises from his convict past, Kelly remains a legendary figure.

Carey was born on the 7th of May 1943 in Bacchus Marsh, Victoria, Australia, to Percival Stanley Carey and Helen Jean Carey (née Warriner). Carey's family operated P. S. Carey Motors, the local General Motors dealership in his childhood. From 1948 to 1953 Carey attended the Bacchus Marsh State School. After pursuing his studies as a boarder at Geelong Grammar School, in 1961 he enrolled for a science degree course at Monash University in Melbourne, which course he did not complete.

At 19, Carey started working for Walker Robertson Maquire Advertising Agency in Melbourne. It was at the agency that Carey had his first tryst with literature and writing. It exposed him to such writers as Barry Oakley and Morris Lurie, who in turn introduced him to American and European masters like Samuel Beckett, Saul Bellow, Vladimir Nabokov, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Jack Kerouac and William Faulkner, which triggered Carey's skill at creative writing. In 1964, Carey wrote *Contacts*, which was shortlisted and turned out to

be an unsuccessful finalist in 1965 for a Stanford Writing Scholarship. Between 1964 and 1970, Carey wrote three novels, namely, *Contacts*, *The Futility Machine* and *Wog*, which did not appear in print. After travelling all over Europe, in 1970 he returned to Australia. He began writing stories which appeared as *The Fat Man in History* in 1974, published by the University of Queensland Press. By that time, he also managed to write a fourth novel, *Adventures Aboard the Marie Celeste*, which was also accepted for publication. However, Carey declined the offer in favour of *The Fat Man in History*.

Around this time Carey worked full and part-time in advertising. In Australia, he worked first as an advertising copywriter at Masius Wynne Williams in Melbourne and later with Grey Advertising. After separating from his first wife, Carey's relationship with Margot Hutcheson introduced him to the alternative community at Yandina in Southern Queensland. Here Carey wrote all but two of his stories, and also *Bliss*, his first published novel.

Bliss (1981), Carey's first novel, "combines light and black comedy, incisive social satire and a poetic, futuristic vision" states *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature*.[2] In the words of Hassal, "[it is] a story about telling stories", wherein lies an "awareness of the problematic nature of trying to grasp reality through a fictitious construct".[3] In *Bliss* Carey explores the life of a middle-aged advertising executive Harry Joy. After a heart attack, Joy experiences a clinical death and consequent out-of-body experience. He revives

with a radically different perception of reality. In the opinion of some critics, this incident, 'leads him to a recognition of the "worlds of pleasure and pain, bliss and punishment, Heaven and Hell."'[4]. His new lease of life leaves him with the onerous responsibility of trying to cope with a world that 'seems like Hell'. He firmly believes that he is in Hell. Living in a world in which his son is a drug peddler and has an incestuous relationship with his daughter, his wife is having an affair with his business partner. His daughter is a communist and a drug addict. It is clearly a world in which affluent citizens choose tawdry progress and cancer-inducing food-additives above conservation and self-discipline.

His second collection of stories, *War Crimes* was published in 1979. After completing *Bliss*, Carey left Grey Advertising, formed a joint advertising agency with Bani McSpedden and returned to Sydney. From here on, Carey began winning a slew of awards for his stories. *War Crimes* was awarded the New South Wales Premier's Award for fiction in 1980.

Bliss bagged the New South Wales Premier's Award, the Miles Franklin Award and the National Book Council Award in 1982. Well-received as a film in 1985, it won the best picture, director and screenplay awards from the Australian Film Institute, and was also shown as the official Australian entry at the Cannes Film festival.

Illywhacker (1985), Carey's second published novel which also won multiple awards, established Carey as a writer of international stature. *Illywhacker* was written after Carey moved to Glennifer near Bellingen in northern New South Wales. The novel proved to be another landmark in Carey's life. *Illywhacker*, won the *Age* Book of the Year Award, NBC Award for Australian Literature, FAW Barbara Ramsden Award, and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. The novel is about Herbert Badgery, a 139-year-old man who claims to be a trickster and liar. At the onset of the novel itself, Herbert Badgery quotes an extract from a dictionary of Australian slang, explaining the meaning of Illywhacker.

In the first few lines he tells us his age and then informs us tongue-in-cheek that 'I'm a terrible liar' and that 'My age is the one fact you can rely on, and not because I say so, but because it has been publicly authenticated' (*Illywhacker*11[*]). He goes back to 1861 in his narration of the history of his life, upto the present, where he is caged in his son's establishment in Sydney, in a pet emporium named 'The Best Pet Shop in the World'. *Illywhacker* is the story of three generations of the Badgery family, and runs parallel to the development of Australia after it gained its independence from England. The novel portrays the various branches of the Badgery family and their lives, including those of their friends, from 1861 to 2025.

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[*] For all further references to *Illywhacker*, (*I* followed by page number) will be inserted in the text

Howard Jacobson, writing in the *New York Times Book Review* found the novel "a uniquely Australian work and contended that the experience of reading it was nearly the equivalent of visiting Australia."[5] In Badgery's narration of the history of his life, one can't help but notice the keen examination of the lies and myths that underlie Australian history and culture. The fact is supported by Mark Twain's epigraph, where Twain states that:

> **Australian history** is almost always picturesque; indeed it is so curious and strange, that it is itself the chiefest novelty the country has to offer and so pushes the other novelties into second and third place. It does not read like history, but like the most beautiful lies; and all of a fresh new sort, no mouldy old stale ones. It is full of surprises and adventures, the incongruities, and contradictions, and incredibilities; but they are all true, they all happened.[6]

Badgery keeps questioning the truth of the stories he is telling. This reflects on the official history of the country built with prodigious lies. The reader is given constant reminders that the narrator is a notorious liar. He is a narrator and "storyteller of immense gusto and confidence".[7] He gives different versions of the same events stressing on the fictional nature of the narration. Nevertheless, each of these versions can have some truth in them. Sue Ryan states that "Illywhacker sets out to express the harsh truth about Australians and their

history in the guise of fiction, in an attempt to make it palatable and even entertaining."[8]

By 1986, Carey had already begun work on his next novel, *Oscar and Lucinda* that was published in 1988. *Oscar and Lucinda* (1988), his third novel, won for Carey his first Booker. It also secured him the Miles Franklin Award, NBC Banjo Award and Foundation for Australian Literary Studies Award. It became the only second novel of Australia to win the Booker Prize after Thomas Keneally's *Schindler's Ark*. D. J. O'Hearn refers to it as "a monumental masterpiece, a true *bildungs-roman* where stone upon crafted stone is set carefully in place to create an edifice of towering proportions."[9] It is a complex symbolic tale of the arrival of Christianity into Australia. *Oscar and Lucinda* says Norma Jean Richey, "tells us the story of two misfits, unsuited both by nature and by parents who raised them according to personal rather than traditional communal values."[10] It is a tale of two compulsive gamblers, Oscar Hopkins and Lucinda Leplastrier, two guilt-ridden individuals, who are also "stubborn and tenacious and soul-sick."[11]

Oscar's story begins in Victorian England. An overtly obedient child, he conforms to the rigid control of his father, a preacher and head of the Plymouth Brethren. Never doubting his father's convictions, Oscar's confidence in his father is fissured after the incident with the Christmas pudding. As a consequence of this, Oscar joins the Anglican Church, which he serves as a

clergyman till being defrocked in Australia. Constantly berated for his effeminate nature and physique throughout his lifetime, he makes it a habit of accepting all kinds of nasty advances very stoically, accepting it as the will of God, and forever justifying it as essential for the atonement of sin. During his friendship with Wardley-Fish he is introduced to the world of gambling. The fruits are satisfying but at the same time the guilt that it is a sin is also present. The way out that he chooses is to presume that if God wills it he will win, if not he will be duly punished. It is the ensuing guilt from actions of this kind that make Oscar undertake the perilous journey to Australia.

Raised in Australia by an unconventional mother, Lucinda comes by a fortune on her mother's death by virtue of her lawyers conducting the sale of her parents' farm. Subsequently she gains ownership of a glassworks factory. She resents the hold the fortune has on her but can find no way of release from this control. The conditions that her being a heiress imposes on her are even more detestable. She refuses to dress as required, has close relationships with men like the Rev. Dennis Hasset, and even indulges in gambling to the extent of losing every penny she has on her person. She meets Oscar on a ship to Australia and their love of gambling draws them close to each other.

As the novel progresses we see Oscar and Lucinda losing touch with each other only to regain it later when she encounters Oscar who has been ousted from the Anglican Church because of accusations that he never clears himself of. The

progress of their love affair is not smooth as they are never aware that their love is reciprocated by the other. With a realisation of their own passion that is never revealed there is a constant lookout for opportune moments to disclose the same. This occasion comes with the event of the glass church and its transportation to Bellingen. Lucinda bets her entire fortune on it so that when it is delivered, Oscar can be her master. Oscar, on the other hand, sees this as an accomplishment that will make him worthy of Lucinda's love. The end, however, is unexpected. Oscar, on arrival in Bellingen, with the glass church in tow, meets Miriam Chadwick and under unforeseen circumstances is forced to marry her. He then meets his end by drowning alongwith the glass church. Lucinda loses her love and her fortune to Miriam, and continues her life, becoming in turn famous among the students of the Australian labour movement.

In 1989, Carey left Australia and moved to Greenwich Village, New York, where he conducted creative writing classes at New York University. It was in New York that Carey completed his fourth novel, *The Tax Inspector* (1991). *The Tax Inspector* takes us to "a decayed, corrupt outer Sydney, whose streets are infested with packs of feral children with 'lighter fuel breath' and precocious appetites for violence, with homeless individuals inhabiting concrete pipes".[12] It is as Veronica Brady claims 'darker, more serious and less ironic than anything he [Carey] has written so far".[13] The novel is set around Sydney, amongst the Catchprices, an accursed family of car dealers.

Compressed into four days, it focuses on this family threatened with ruin by a tax audit. The themes also include family violence, or more specifically, child abuse, and the origins of psycho-pathological behavior. The three strands of the story are: the Catchprices, Maria Takis, the tax inspector, and a young Armenian called Sarkis.

The reader is provided a deep insight into the character of Benny, the youngest Catchprice, his seeming efficiency, and more so his closeness to his aunt, and his subsequent dismissal from his job by his aunt.

Amidst all the financial and personal problems dominating the lives of the Catchprices, enters Maria Takis, the idealist tax inspector who is eight months pregnant. Maria is an idealist trying to survive in corrupt surroundings. Her sincerity works against her and consequently she is 'sent out on insignificant investigations such as the one into the Catchprice business.'[14] Though she later realises her folly and manages to get herself pulled off the job, she is invariably linked to the Catchprices, moreso because of her close friendship with Jack Catchprice.

The Armenian Sarkis, representing the immigrant generation in Australia, is carried away and consequently trapped in the dreams of the psychotic Benny Catchprice. As is the case with the immigrant communities that are non-Anglo/Celtic, Sarkis and his mother are trying to 'reinvent' themselves as

'Australian'. In his fear and insecurity, Sarkis turns into a victim who has to undergo excessive torture at the hands of Benny Catchprice. He becomes the guinea pig for all of Benny's ventures till Vish, Benny's brother comes to his aid. Although the novel has a violent end where Benny is killed in a most gruesome manner, the birth of Maria Takis' child in the cellar, where Benny has imprisoned her, is like an affirmation of life despite all the destruction and violence that goes on for several generations.

Though *The Tax Inspector* did not get the reception that his novels had received till then, in America and England the reception was favourable. In Australia the book received, as some critics say "little enthusiasm and indeed some dismay".[15]

Carey also tried his hand at writing film scripts, one such being Wim Wenders' *Until the End of the World*, which was released in 1992. Around this time he also commenced work on two novels, one provisionally titled "The Dog, The Duck, The Mouse", and the other, "Magwitch", the latter dealing primarily with Magwitch, (from Dickens' *Great Expectations*) in Australia. "The Dog, The Duck, The Mouse" eventually appeared as *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith*, in 1994 and won the 1994 *Age* Book of the Year award.

The fifth novel by Carey, *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* (1994) takes the reader to two imaginary lands: the domineering high-tech Voorstand and the

archipelago of islands called Efica, populated by rebellious and nationalistic people. The first half of the novel takes place in the republic of Efica, beginning in the year 426 EC (by the Efican Calendar). The second half is situated in a continental Voorstand some years later. The protagonist Tristan Smith, three foot six inches tall, bandy-legged, club-footed, rag-faced, referred to as a monster and a mutant searches for his father's identity while struggling to come to terms with a birth defect. Born into a leftist Efican theatrical company, Feu Follet, Tristan has observed his mother Felicity in her attempts to subvert any attack on the cultural integrity of Efica by the Voorstand Sirkus. However, as the novel progresses, with their superior wealth and technology, the Voorstanders swamp Efica with their Sirkus centred on Bruder Mouse, Dog and Duck. The ultimate humiliation for Tristan is when he gains fame not as Tristan, but in the guise of Bruder Mouse. It suggests the final takeover of Efica by Voorstand signifying the latter's cultural hegemony.

The story of Magwitch appeared as *Jack Maggs* in 1997 and won the Commonwealth Writers' prize in 1998, the 1997 *Age* Fiction Book of the year and the Miles Franklin Award. *Jack Maggs* (1997), as suggested by most critics, is regarded as a play on a British novel, Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. It is a character study of the first Australians, the English convicts who were banished to what was then a penal colony. Carey takes his protagonist from Dickens' *Great Expectations*. Jack Maggs is Carey's version of Magwitch, the convict in *Great Expectations*. The prowler in London, Jack

Maggs, is an illegal returnee from the prison island of Australia, hoping for a welcome from the son he has supported back in England, and subsequent acceptance into a society, the English society, that he yearns for. He has the demeanour of a savage and the skills of a hardened criminal. The stark reality that he was living in an illusionary world, dawns upon him when his own son, Henry Phipps, attempts to shoot him.

Carey also includes a few other characters, such as Tobias Oates, a successful writer of novels who attempts or at least purports to cure Maggs of the phantom that troubles him. The novel travels over the travails of Maggs, in his search for Henry, sometimes in the company of Oates. The reader can clearly trace how Maggs has been cast out, treated very badly, and all he can think of doing, at great risk to his own life, is to go and live with his abusers. A resolution is reached when Maggs finally realises that England has severed ties with him. All his dreams of returning to a respectable life in England are non-existent, as England looks down on him as dangerous. He returns to Australia and to prosperity accompanied by Mercy, who marries him, and who plays a major part in his reconciliation with the truth. Maggs, a banished convict, is shown trying to achieve the impossible, i.e., coming back to England, back to a respectable life. Trevor Byrne[16] substantiates:

> For most of the novel Maggs is so obdurate in his identification with the nation that has transported him, flogged him and would hang him

> if given the opportunity that he says things such as "I'd rather be a bad smell here than a frigging rose in New South Wales"(*Jack Maggs*250[†]). It takes not just Phipps shooting at him to change his mind, but the realisation that the man he considered his son is prepared to be a soldier of the regime that has so brutalized him.

The realization enlightens the protagonist Maggs and as Hassal[17] interprets his fate is an escape "to the place of a respected citizen surrounded by a loving family". Here also, as Hermione Lee[18] states, "Maggs gets the better of his author and goes back to Australia to look after his own children and to lead a happy, successful and wealthy life"

Between these two books, Carey also wrote a book for children titled *The Big Bazoohley* (1995), which won the Children's Book Council Honor Book award.

In 2001, Carey once again proved himself to the world when his novel *True History of Kelly Gang* (2001), won him his second Booker prize, thereby joining the band of a select few who have achieved this rare feat. His latest novel, the eighth one, is *My Life as a Fake* (2003).

[†] For all further references to *Jack Maggs*, (*JM* followed by page number) will be inserted in the text

ii) Carving a Literary Tradition

The major historico-cultural inheritance of Australia is founded on forced human displacements. However the nation has a double heritage. While it remains historically a penal colony, it was also a "Promised Land" to the immigrants. This inheritance, along with the particular physical realities of its environment have, from early times, provided writers with enough of inspiration for their works. Being a penal colony, Australia absorbed unwanted elements of 18th century England. This led to the "cleansing" of the undesired Aboriginal population. Thus as Djelal Kadir[19] puts it in his article in *World Literature Today*, "Australia and its culture are marked by a legacy of banishments, exclusions, circumspect interest and vested circumscriptions." A brief historical sketch of the nation of Australia is most relevant to a fuller understanding of "Australian National Identity trapped in its historical processes." By itself, the history of Australia makes a fascinating study as it is founded on diverse cultural legacies. It makes even more enjoyable a study when trapped in Peter Carey's fiction.

More than 40,000 years ago, several groups of people from Southeast Asia emigrated to Australia and are now regarded as that country's indigenous population - the Aboriginals. Prior to the European influx in the nineteenth century, the Aboriginals structured their existence around nature. Their ability to endure depended on a widespread knowledge of Australia's flora and fauna, as well as an aptitude to get accustomed to different areas of the land. When the

number of people in a group became too profuse for the land to support them, the group would segregate and move to the next appropriate piece of land. Although differences often came up amongst these groups, over time, a core culture, language, and approach to life endured. Their communal co-existence with nature suffered a permanent alteration and near extinction with the arrival of the Europeans beginning in the late 1700's.

As early as the second century AD theories of a great southland or "Terra Australis" to balance the land-masses of the northern hemisphere were proposed in Europe. Nonetheless, Australia remained unexplored by the West until the 17th century. European contact with the Australian continent was a by-product of 16th and 17th century mercantile expansion in Asia by Portugal, Spain and Holland. In 1606, the Spanish navigator Luis Vaez de Torres sailed through the strait which now bears his name. In the same year, a Dutch ship, Duyfken, at Cape York made the first authenticated landing in Australia. In 1642, Dutchman Abel Tasman reached Tasmania, which he named ***Van Diemen's Land***. Other sightings and landings occurred, but it was not until 1770 that Captain James Cook, of the British Royal Navy sighted the more fertile east coast. Captain Cook's account of his discovery provoked much attention in England.

The European settlement of Australia was initiated in 1788 when a British penal colony was established on the east coast. From this starting point

Australia grew rapidly and continually, expanding across the entire continent. A number of reasons contributed to Britain's decision to colonise Australia. The most important factor was Britain's need to relieve its overcrowded prisons. On 13 May 1787, the first fleet of 11 ships sailed from England under the command of Capt. Arthur Phillip and reached Botany Bay on 18 January 1788 with 1530 people on board, out of which 736 were convicts. Finding the bay a poor choice, the fleet left eight days later to establish a settlement at Port Jackson, a few kilometers north. Here, Phillip began the first permanent settlement on January 26, now known as Australia Day. The settlement grew to be Sydney, Australia's biggest city with one of the world's best natural harbours. It was named Sydney in honour of Britain's home secretary, Lord Sydney (1733-1800) who was responsible for the establishment of the colony. After the establishment of the colony at Port Jackson, further settlements began at Hobart (Tasmania) in 1803; on the Brisbane River (Queensland) in 1824; and on the Swan River (Western Australia) in 1829. Melbourne was established at Port Phillip Bay (Victoria) in 1835, and Adelaide at the Gulf of St.Vincent (South Australia) in 1836. Explorations into and along the coast, helped the growing settlements expand and endure the unknown land and its climate and surroundings. Transportation of convicts from Britain to most of Australia ended in 1840 and to Tasmania in 1853. Western Australia continued receiving convicts until 1868. By 1868, more than 100,000 convicts had arrived in Australia since the settlement began.

The Europeans who moved to Australia claimed the better land for themselves. Though the Aboriginals struggled to keep their land, the fighting was unequal and they were inevitably forced to adjust to the new arrivals, becoming paupers in a land that had previously been theirs. Those who lived near the European settlements had to depend less on the land that earlier provided for them, and more on an improper diet given to them by the new settlers. The Europeans also forced them to cover their naked bodies, providing clothes and blankets which the aborigines used unhygienically and ended up suffering from various new diseases. These factors contributed to a demoralization and despondency within these groups which caused their gradual extermination. A few other groups survived by managing to retain much of their traditional customs, but ended becoming a menial part of this new world by working for the foreigners.

In 1945, as a result of the Second World War, there were large numbers of displaced people and refugees to whom Australia beckoned as a land of opportunity. The result was a huge wave of immigrants, most of them from Great Britain, and also from Austria, Greece, and other parts of Europe. Southern Europeans and people of colour were discouraged from immigrating. Jews were often less accepted than Germans, even though Germans were considered 'the enemy' during World War II.

In 1947, the Australian Government offered to pay for Europeans to immigrate under certain conditions. The immigrants would have to work for a period of

two years at a job assigned by the government, irrespective of their skills and qualifications. This meant that skilled immigrants were often employed at menial jobs. Alongside this development, there was evident an increasing anti-immigrant prejudice. The national workers feared that immigrants would take their jobs. Immigrants had many adverse effects on the developing post-war Australia. One of the most effective was the increase in Anti-Labor sentiment which caused the overthrow of the Labor Party in 1949.

In the mid 20th century, the Australian government began to redress the wrongs that were wrought on the aborigines. In the 1950s and 60s the aboriginals were finally enfranchised. Later governments have also committed to a programme of Aboriginal self-determination, and have given grants to Aboriginal-run organizations which provide legal and medical assistance to the groups. In addition, a process of land reclamation began in 1976 with the passing of the Aboriginals Land Rights Act. This Act has enabled some former reservations to be returned to original hands.

The distinct and peculiar features of Australia's historical and cultural past find its representation in its literature. Australian writing reflects the ambiguities of the masses as well as the conditions of the aboriginal population, immigrant women, etc. A major share of the intensity in Australian literature is derived from the subtle as well as not-so-subtle contrasts, human and geographic, that characterize the country today. Australian literature seeks to examine and

articulate, if not to harmonise, a people for whom one common factor is a salient shared experience of displacement.

Australian literature from the very beginning has reflected its social and political history. In the first hundred years from 1788, writers wrote about the countryside, their living conditions and their surroundings. All writing was in the form of memoirs, descriptive accounts and fiction. The basic objective of this writing was to acquaint people back in Britain with the new land and the challenge faced by the convicts, squatters, and other settlers. Prominent among these were Rolfe Boldrewood, Marcus Clarke, Joseph Furphy and others.

All writing of the 19th century can be considered as the first phase of writing in Australian literature. Writing in Australia began with mapping the difference and distinctiveness of a new society establishing itself in the antipodes and at a large imaginative distance from the rest of the world. The writing of this phase was designed for the benefit of the readers back in England. Thus, the writers tried to put forth their experiences and travails in this new land. The first novel written in Australia was in Hobart, in 3 volumes called *Quintus Servinton. A Tale, Founded upon incidents of Real Occurrence* (1830-1). In this novel, Henry Savery drew on his own experiences of transportation to Australia and life imprisonment there for other offences.

Of special interest is the period from 1840-1860 referred to as the Guidebook Period. There was a whole sequence of novels providing information of life in the penal colonies. A few novels were didactic in nature written with the purpose of reformation or moral exhortation. Noted writers of this period were Charles Rowcraft, who tried to provide details of the colony and show that life in these penal colonies was not all that pleasant; Alexander Harris, whose book can serve as social history and whose comments on the conditions prevailing there are more like brief official reports; Mary Theresa Vidal, whose book aimed at reformation; Catherine Helen Spence, who tried to give a woman's point of view of life in the colony; William Howitt, who depicts Australian life and character and almost provides a source-book of life in the colony; and, Caroline Atkinson, who initiates the use of the Australian idiom in the numerous conversations she has in her work.

Australian fiction in this century had three staple themes or typical Australian themes. They were Convictism, Pastoral life, Bushranging.[20] Writers were concerned with movement and action and violence and adventure. Four well-known novels were *Ralph Rashleigh* by James Tucker (1844-45), *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn* by Henry Kingsley (1859), *For the Term of his Natural Life* by Marcus Clarke (1870-1, 1929) *Robbery Under Arms* by Rolfe Boldrewood (1882-3, 1888). Early colonial writers in the 1890s viewed the world with European eyes and wrote of Australia as an untamed land devoid of culture, tradition, and ripe for exploitation. Earlier, while much had

been spoken of the barrenness of Australia, with the passage of time, the talk about the development of its geography and society began to take centrestage.

The beginning of the 20th century produced writers like Rolfe Boldrewood, Marcus Clarke, Joseph Furphy, Henry Lawson, and Barbara Baynton. This could be considered the second phase in the flowering of Australian literature. The writers of this century, while following European traditions tried to devise ways to tell things as they were, within the context of romance. Maintaining a Eurocentric view as the earlier phase of writings, these writers attempt deviations from the earlier writings in subtle ways, without upsetting the prevalent norms. Baynton's claim to fame lies more with her short stories than her novels. In her novel *Human Toll* (1907), she tries to show people who are all victims of the outback. Hadgraft comments appositely,

> Baynton hates the bush and even, one is tempted to think, the people who live in it. There are few kindly characters in her writing, practically all being portrayed as malicious or stupid or drunken, and there is no opportunity for redemption. The mateship in Lawson's stories is a thing not found in hers. With their grim and sordid tones they read almost as if they were a deliberate counterblast to the heroic or cheery or humorous accounts of bush life written by other storytellers of the period.[21]

Henry Lawson is considered as the "most Australian" of contemporary authors. With characters drawn from the smaller classes, like the squatters, he constantly tries to be "just in his portraiture". Hadgraft[22] notes, "the humour and humours of the types are caught, the turns of phrase, the outlook – it is a little world, and nowhere but in Australia at a certain time could it all exist together". The one relation that he lays most emphasis on, is that of loyalty, the conception of "mateship"[23]. Lawson was the most articulate voice of this Australian version of comradeship.

Joseph Furphy's book, *Such is Life* (1903) is supposedly diary extracts from the diary of Tom Collins, a government official with the rank of Deputy-Assistant-Sub-Inspector. The theme is that of a child lost in the bush and the story is told from the point of view of one of the men in the search party. Hadgraft claims that the book is a landmark as even to this day "an outsider would probably get a better insight into Australians from it than from any other single book"[24].

Henry Handel Richardson was another novelist in the long European tradition and, by common critical consent, is considered as the greatest novelist. Born in Australia, she wrote and lived abroad. The three novels she has to her name are *Maurice Guest* (1908), *The Getting of Wisdom* (1910) and *The Young Cosima* (1934).

By the 1930s indigenous novels began to be written. e.g. Prichard's *Haxby's Circus* (1930). The 1930s saw the appearance of a series of historical novels. The 1940s and 50s were marked by a generation of conservative writers with a strong sense of traditional literary forms. The 1940s saw an increasing interest in the plight of the aborigines. There was an increase in the number of novels and short stories that reflected the growth of immigration, industrialization, and a more secure sense of cultural independence from Great Britain. Literature of these times mirrored the anxiety and doubt of the age.

Patrick White, Martin Boyd, Christina Stead and Hal Porter were other formidable literary figures. Patrick White had published three novels in 1950s; Martin Boyd had composed *Langston Quartet,* Stead had written her masterpiece and Porter was acclaimed as a short story writer and a memoirist. Patrick White, a Nobel Laureate in 1973, proved to be a great asset to Australian Literature, and gained international recognition.

Fiction writers like White, Stead, Boyd changed the trend in the 1960s. During the 1960s Australian Literature was devoted principally to a nationalistic tradition looking back to the 'barren anecdotal realism of local literature' found in the tradition of Henry Lawson's bush stories. The 1960's also witnessed the emergence of aboriginal writing. Around the 1960s and 70s, aboriginal people also begin to make their presence recognized. Ken Goodwin claims that in the last twenty five years there have been two new groups of writers visible, the

aboriginal writers in English and migrant writers in English or in European and Asian languages. All these writers too share the themes of displacement, alienation, loneliness and withdrawal like the early 19th century writers. [25]

Migrant writers from non-English speaking countries express feelings of alienation, loss and rejection like aboriginal writing. Made to feel like outsiders by the white Australians, who were themselves the fist migrants or descendants of migrants, these writers revealed their voice around the same time as the aborigines. Amongst these writers, a few like Judah Waten and David Martin, writing in English, have been accepted by the Australian readers and are popular. Some, like the Greek writer, Dimitris Tsaloumas, write in their native language for their country of origin. With the huge waves of immigrants coming into Australia from other countries, one noticeable phenomenon is the emergence of communities of bilingual writers and readers from specific countries, sometimes even with their own publishing outlets.

Mudrooroo Narogin (Colin Johnson, whose Aboriginal identity, however, was questioned) published his first novel, *Wild Cat Falling*, in 1965. Sally Morgan, with her autobiography, *My Place* (1987), provides a poignant account of her discovery of her identity and family history, in the process narrating their social and cultural history. Kim Scott, with his novel *Benang* (1999), became the first Aboriginal writer to win the prestigious Miles Franklin Award (which he shared with Thea Astley). With these and other Aboriginal writers, Aboriginal

people thus entered into history to assert their claim to the imaginative territory of Australia—a claim especially significant in the last decade of the 20th century as Australians attempted to effect a process of mutual understanding and reconciliation. Sam Watson also gained attention with his writings. Watson in *The KadiatchaSung* intermixes intricately mythology and reality, where black and white Australians stand juxtaposed in a deadly hunt positioned in a timeless past and uncertain future.

The late 1960s saw a shift away from the mythopoeic, away from the symbols of the bush country reflected in Patrick White's books. White (*The Solid Mandala*–1966) experiments with black comedy and kitchen-sink realism. Frank Moorhouse is another writer who presented a new way in which life could be represented in fiction. His stories *Futility & Other Animals* (1969) and *The American Baby* (1972) are pioneering. He allows the world of the bars to speak and manages to treat sex as a glittering obsession. Peter Carey also gained attention with his short stories around this time. He has two collections to his credit, *The Fat Man In History* (1980) and *War Crimes* (1979). Helen Garner with *Monkey Grip* (1977), a book that takes a fresh look at the world of sex and entanglement and of love, seems to sum up the changes of the 1970s.

By the 1970s, the disillusionment of Australian writers with European traditions led the younger generation of writers to international writers like Beckett, Bellow, Kerouac, Faulkner, etc. This created a new experimental

environment in the literary field. The result was a plentitude of experimental writing. With writers like Patrick White and Hal Porter, and others, experimental writing emerged with a flourish on the Australian scene.

The changing economic and political climate boosted a new interest in experimental writing. Literary fictional publishing received a shot in the arm due to the vast sums of money allocated to it by a new Labour Government in Australia. Thus, the dominant trend was increasingly reversed. The result was that Australian writing severed itself from the essentially derivative, European traditional writing.

A new kind of writing was championed where there were "no more formula bush tales, no more restrictions to the beginning, middle and end story, no more preconceptions about a well-rounded tale".[26] Rather, it dealt with liberalized subject matter. The writings were "often urban, inner city- dealing with things that in the 1960's had been taboo: sex, then drugs".[27] The fabulatory tendencies of non-Australian writers like Jorge Luis Borges, Italo Calvino, Donald Barthelme, also gained attention. These experimental writers shared a love of the bizarre, a fascination for the nightmarish, a delight in the sordid, the surreal, and the lurid. A noticeable factor was the turning of many younger writers to these international models. Writers like Frank Moorhouse, Michael Wilding and Peter Carey who were provocative and scandalous in the manner of the 1970s, broke free from all restraints and explored the many possibilities of

fantasy—sexual, science fiction, gothic. Allowing for the liberalism of their values, their stories in fact display an almost moral preoccupation with social and political attitudes. They are each highly alert to the ironic possibilities of personal encounters. In the 1980s Carey extended his range and began writing novels, still exploiting fantasy and, as much postmodernist fiction does, the interpolation of stories within stories.

The 1980s also witnessed the surfacing of a number of accomplished women writers like, Kate Grenville, Helen Garner, Glenda Adams, prominent voices which lasted through the 1990s. In all her work Grenville treads a precarious line between darkness and superb comedy in novels like *Lillian's Story* (1985) and its sequel, *Dark Places* (1994), to *The Idea of Perfection* (1999). Garner's work consists of *The Children's Bach* (1984) and *True Stories: Selected Non-Fiction* (1996), which draws upon fact as well as fiction. Among male writers, Brian Castro, Robert Drewe, David Foster, and Tim Winton similarly emerged as significant writers. Of these Winton and Foster are particularly notable for their volumes *Cloudstreet* (1991) and *The Glade Within the Grove* (1996), respectively. The contemporary Australian literary scene is dominated by fiction. Glenda Adams with her novel *Longleg* took the Book Council Prize with Tim Winton's *Cloudstreet.*

Thea Astley was another highly successful novelist. Although droll and amusing, she wrote about serious issues. Astley's later novels, *Drylands: A*

Book for the World's Last Reader (1999), for example—were increasingly concerned with the dominant, two-sided problem in late 20th century Australia; firstly, how to bring about a resolution between Aboriginal and European Australians and secondly, to resolve the dilemma of white Australians vis-à-vis the dark side of their past.

Angelo Loukakis, born and educated in Australia, is a short story writer who sets his works in Greece or in the Greek communities of Australia. His volume of short stories *For the Patriarch* (1981) focuses on the migrant communities of Sydney. Spiro Zavos, a writer of Greek ethnic origin, sets a few of his stories in Greek communities of New Zealand. Serge Liberman, a short story writer of Russian Jewish origin, in his collections *On Firmer Shoes* (1981) and *A Universe of Clowns* (1983), writes about Jewish migrants who are confounded by human problems they face. Banumbir Wongar (real name Streten Bozic) was the most prolific and widely published migrant writer. His best known work being the stories of *The Track to Bralgu* (1978), most of his writing has aboriginal themes. The feature of writing the most horrendous account of the migrant experience[28] is supposed to be that of Rosa R. Cappiello. Written in Italian and later translated into English, her *Paese Fortunato* (1981), a tale of a vile migrant hostel succeeded in attracting a lot of literary and political attention and added the theme of bitterness to migrant writing.

To sum up, the rise in experimental fiction in Australia in the 1960s and 1970s, intensified in 1980s and 1990s, saw many new writers gaining prominence. Peter Carey was one among these writers who came to the fore with his brand of experimental writing. In the literary climate of Australia, Carey gained attention with his short stories only by the early 1980s, the period standing out in the literary history of Australia. Peter Carey was among the first Australian writers to reverse the dominant trend in Australian literature, who along with writers like David Malouf and Rodney Hall tried to experiment with his writings and was also among the first writers to have his work published with success in Australia. Initially, Carey gained attention with his short stories titled *The Fat Man in History* (1980) and *War Crimes* (1979). However, his reputation was established and consolidated on his "crowded, fabulistic novels of the later 1980s".[29]

iii) Of Influences and Views

Carey's writings, be it his short stories or his novels, have always elicited responses that are diverse. His fiction is always inhabited by hybrid characters who live "in between spaces or on the margins".[30] This world that he projects is in his own words "quite normal to them (i.e. the people). Not nice, but normal".[31] Like all the other experimental writers who emerged in great numbers due to the characteristic conditions of the times, Carey shared too "a love of the bizarre, a fascination for the nightmarish, a delight in the sordid, the surreal, the lurid"[32] as is evident in his works.

When at the agency, working with Barry Oakley and Morris Lurie, Carey got to read works by American and European masters such as Samuel Beckett, Saul Bellow, Vladimir Nabokov, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Jack Kerouac and William Faulkner who left lasting impressions on him. All these were experimental writers who defined and set new standards in literature. On the influences that shaped his writings, Carey reveals that "...Borges certainly did, and García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* must have - a wonderful book. .... But earlier influences than the ones I've named were Faulkner and Kafka and the novels of Beckett".[33]

Carey has acknowledged that "García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* had a huge effect on him."[34] Carey happened to read Gabriel García Márquez and it "just knocked me right off my bloody head – such a beautiful,

fantastic, perfect book'.[35] He further described Márquez as "the writer I probably most liked in retrospect"' for "his ability to blend elements of fantasy and reality on a big scale".[36] Hassal states that Carey incorporates a lot of "Márquezian transformations".[37] There are apparent similarities in "Carey's ability to tell a character's story with unnerving insight in a few sentences, as García Márquez characteristically does".[38] Carey's writing amply demonstrates that Márquez's novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* had a seminal influence on Carey's later writing, more markedly in *Bliss* and *Illywhacker*. The acknowledgement of the influence of Márquez, led him to be associated with 'magic realism'. This concept of magic realism gained precedence with the Latin American fiction of the 1960's. The storyteller performs the duty of conveying the community's sense of identity and often required extremes of fantasy for adequate expression. This freedom, due to him, when practiced by the leading exponents of the times like Marquez, led to magic realism.

Around the late 1960s and early 70s, Carey began to read the work of Donald Barthelme, an American writer. Carey was "particularly affected in terms of ways of talking about things"[39] in Barthelme's story *The Balloon*. Bizarre incidents abound in Barthelme's world and characters in his stories take the wildest dislocations for granted. An influential American writer of short fiction, he was known to reject traditional chronology, plot, character, time, space, grammar, syntax, metaphor, and simile, as well as the traditional distinctions between fact and fiction.

In 1972, the *Tabloid Story* magazine was launched, edited by Michael Wilding, Frank Moorhouse and Carmel Kelly. *Tabloid* championed a new sort of writing, ones that dealt with things that were considered hitherto taboo. It was this magazine that drew the attention of Australian writers by expressing an interest in the "fabulatory tendencies of non-Australian writers like Borges, Calvino and Barthelme".[40] Michael Wilding, an English fiction writer and academic, was instrumental in having Carey's first book published, the book that appeared as *The Fat Man in History.*

Carey has been described as a fabulist and his work likened to "that of Jorge Luis Borges and Donald Barthelme, a blend of surrealism and realism"[41] thereby creating "a compelling, often nightmarish world which is mysterious and serious, fantastic yet real".[42] Borges, in his writings is known for his ability to take characters and ideas from other published works and reinvent or redo them. Blending fact and fiction, often mythic in resonance, many of the Borges' stories have a vague feeling of surrealistic genuineness; and later more than a few Latin American 'magical realists' cited Borges as their primary inspiration. Borges showed the possibilities in narrative of presenting forking paths and thus alternative realities by cunningly mixing philosophy, fact, fantasy and mystery. In a manner akin to Borges, Carey creates "a fictional world which juxtaposes the familiar and the unexpected with the maximum suggestive effect".[43]

Woodcock confirms that, Carey himself has often recalled the impact of Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* with its structural divisions in a manner that the story is 'told from different points of view... and people often contradict each other'.[44] In the Bold Type interview[45] Carey named James Joyce (*Ulysses*), William Faulkner (*As I Lay Dying*) and Samuel Beckett (*Malone Dies*, *Molloy*, *The Unnamable*) as "writers who would influence (him) forever". In another interview broadcast in Australia, Carey confided that "his reading of Kafka's *America,* Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying,* and *Beauty and the Beast* all influenced [him]".[46] In Franz Kafka's writings the themes of alienation and persecution are repeatedly emphasized and it is a well-propounded idea that his works are considered emblematic of existentialism. Emile Zola, most famous for his long series called *Les Rougon Macquart,* was noted for his very natural portrayal of history of a family written after intense study, ranging in subject from the world of peasants and workers to the imperial court. Zola prepared his novels carefully. The result was a combination of precise documentation, dramatic imagination and accurate portrayals. Zola interviewed experts, wrote thick dossiers based on his research, made thoughtful portraits of his protagonists, and outlined the action of each chapter, thus lending immense credibility to his works. One can't help but notice the conglomeration in Carey's fiction of the "Kafkaesque nightmares of terror and imprisonment",[47] the "stomach-turning Zolaesque physicality"[48] lending its Latin American style magic realism as well as the influence of Samuel Beckett, Jonathan Swift and Jack Kerouac.

"Like Beckett and Kafka… and also like Swift, Carey defamiliarises the stories from which 'reality' is constructed… his satiric purpose, like Swift's, is unmistakeable".[49] Beckett, an Irish novelist and playwright, one of the great names of Absurd Theatre, wrote plays that are concerned with human suffering and survival, and his characters are struggling with meaninglessness and the world of the Nothing. Beckett was obsessed by a desire to create what he called 'a literature of the unword.' He waged a lifelong war on words, trying to yield the silence that underlines them. His search for meaning drawn from silences, served to defamiliarise ordinary everyday reality that found favour with Carey. Carey found enticing the "odd use of language" in the stories of writers like Kerouac, which he found "very liberating, exciting, wonderful".[50]

Graham Huggan[51] notes that Carey's work "is much indebted to (Günter) Grass" and his works like *The Tin Drum*. Grass, in his works attempts to confront history, not by dehistoricizing it, but by locating historical events in a specific time and place. One finds in Carey's fiction surreal elements which resemble Grass' art, e.g., the omniscient narrator's narration of events in the form of a confession, the shifts in narrative voice, etc. in novels like *Illywhacker* and *Oscar and Lucinda*. Bruce Bennet, in *World Literature Written in English*, found similarities "between Carey's work and that of Kurt Vonnegut Jr. and Evelyn Waugh…"[52] Evelyn Waugh, an English writer, was

regarded by many as the leading satirical novelist of his day. He provides a very severe indictment of issues around that affected him.

In 1980, when Carey won his first major award for fiction, he also helped establish the McSpedden-Carey, an advertising agency, which did very well and was a major source of Carey's income. The stabilization of his financial position gave the necessary boost to Carey's literary career, for as Woodcock[53] puts it "he was freer than most writers to maintain his ongoing commitment to take risks and experiment in his work, without having 'to worry if something sells or not'". Carey's mixtures of lifestyles and the transitions he made from science to advertising and literature was the defining factor for his writings. Clearly, the influences on Carey are multiple. While being influenced by writers such as Marquez, Borges, Faulkner, Beckett, Kafka, Grass, the writings of *The Tabloid*, and the American fiction of the 1960s, Carey remains a literary giant in his own capacity.

Carey once said[54]: "Almost everything I have ever written has been concerned with questions of 'national identity', a seemingly old-fashioned project that seems, to me, an alarmingly modern concern." In the same interview he also comments that "my fictional project has always been the invention or discovery of my own country."[55] To Carey, confronting the Australian past which drastically affects the present, assumes prime importance. Whereas Australians do not like to celebrate the instant when the nation was born, Carey

emphatically states that "it has been something of a passion for me to do just that [celebrate Australia's inception]".[56] Thus Carey, whose preoccupations remain centrally Australian, admits the impact of Australia, its past, its history, its developments and its present and the people, as a moulding power in his works.

In an interview with Robert Birnbaum[57], Carey affirmed a particular immigrant experience that an Australian has:

> as an Australian writing in English, the first thing you go to do is discover your own country and present your own country in a way that it's not been presented before to your people. Secondly, if you are going to be honest, you are also writing for the metropolitan centers, as part of Anglophone literature, you have to think about those readers as well. But you can not patronize or betray your first readers.

Carey clearly patronized his first readers. He tried to discover and present his homeland in a manner unlike any other earlier representation. Australia's convict history, even though it was a relatively brief period when it transpired, in Carey's own admission, has always held his interest and also "really shaped us to an extraordinary degree - far more than we acknowledge - and in all sorts of good ways."[58] He also acknowledges the negative side of Australia's history,

the side that he "like[s] a little bit less, as well." Wanting to give due credit to both the positive and negative impact of Australia's convict past, Carey takes it up with passion and enthusiasm.

More than any other Australian writer, Carey, shows an ardent concern in creating viable Australian origin myths. "We're the only country on earth that has its beginnings in a concentration camp, a penal colony, and genocide, too"[59], Carey had once acknowledged. It is for this country that he tries to create and recreate myths using storytelling as an implement. Accepting the presence of the native indigenous aborigine and their 40,000 year old culture that was systematically wiped out, Carey seeks to draw our attention to the plight of the convicts too. These were people who also had to endure extreme hardships, and what Carey tries to foreground is their fortitude and grit in all their travails which finally led to the creation of the Australian nation. Thus instead of attracting shame, the penal past projects tales of tenacity and determination, traits any country would be proud of. He projects the myth of the Australian as a "battler", and the real people of Australia as the working class. Carey has always asserted that keeping aside a few of his stories, the rest of his writings have been "writings about Australia".[60]

Carey shares with other experimental writers of his times a disposition for exploring the periphery of human experience. He presents characters that are as normal as any person could be. However, what draws these people apart are

their peculiarities of either experience or personality, or at times even both. The result is a transformation of the most ordinary into the most 'insane idea',[61] that is built upon until it finally turns out to be the worst nightmare possible. The feeling that these nightmarish possibilities exist in normal everyday life is by itself chilling to the bone.

Carey believes that there is a part of the Australian national psyche "that really doesn't like success... the Australian culture seems one that usually celebrates defeat and feels most uncomfortable with success. All our great stories are ones of defeat".[62] Success is disparaged in a society like Australia. The characters in Carey's works "tend not to understand each other ... tend not to know each other ...they don't even get themselves right".[63] It is this basic misunderstanding that leads to the evolution of the narration in the novels. Disruption, disturbance and menace are interests that show forth in all of his writings. He wants to disrupt our complacent view of normality, and add new dimensions to it. He desires to drastically alter our view of normality, which he attains by a clever blend of science fiction, fable, fantasy and satire. He wishes to awaken and familiarize us to the possibilities of human experience.

Woodcock gleans out four important concerns[64] other than national identity, divulged in Carey's fiction. One is American imperialism and culture that has such a drastic and overpowering effect on all it comes in contact with, the same as occurred with Australia. He also attends to the hegemonistic concerns that

America indulges in, and the culture that it propagates and nurtures in its conquests like Australia. Capitalism and all its prevailing evils of corruption, bribery, nepotism, etc. Carey explores their probable fallout in terms of power and authority which affects all in the normal course of time. He also provides a damning critique of the obsessive culture of tourism.

Carey, once he gained success as a writer, has always claimed enjoyment in the wearisome work of writing novels or stories. In an interview with Nona Walia[65] for the Times News Network, Carey states that "my mind is always working overtime. I'm self-absorbed, self-obsessed with my characters and plots. Yet, rarely are my writings autobiographical". He denies having any interest in writing autobiographical fiction, but also admits enjoying the work of other fiction writers who use autobiographical elements in their works. In the Bold Type interview[66], Carey states that "For [him], the pleasure in fiction is to invent, to elevate myself, to end up discovering things I did not know when I set out. I enjoy writing autobiographical non-fiction every now and then, although it would feel unseemly to make a business of constantly confessing."

Notes

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[13] Veronica Brady, "Birth, Death and Taxes," Overland 125 (1991): 80.

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[25] Ken Goodwin, A History of Australian Literature (London: Macmillan, 1986) 263.

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[27] Woodcock, 7.

[28] Goodwin, 269.

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[30] Woodcock, 1.

[31] Woodcock, 1.

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[35] Woodcock, 7.

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[37] Hassal, Macadam 31.

[38] Hassal, Macadam 74.

[39] Woodcock, 5.

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[41] Ozlit, <http://www.Ozlit@Vicnet/AustralianLiteraryresources/AustralianBooksandWriters.htm>

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[47] Hassal, Macadam 29.

[48] Hassal, Macadam 29.

[49] Hassal, Macadam 71.

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[51] Graham Huggan, "Is The (Günter) Grass Greener On The Other Side? Oskar and Lucinde In The New World," World Literature Written in English 30.1 (1990): 2.

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[53] Woodcock, 8.

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[55] Bold Type Interview.

[56] Bold Type Interview.

[57] Robert Birnbaum, interview with Peter Carey, "Personalities," The Morning News, 16 Dec. 2003 <The Morning News - Birnbaum v_ Peter Carey_>

[58] Peter Carey, Powells Books Interviews, Boswell Magazine, February 2004 <http://www.powells.com/search/>

[59] Powells Books Interview.

[60] Ross, 75.

[61] Woodcock, 13.

[62] Ross, 76.

[63] Birnbaum Interview.

[64] Woodcock, 18.

[65] Nona Walia, "Write on Target," The Times of India: men and women [India] 23 Feb. 2003: 3.

[66] Bold Type Interview.

I

Nation and Narration: Reinventing Australia

The process of inventing a nation in terms of its comprehensive culture is largely dependent on its literary output. As such, poets and novelists shoulder a significant responsibility in the process of nation-building. Alan Lawson deliberates that in settler countries like Australia and Canada, "social, literary and political commentators ... have, perhaps, shown an even greater obsession with the problem of national identity than those of most other emergent colonial or post-colonial nations".[1] Timothy Brennan, in his contribution to Homi K. Bhabha's *Nation and Narration,* quotes that "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it *invents* nations where they do not exist."[2] Carey's *raison d'être* is to create a 'nation', a sense of pride and belongingness out of a disparate people, i.e., the early settlers, the first wave of European immigrants, the second wave of Asian immigrants, etc. One of the most commonly running theme in almost all of Carey's novels is *'national identity'*. Carey[3] once said: "Almost everything I have ever written has been concerned with questions of 'national identity', a seemingly old-fashioned project that seems, to me, an alarmingly modern concern." In the same interview[4] he also comments "my fictional project has always been the invention or discovery of my own country." Writers, in this venture, have thus made every effort to "provide images of the *here* that will not shock or embarrass by comparison with the long-held images of *there*".[5]

Nationalism gained political pre-eminence in the 19th century, emerging from two main sources: the Romantic exaltation of 'feeling' and 'identity', and the Liberal requirement that a *legitimate* state be based on a 'people'. Expounding this idea meant the enforcement of a considerable degree of uniformity, so that a common or shared experience would be possible. In this sense, the very nature of nationalism requires the creation of boundaries. Johann Gottfried Herder has stated that an individual could achieve his/her fullest development as integral part of a particular nation. In order to become a nation, the body of people, with a common territory, culture, language, history, needs to be sufficiently conscious of its national unity and identity. The sense of national identity has in many cases been built upon national symbols. "Identity is a variety of ethnicity with its special features like common territory, history, language, religion, shared memories and myths and other cultural traits."[6] Stories handed down about a nation that forms the matrix of its cultural history is what accords the nation its identity. Myths, legends, etc. go a long way in creating this sense.

Every individual is privileged to acquire his identity from his nation's history. For a people like the Australians who have a penal past, identity formation becomes tantamount to a crisis. Though short-lived the convict heritage never fails to haunt, because its total erasure from the atavistic mind is impossible; nor is it desirable as expounded in Carey's *Jack Maggs*. There is no wish to embrace the past and there is no conscious desire to erase it either. All of

Carey's novels are set in Australia or are about Australians. His expatriate experience has not affected his concern with Australia: "Being away from it, I've never been less able to separate myself from it." He has also emphasised his continuing concern with Australian history: "What you end up wanting to talk about is Australian history ... You've grown out of that soil – out of the soil that starts with a convict economy, a concentration camp, genocide and all of that. You're the echo of a defeat culture."[7] In each of his novels the quest for an identity assumes different modes and is dealt with at different levels.

Australian national identity is thus constructed to a great extent by the nation's penal experience narrativized by Carey. Hassal[8] interprets this search for experience as follows:

> The Australian dimension of the setting is especially appropriate because as far as its European inhabitants are concerned, Australia began life as a hell on earth for transported convicts, and the imagery of hellish imprisonment has figured in its literature and its cultural self-images ever since. Ironically enough, the other dominant myth of Australia has been as a paradise, a new world, a virgin continent, a south land of the Holy Spirit, a social laboratory, where the ills of the old European world might be put to right. Carey draws on this specifically Australian tradition of hell and heaven, as well on the larger Christian tradition in *Bliss*.

Aijaz Ahmad in his deliberations in *In Theory* expounds Fredric Jameson's views on the *national* experience as being fundamental in the maturity of the Third World intellectual. This estimate can also be applied to a settler colony like Australia. Thus, to quote Jameson, it can be said that:

> All [Australian] texts are necessarily ... allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as ... *national allegories* .... The telling of the individual story and the individual experience cannot but ultimately involve the whole laborious telling of the experience of the collectivity itself.[9]

Carey creates the national consciousness of Australia through the mythic device, which is most suitable to the nation as its history defies all tests of verifiability. It is neither true nor false since it is largely constructed on models of lies and truths. Grappling with verifiability shapes the very character of Australian identity. The national identity cannot overlook the indigenous culture of the aborigines. There is an awareness that the convict Australia does not actually have a history, given the fact that its earlier aboriginal cultural history was exterminated. Though acknowledging the rich cultural history of the aborigines, which was consciously erased by the white imperial forces, Carey does not speak from the position of the native aborigine. Thus, the need

to create the cultural history and identity of Australia assumes prime importance. There is, in addition, an awareness that Australia can no longer look to England to find roots, where they evidently no longer belong or are no longer accepted, and so arises an awareness that roots have to be grown in a new soil.

Through the hell of the past, Contemporary Australia is shown as struggling to build a 'heaven' for itself. *In Bliss*, Harry 'dies three times' (*Bliss*11[*]) He becomes 'totally convinced that he was actually in Hell' (*B*52). Consequently, he is awakened to the true nature of his life. He looks at his old life with the same people, in similar situations, in a whole new light. The past is reviewed by Harry and he finds it inadequate. His attraction to the commune life is a result of his desire to get away from the 'Hell' he was living in so far, the dangerous materialistic world based on power that is ruthless power. His entry into the commune is also not an easy one. Assuming his role as a storyteller of the commune, it is some time before he is accepted as one of them. His search for a 'heaven' is complete when Harry meets Honey Barbara at Bog Onion Road. This information is corroborated by the fact that the whole novel is narrated to us by Harry's and Honey's children. This clearly illustrates that Harry had been hitherto telling stories which had been piled upon him from his predecessors. In the bargain, Harry mastered the art of crafting stories. However, he hardly realised their relevance or their role in transmission of the

[*] For all further references to *Bliss*, (*B* followed by page number) will be inserted in the text

value system of a nation. Harry's meeting with Honey takes on epiphanic dimensions as he now begins to see definite meanings in his stories.

Bettina, with her dreams of making it big in New York its Glass towers, also fights for the right to live her rightful life, i.e., having a chance at making ads. The novel explores the effect of American culture on the Australian psyche. Having been enamoured of Harry right when she set her eyes on him, the fact that he makes ads and talks gloriously of New York, consolidates all her attention and love for him. Dreaming of 'going to be a hot-shot' (*B*96), Bettina has to come to terms with the reality that Harry is not going to let her fulfil her dreams. When he does allow her to do ads, she finds that she cannot sell them on her own. She needs Harry to do it for her. Her success is, however short-lived as she dies of cancer, supposedly caused by excessive inhalation of petrol fumes, a symbol of materialism and progress. Honey functions as a remedy in respect of Bettina. Honey makes valiant attempts in transforming the Joys family to her way of clean living. However, gradually she finds herself succumbing to the temptations of the city. She finally finds her way back when she consciously decides to leave the city, the Joys, and return to the commune.

Carey's second novel, *Illywhacker*, which was shortlisted for the Booker prize is, as Tony Thwaites states, "an ideal candidate. It deals explicitly with the question of 'Australianness'".[10] Howard Jacobson[11] found *Illywhacker* a uniquely Australian work and contended that the experience of reading it was

nearly the equivalent of visiting Australia. The life of the 139-year-old trickster and liar, Herbert Badgery, parallels the development of Australia following its independence from England, and is full of odd adventures, including stints as a pilot, car salesman, and even snake handler.[12] Carey attempts to present an Australia that is striving to shake off the colonial chains binding it and asserting itself. Hebert embodies this attitude in his lifetime, whether it means trying to build an indigenous Australian aeroplane, as Woodcock states:

> Herbert… [attempts] to make an Australian aeroplane and in doing so remake Australia independent of the colonialist legacy… [the act] represent a dream about Australia as a self-determining autonomous nation producing its own culture…. Through this picaresque treatment of the Badgeries' family history Carey felt as if he were 'at last trying to come to grips with what it means to be an Australian and what Australia is'.[13]

In the story of the four generations of the Badgeries that we read of, the reader views the different developments that have taken place in Australia. Herbert's attempts to assert his identity, his realisation that his lies were more easily acceptable to people than his truths, go a long way in portraying the early Australians who were opportunists, who struggled, no doubt, and tried to get what they wanted through all possible means. That Herbert, embodying the

early Australians, is not clear about what he wants himself, is what sabotages all his attempts at stability and happiness.

> The Badgery families are trapped by their own aspirations and mythologies, embodying the direction of contemporary Australian society. Herbert's desire to make history, or Leah's sense of there being no history, represent phases in a search for an Australian identity ...[14]

Carey tries to project the Australian past as not only consisting of convict origins. In trying to foreground the aborigines as original inhabitants who had their own culture and traditions that were as rich as any other culture, Carey attempts to subvert the imperial creation of Australia's history as a tale of the convict who was sent to the land. Carey is definitely attacking the image of Australia as a wild and barren uninhabited bush country as projected in earlier Australian literature. He also incorporates the world of the aborigines who lived contented lives before it was disrupted. *Oscar and Lucinda*, set in England and Australia, in the middle of the 19th century is

> obviously intended to demonstrate just how very different a country the past was, and how, in that country, salvation and damnation were

> not only a constant topic of intellectual debate but a matter of profound emotional concern to the individual."[15]

As in Gabriel García Márquez's *A Hundred Years of Solitude* or in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, or in Günter Grass' *The Tin Drum* , *Oscar and Lucinda* uses a large-scale fabulatory form to interweave the fantastic and often painfully absurd adventures of extravagant fictional characters with the actual events of national or international history to create a gigantic teeming canvas.[16] The verisimilitude or falsity of historical narration is consciously kept in abeyance. Facts are intertwined with fantasy. The reader encounters an alternate society that had thrived long before the advent of the Europeans. The reader observes that the Europeans, who came with the zeal to convert the pagans and to spread Christian values ended up in the process eradicating a whole culture and tradition, only to lay claim to the land as its original inhabitants. Lucinda feels disillusioned with the fortune that she has inherited, as she feels the rightful owners of the land she inherited are the natives. She wants to shake off her inheritance and to be free of its burden. Oscar is a defrocked clergyman, who gives in to the temptation of gambling and accepts all adversities as retribution for all his wrongs. With his love for Lucinda remaining unexpressed, he looks for unusual ways to express it. Jeffries who wants to be a pioneer in finding new lands stops at nothing to achieve this objective, even to the extent of slaughter and misrepresentation of facts.

The Tax Inspector referred to by critics as a tragicomedy of modern life in run-down Sydney, is set amongst the Catchprices, an accursed family of car dealers. Set in 1990's Carey presents outer-suburban Sydney at its worst. 'The future' which Maria sees in Australia (*The TaxInspector*34[†]), is one of possibility but also one compromised by the ongoing effects of the poisons of the past, the "convict beginnings" about which Carey stated, "have their effect on the Australian culture-I think our easy tolerance of corruption might spring from that".[17] Benny Catchprice, the sixteen year old youngest member of the Catchprice family reveals to his brother, Vish that he has 'changed' (*TI*18). Thus, as Woodcock tells us, "Benny undergoes a miraculous transformation from a slob in Doc Marten boots and Judas Priest tee-shirts to an elegantly manicured and silk-suited salesman ready to rescue the family business from debt and the tax inspector".[18] Similarly, Vish too tries to escape from his family and find solace with the Hare-Krishnas. Jack, Benny's uncle, likewise has moved out of the family home and has now turned into an epitome of the corruption that plagues Australia. Benny, who has a problem tackling his dismissal from Catchprice Motors and subsequent unemployment makes his incompetence evident. To tide over all this, the reader sees Benny going through a psychological upheaval which leaves him mentally unstable, and having a whole lot of illusions. He seeks to be successful. The desire for success makes him employ all the wrong and most bizarre means to achieve his

[†] For all further references to *The Tax Inspector*, (*TI* followed by page number) will be inserted in the text

ends. All he desires is to be in control. With all these characters, there is an obvious aversion, almost hatred, of their past. They are looking for ways to break off from it and make something new of themselves. Whether it is Vish, Benny, Mort, all are shown as struggling to attain this objective.

> Carey's novel (*The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith*) is about national identity viewed from the outside and the periphery. On page 117 we read: 'No one can even tell me what an Efican national identity might be. We're northern hemisphere people who have been abandoned in the south, All we know is that we're not.' This quest for identity is carried out on a personal level. ...[19]

Creating two imaginary lands that could be considered as prototypes of Australia and America, Carey underlines the quest for an Australian national identity. He undertakes this endeavour in the person of the mutant, Tristan. Tristan, the disillusioned narrator, seeks his father to assert his parentage, which is suspect. The journey leads him to Voorstand, and there, swamped by the culture of that country, Tristan finds himself gaining fame disguised as Bruder Mouse, the very symbol that his mother, Felicity, and his people, the Eficans despised. As the novel progresses, we find Tristan feeling repentant for assuming the disguise. When he finally does away with it, the reactions are severe and he is saved by the timely intervention of his father, Bill.

Carey, when questioned on his motive for writing *Jack Maggs* in the Bold Type interview[20] said:

> I am Australian. Our founding fathers and mothers did not come to our shores in search of liberty, they came to prison. Very few modern Australians are descended from those first convicts, but I believe that they affected the character of our nation forever – after all, not many modern Americans have ancestors who were on the Mayflower, but those folks on the Mayflower affected America forever. Unlike Americans, Australians do not like to celebrate this moment when the nation is born, and it has been something of a passion for me to do just that. We carry a great deal of furniture about our beginnings. It's a complicated business to discuss in so brief a form as this, but there is a great deal of self-hatred, denial, grief, and anger, all unresolved.

In *Jack Maggs*, Carey seeks to "reinvent... possess... to act as ... advocate"[21], the character of Magwitch from Dickens' *Great Expectations.* In Dickens' *Great Expectations,* Magwitch is shown as a savage who tries to corner Pip. He is an ex-convict who has come back from the prison-island of Australia to claim his due for having raised Pip. Pip looks at him, and everything associated

with him, in horror. Carey subverts the Pip-Magwitch relationship. As Carey states[22]:

> Dickens' Magwitch is foul and dark, frightening, murderous. Dickens encourages us to think of him as the "other", but this was my ancestor, he was not "other". I wanted to reinvent him, 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.

In *Jack Maggs* thus, Carey tells us the story from Magwitch's point of view. For Carey, "*Great Expectations* is not only a great work of English literature; it is [to an Australian] also a way in which the English have colonized our ways of seeing ourselves."[23] In the novel *Jack Maggs*, Carey makes an attempt at "reinventing the story of another fictional ancestor, the convict Magwitch who was transported to Australia."[24] In the novel, the main protagonist, Jack Maggs, is an illegal returnee from the Prison Island of Australia. His disposition, on his arrival in England, creates a lot of speculation among the fellow passengers in his coach. He is said to have 'hooded eyes' (*JM*3) and doesn't desire conversation with anyone.

To Maggs' mind, living a life as Jack Maggs Esquire in Australia is repulsive. He cannot envisage his life as an Australian and clings desperately to his mother country and his identity as an Englishman. All this, despite the brutal treatment meted out to him by England. All his attempts are only directed at being 'a bad smell here than a frigging rose in New South Wales' (*JM*250), as he divulges to the writer, Tobias Oates. Maggs is a respectable man with two sons in Australia. However, to further his efforts of a return to England, he has adopted a son, Mr. Henry Phipps and raised him like a gentleman and thus maintains a freehold mansion for him at 27, Great Queen Street in England. His yearning for his mother country is characteristic of all those who were deported to Australia and who longed for a return as they still felt themselves to be citizens of England, the country of their birth. A national identity removed from England is abominable for people like Maggs. A return to England, his supposed homeland, even at a considerable risk to his own life, and a denial of all the prosperity and good name Australia has brought him, is what Maggs prefers. His disclosure to Mary Britten that he had come there only 'for the culture' (*JM*7), puts forth his intentions. Again he desperately tries to assert to her that London is 'my home. That's what I want. My home' (*JM*8). The reader sees him even more desperately trying to convince Percy Buckle when he says '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' (*JM*141). We see him clinging and holding onto each and every part of his life in London. He remembers all his childhood days, the people then, very vividly and all he

desires is to be accepted in London. He openly, and in no uncertain terms, rejects Australia, even though it has provided him his fortune. He refers to it as 'that vermin' (*JM*141) and denounces his own blood back there as belonging to the Australian race. He very astutely states that he is 'not of that race' (*JM*340).

However, the rejection that he faces, once he is in England, jolts him out of his reverie. With the help of Mercy Larkin, he is able to accept that he does not belong in England anymore. The awareness of his rejection comes across to him in various ways. His own house is empty when he arrives even though he has informed the occupants, i.e., his son, of his impending arrival. He realises that his house is empty, 'yet he knocked, tapping and scratching against the pane' (*JM*10). When he finally succeeds in entering his house, his thoughts are, 'for this he laboured? To stand in Henry's hallway like a thief, his breeches smeared with London soot?' (*JM*40). Thus the reader sees him getting disappointed with everything he experiences in England. His efforts to locate his adopted son also prove futile. The last straw in his string of disappointments that shatters all his illusions is when his son points the gun at him in a bid to kill him. Acceptance of his self, as it is, dawns on him and he returns to Australia to start life afresh. With Mercy as his companion and wife, he accepts his Australian identity and thereafter leads a very contented and fulfilling life.

Carey thus exemplifies the leaning, as he has acknowledged, of according to his nation and its past a new face. In all the novels discussed, Carey states a

case for the Australian nation and its people. The reader is made aware of the passion with which each of the characters in the novels of Carey pursues the search to find an identity and in the process also creates a national identity.

i) In the Web of History

The question of national identity is certainly political and it brings in with it the political, the historical, cultural and ideological issues. For the nation of Australia defining national boundaries is an act of resistance against denigration of their culture by either powers, England or America, personalized in the character of Jack Maggs in *Jack Maggs* who sheds himself free from the influence of these two powers.

The main task of Peter Carey is to represent the National Identity of Australia on the global map. While following all the post-modernist models such as fissures, heterogeneity, multiplicity, and particularities, which reject fixation, Carey rejects being fixated even in these models. *Illywhacker* as a historico-cultural text gives us a kaleidoscope of cultures but certainly not a fixed one.

History of a 'given' construct is subverted and alternatively, multiple historical possibilities are suggested. Therefore Carey's representation of Australian history is not reproduction of factual details but imaginative and inventory, debunking notions of objectivity, further problematized by genre-blurring.

Illywhacker, in fact, uses letters, records, poems, narratives, journalistic clippings, diaries, creating a generic confusion thereby suggesting multiple historical possibilities. History writing suffered no restraints of possibilities and many a historian used the technique of fictional representation to create

imaginative versions of their historical records. In her discussion of a historiographic metafiction, Linda Hutcheon says, "The post-modern novel has done the same and the reverse."[25] Historiographic metafiction plays upon the truth and lies of historical records. Blurring the distinction between facts and fiction, "postmodernism deliberately confuses the notion that history's problem is verification, while fiction's is veracity."[26] While the historical novel many a time makes use of real historical personages, the metafictional reflexivity of the postmodern novel includes ex-centric, marginalized or peripheral characters. Here characters cannot be types because the question of positioning the protagonist in a socio-cultural set-up, is impossible, as there is no sense of cultural universality. The postmodernist models best suit nations such as Canada or Australia where national identity is constructed not from a single but multiple histories of peoples and consequently multiple cultures.

For a nation with a peculiar history like Australia, Carey attempts to create a past and consciously subverts the history of Australia constructed and handed down by Imperial powers. Carey categorically states his intention in his interview with Jean W. Ross:

> The Australia I wished to write about was the one described by Mark Twain... i.e., "Australian history is almost always picturesque; indeed it is the chief novelty the country has to offer ... It does not read like history, but like the most beautiful lies; and all of a fresh

> new sort, ... It is full of surprises and adventures, and incongruities, and incredibilities.[27]

Illywhacker, for instance, *was* described in the *Publishers Weekly* announcement as "some 100 years of Australian history transformed by the imagination into drama and myth."[28]

History is viewed as another story-telling process and therefore enters the understanding that subjectivity is bound to creep in. In some of Carey's fiction multiple narrators tell the same tale in different versions. "Derrida has proclaimed the separation of the signifier and the signified, which, if true, would reduce all lies and (hi)stories, satires and truths to the status of mere texts".[29]

Veronica Brady[30] in *Overland* tells us that Carey has always been preoccupied with history, with the state of events, places, institutions, memories and habits. Sometimes as in *Illywhacker* and *Oscar and Lucinda* he parodies this state; sometimes, as at the end of *Bliss*, he dissociates his characters from it and at other times, in the stories especially, he escapes ahead of it into an imaginary world of his own, a kind of counter history which nevertheless has an uncanny, often eerie and sometimes funny resemblance to what we choose to regard as the 'real thing'.

Critics also confirm that all of [Carey's] writing, despite its variety, seems to be rooted in storytelling. *Bliss*, an account of modern day Australia, is considered to be a "story about story-telling".[31] There is a preoccupation with the creation of stories 'something new... something interesting... something we haven't heard before... it must be totally original' (*B*76). The story of Little Titch narrated by Harry is 'the only original story he would ever tell' (*B*76). It is here that Harry embarks on his journey as a story-teller. All his life he has thrived on the stories his father, Vance, narrated to him. These, when narrated in turn by Harry in *Bliss* assume a whole new dimension. The meaning Vance accorded to his stories is lost on Harry. Harry finds his true calling, i.e., that of the story-teller in the commune.

> In this account of the myth-making role of the story-teller in the "broken culture" of Bog Onion Road, Carey is clearly offering an ambitious interpretation of both the personal value to the story-teller, and the cultural value to the community, of local stories and story-telling, particularly in a colonized culture like Australia's.[32]

The narrative in *Illywhacker* is a pastiche of historical references. As the critic Sue Ryan[33] opines:

> although a lie because it does not tell the whole truth, may also be seen as an incomplete version of the truth. In this way Carey's lies about Australian history can be seen as part of the truth, just as the version given in history books is lies or only partial truth.

Brought to the foreground, is also the power of the written word to authenticate lies. The trickster, or illywhacker, Herbert Badgery "... [goes]... behind the scenes... of Australian history... He travels up and down its secret alleys from the late 19th century to the early 20th centuries, casting his cynical gaze on the lies he finds there".[34]

Herbert's 'salesman's sense of history' (*I*343)... reveals Australia itself as a 'show', a product constructed from illusion and deception. Initially, Herbert embodies what Carey has called 'a kind of entrepreneurial optimistic nationalism'. Herbert's 'combative nationalism' is portrayed in a number of ways:

> ... he celebrates the diversity and detail of Australia, its landscape, localities, societies, people and characters...it is a *One Hundred Years of Solitude* of the outback, with small-town lives and incidents woven together into a panoramic account of national history...Herbert's life is presented as that history in the making.... Australia's history is itself lies, that 'the raw optimistic tracks' of its

> pioneers were made at the expense of another society, and 'cut the arteries of an ancient culture before a new one had been born[35]

Illywhacker's 'novelist-as-liar device' goes a long way in reinforcing the viewpoint that history is ultimately a construction from particular subjective point of view. The reader in Carey's fiction is made aware of this subjectivity in historical narrations. When the novel begins, we have Herbert informing or rather warning us that even though he is the narrator, he is 'a terrible liar and [he has] always been a liar.' (*I*11) We are repeatedly informed directly or subtly that the narration need not always be the truth. According to *Illywhacker*'s "project is not so much to play tricks ... as to do with the history of Australia".[36]

As in *Illywhacker*, the story the narrator tells in *Oscar and Lucinda* is a family history which is also a national history, told from the point of view of the central white characters. But this dominant outlook is shadowed all through by a hidden history. This history emerges most powerfully when Kumbaingiri Billy, the aborigine, tells his version of the arrival of Jeffries, Oscar and the expedition. "This forms a damning indictment of the pretensions and hypocrisies of Jeffries's attempts to enter the annals of exploration, discovery and empire-building- which leads us to the glass church".[37] The zeal of empire building is seen in Mr. Jeffries who agrees to lead the expedition, carrying the Glass Church up north to Bellingen. The land has been unexplored and

unmapped. Mr. Jeffries dreams that he 'would write such journals as the colony has never seen. Every peak and saddle surveyed to its precise altitude.'(*OscarandLucinda*350[‡]). Information provided by Mr. Jeffries in his journals is however far from the truth. The differences in Mr. Jeffries' journal, that which Oscar himself witnesses, and what the Aborigines speak of in their stories shows how, as Ms.Vergara[38] says, "history is re-written". All three versions are different, and this leaves one uncertain of the actual train of events. Jeffries wants to name the new territory and thus become a pioneer himelf, thereby "appropriating the land for the English".[39] He is totally oblivious to the loss of human life even if that is of the Aborigines, thereby shattering the much touted egalitarianism of the Imperial forces.

Oscar and Lucinda, which bagged the Booker prize, deals directly with issues of British imperialism in colonial Australia. Commenting upon the Victorian expansion of the British Empire, the stories of Oscar and Lucinda expose the myth of empire building as a glorious pursuit. The myth of empire building adopted by the British, is revealed at its stark best when Lucinda resents her fortune as she realizes that it has been usurped from the Aborigines by her parents and by extension, the British colonizers. The colonial project is at full play in the displacement of the Aborigines and its consequent claim to the Australian land as a matter of right.

‡ For all further references to *Oscar and Lucinda*, (*O&L* followed by page number) will be inserted in the text

"The stories of Oscar and Lucinda expose the myth of empire building as a glorious pursuit." says Bernadette Vergara. He also adds that "Colonization and British imperialism are themselves a form of storytelling. Conquering the new and unexplored land, mapping it out, is a story." Mr. Jeffries' journal citing the course of journey and subsequent exploration, Oscar's account of the same journey, and the tales passed down by the Aborigines, illustrate how history is subject to variations. These different accounts also illustrate how difficult it is to distinguish fact from fiction even in the case of Oscar and Lucinda, although there is otherwise little doubt cast upon the narrator's own version of his great-grandfather's story. *Oscar and Lucinda* is very much about the origins of history in the form of Mr. Jeffris' deliberate and conscious effort to make and write history in his journals and also Oscar's missionary work which essentially entails bringing the stories of Christianity to the Aborigines. The novel also compares the two versions of Oscar's story, that told by the narrator and the other by his mother. The narrator never really tells how he constructed his version of Oscar's story. On the first page, he describes the daguerreotype and says that it seemed obvious to him that his great-grandfather was holding his breath and attempting not to twitch. *Oscar and Lucinda* offers an almost complete appropriation of history because the narrator revises it so completely from his mother's story of Oscar as pioneer clergyman.

Carey demythologizes contemporary Australia, in the process revealing a hidden history beneath the surface 'show'. The hidden imperial history of white

Australia's colonization of Aboriginal land is clearly revealed. Carey also reveals how deeply imbued with Christian culture his life and Australian history has been. Woodcock categorically assumes that, "as the novel plays with storytelling, so it also plays with history".[40]

In *Oscar and Lucinda* the narrator tells of his past like a story. Beginning the story by calling Oscar his 'great-grandfather' (*O&L*1), "the narrator implies that he exists because Oscar had sexual intercourse with someone, thereby producing his grandparent."[41] Carey names the novel *Oscar and Lucinda* presumably dedicating the plot equally to Oscar's and Lucinda's development, leading the reader to believe that Oscar and Lucinda end up together having a sexual relationship and thereby fulfilling their love. Furthermore, the narrator begins the chapter on Oscar's and Lucinda's first encounter by telling the reader, 'In order that I exist, two gamblers, one Obsessive, the other Compulsive, must meet' (*O&L*187). Although this statement implies that Oscar and Lucinda have sex, the text never clearly asserts it. It is the reader who makes this connection because the reader wants to believe the story. The narrator introduces Miriam earlier in the novel but does not call her his 'great-grandmother' (*O&L*422) until Oscar and Miriam meet. Entitling the next chapter, which begins after Oscar and Miriam have sex, "Oscar and Miriam" (*O&L*422), Carey plays on the novel's title *Oscar and Lucinda* that originally led the reader to believe in their future sexual relationship.

The narrator clarifies at the onset of the novel that he himself 'learned long ago to distrust local history' (*O&L2*). It is only after this confession that he goes on to narrate his history. Here too one finds disparities in the information he gives us. Equally doubtful is the source from which he could have received such detailed information about his history. Woodcock aptly says[42] that "*Oscar and Lucinda* plays with history and fiction in ways which remind us that history too is a storytelling process and something we must be wary of." It also brings forth the arbitrary and partial. Not only is history made up of chance occasions and potentialities, it also contains different points of view thereby suggesting subjectivity in history-writing. Any history, the book suggests, is merely one view of the past, and may hide many other possible versions of the same events. For example, the narrators distrust of local history is occasioned by the fact that 'Darkwood, for instance, they will tell you at the Historical Society, is called Darkwood because of the darkness of the foliage, but it was not so long ago you could hear people call it Darkies' Point, ...' (*O&L2*).

The Tax Inspector "is more weighed down by the burden of the past.... [It is] shadowed by history.... the only big city in the world that was established by convicts on one side and by soldiers on the other".[43] The Sydney, we perceive from a reading, is a product of the killing effects of capitalism. As Woodcock says[44]:

> Carey [in *The Tax Inspector*] paints a vitriolic portrait of social decay and disintegration, the collapse of communal ethics and the sheer rapacity of the business world consequent upon the global market economy of the late 1980s.

Further Hassal reiterates[45] that "*The Tax Inspector* sets a grimly detailed account of three generations of incest in the Catchprice family against a broader account of public venality and corruption of Sydney".

The novel deals with the government tax investigation of a small car dealership of the Catchprices. Although it depicts just four days in the life of the Catchprice family, when the tax investigation is in effect, Carey constantly uses the flashback "...what Jen Craig calls Carey's manner of 'telescoping time with an incident or object at either end of it'."[46], to dig back into the past. In this way he links the Catchprice history with the wider social history.

The novel has three main stories to tell us, that of the Catchprice family, the story of Maria Takis and the story of Sarkis, the Armenian. It begins with Benny's transformation, to an elegant and silk-suited salesman. The reader learns that Benny has shaved off all his bodily hair, as if to portray that he 'had been peeled of all history' (*TI*133). Benny's transformation seems to be one attempt at reinventing himself and reworking his history, i.e., his past, which, as revealed in the course of the novel, is disturbing as it involves child abuse by

his own father. The reader finds the whole of the Catchprice family fighting with the ghosts in their pasts. Gran Catchprice, although aware of all the wrongs going on, prefers to turn a blind eye to the doings of her husband, and consequently of her son. Maria, the idealist tax inspector, who is eight months pregnant when we meet her, gets entangled with the Catchprices too. Sarkis, an immigrant in search of a job, is manipulated and taken advantage of by Benny, by enticing him with employment.

The Tax Inspector shows what Carey has called "a newer Australia that we still haven't mapped".[47] The novel, while giving us the history of the anglophone Catchprices, also "gives a significant presence to the non-Anglo/Celtic Australia of the various immigrant communities…".[48] Maria, a Greek immigrant, quietly drops her father to his home in Newtown, 'slipping into Greek territory like a spy in a midget submarine' (*TI*130). So also Sarkis and his mother, Armenians, suffer when they are 'away from the Armenians' (*TI*82). Sarkis, depressed and unemployed, when we are introduced to him, is 'ashamed, not ashamed of his mother, but ashamed on her behalf…' (*TI*82).

The two imaginary lands of Voorstand and Efica that Carey creates in *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith*, is reminiscent of America and Australia, respectively. Efica's history as a penal colony and its massacred indigenous peoples (*The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith*9[§]), "suggests analogies with

[§] For all further references to *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith*, (*ULoTS* followed by page number) will be inserted in the text

Australia and the wider post-colonial experience."[49] The eighteen islands of Efica constitute a hybrid culture with a hybrid English language. Tristan, the mutant, born in the small island nation of Efica states that "[Efica is] a country so unimportant that you are already confusing the name with Ithaca or Africa" (*ULoTS*5).

As his life progresses, Tristan also explores the relationship between these two countries in the novel. Efica is swamped, culturally and politically by Voorstand. Although both the countries were founded by colonial Europeans, as their respective histories tell us, until the novel's narration, "Efica has remained a poor archipelago,... while Voorstand has become an arrogant and technically advanced colonial power in its own right, although not without compromising some of the principles on which it was founded."[50]

Jack Maggs is a character study of the first Australians, the English convicts who were banished to what was then a penal colony. In the novel we encounter Jack Maggs':

> contradictory urges to both reveal and conceal the story of his life. His use of his story is an attempt to expunge his past and have himself recreated in a sense as Henry Phipps, cleansed of his sordid past and a gentleman in a fine house at last. ...[51]

He writes of his past, his history, in an ink that appears only when held against the light. This history is meant only for the eyes of Phipps. At the same time it haunts him in the nature of the phantom:

> [a] pain and the horror that always accompanied these crises. It was not a horror of anything, or about anything, but a horror so profound that a certain time elapsed during which he hardly knew where on earth he stood (*JM*33-4).

We see Maggs trying to grab Tobias Oates' promise of getting rid of the phantom and the ensuing pain resulting therefrom. He seeks to wipe out his past and start anew. But in this endeavour he finds no support.

In *Jack Maggs*, Carey implies that there are always two stories being told, that there are, "as in all crooked businesses, two sets of books"[52] The narrator tells us Maggs' life story, but the one that is official, i.e., the one that is published, accords a different ending to Maggs. Carey complicates the conclusion a little more by implying that the textual history that remains in the Mitchell Library actually hides the true story of the time. Maggs never reads 'That Book' (*JM*356). It is Mercy who collects all the copies, the serialized parts then compiled together, and the amended versions, of Maggs' story that appear in

print, and these account for 'no fewer than seven copies of the last edition' (*JM*356).

Carey in *Jack Maggs* thus accounts for more than one story of Jack Maggs, all never telling the whole truth and therefore getting reduced to fiction. With Tristan in *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* too, the reader is made aware of the overriding influence of the superior Voorstand that swamps Efica, manipulating the latter for its own benefit. In *The Tax Inspector* Carey explores the mapping of an Australia that has always remained concealed. *Oscar and Lucinda* and *Illywhacker* both present an alternative history of Australia to the reader.

ii) Telling Lies to Tell the Truth

Speaking about his novels, Peter Carey quotes from Twain, "I*t does not* ***read like*** *history, but like the* ***most beautiful lies.***" Sue Ryan[53] in her study of Carey's fiction draws a conclusion that "the lie" is one of the metaphors in his novels. In her opinion:

> By analysing how and why characters' lies are created, received and developed we gain insight into how Carey perceives the function and creation of his fiction. The main function of lies is seen to be **creative entertainment**. ... And yet lies are also seen as **a way of expressing the truth**. .... although a lie does not tell the whole truth, (it) may also be seen as an incomplete version of the truth,...just as the version given in history books is lies or only partial truth.

All of Carey's novels have characters that resort to lies to create a world to suit their mindset. Reasons for resorting to telling lies could be varied. But most of the time it seems as if it is a means of escape from reality. When the characters lose control of current circumstances, a make-believe world is the best option available to them to come to terms with the present problems, difficulties or dilemmas. In the process of creating a world with lies, one can't help but notice the ingenuity of these characters, in trying to make their make-believe world look real. Acknowledging this trait in his characters, Carey opines[54] that "Australians are like that.... You're working with limited resources, but

because you have limited resources, you make something that's wittier and cooler than what you have anyway".

In their attempt to grapple with reality, the characters create stories, unbelievable and most extraordinary ones that are supposed to assist them. However, most of the time they end up getting trapped in the stories themselves. Their lies run amok and continue to evolve independently, in ways their initiator had not foreseen. In many ways they turn on the creators themselves. Only those who manage to extricate themselves from their stories manage to survive till the end of the novel.

Harry in *Bliss*, the major protagonist, has till his first death, i.e., clinical death, always lived a complacent life feeding himself on the stories of his father, Vance, who tells him about the 'trembling glass towers' (*B*22) of New York. These stories help him in his meandering path in life. He wins over Bettina, his wife, because she is overwhelmed by his tales of New York. In his hands the stories of Vance Joy lose their meaning and become directionless. He is a Good Bloke, a popular figure around who can tell amusing stories. When he is arrested by the police after his red Fiat has been crushed by an elephant (*B*71), he is asked to tell an original story, as the police refuse to believe the truth. The car is certainly crushed, but one never really gets to know whether the car was really crushed by an elephant. This impression is created because of the way Mr. Billy de Vere, from the circus, informs Harry. He says, 'This is almost the

same as the original story' (*B*70). We see him forever trying to make meaning of all that is happening around him, and in the bargain creating a whole imaginary world. It could be thinking that he is in 'Hell' and all those around him are 'Captives', or even writing advertisements that tell a false story. His final role is that of a storyteller to the forest community at the end of the book. In his quest for storytelling, Dominique Hecq believes that Carey "attempts to recapture some of these lost myths in its journeying through histories and stories"[55]

In *Illywhacker*, Herbert Badgery in the first few lines he tells us his age and then informs us tongue-in-cheek that 'I'm a terrible liar' and that 'My age is the one fact you can rely on, and not because I say so, but because it has been publicly authenticated' (*I*11). Herbert goes back to 1861 in his narration of the history of his life, upto the present, where he is caged in his son's establishment in Sydney, 'The Best Pet Shop in the World'. A story of three successive generations of the Badgeries and their friends, the novel parallels the progress of Australia from its independence from England, and runs from 1861 to 2025. As he narrates the history of his life, he himself keeps questioning the truth of the stories he is telling, and parallels the official history of the country with prodigious lies. The reader is given constant reminders that the narrator is a notorious liar. Multiple versions of events are given in the narrative to stress on the fictional nature of the narration. Each of these versions can have some truth in them. It is as Sue Ryan states[56] 'Illywhacker

sets out to express the harsh truth about Australians and their history in the guise of fiction, in an attempt to make it palatable and even entertaining.'

"Carey prophesizes the destructive nature of stories and how while telling them one assumes power over meaning in an individual's life",[57] states Amanda Cooper. Indeed, the transport of the church, a fanciful and impractical scheme, destroys life in its path until Oscar prays for the church's destruction. In the same way, the narrator's mother believes in the story even though it destroys her relationship with her husband. When stories fall apart, as this one does, the people who found meaning in them must falsify them in order to continue believing in them.

Carey tries to present the fact that the past of Australia has always been a series of lies, right from the narratives of the first white settlers in Australia. Thwaites quotes M.V. Anderson's unfolding of the history of Australia[58], where he elucidates:

> Our forefathers were all great liars ... However it is their first lie that is the most impressive for being the most monumental, i.e., that the continent, at the time of first settlement, was said to be occupied but not cultivated and by that simple device they were able to give the legal owners short shrift and, when they objected, to use the musket or poison flour, and to do so with a clear conscience. (p.456)

iii) Treating the Colonial/Capitalist Cancers

Theorists Diana Brydon and Helen Tiffin, in *Decolonising Fictions*, claim that postcolonial writers seek to construct texts that 'write back' against imperial fictions and question the values once taken for granted by the once dominant Anglocentric discourse of the imperial epicentre. In *Jack Maggs* the process of 'writing back' is thoroughly illustrated. 'The colonial 'other' character from a canonised Victorian novel becomes the principal figure in a modern 'decolonising' text, and the peripheral reaches of empire become of central importance.' As Brydon and Tiffin point out[59]:

> Anglocentrism denies Post-Colonial territories the right to their own identities, assuming instead that they are merely engulfable parts of the imperial centre. Therefore, in *Great Expectations*, Australia functioned not as a coherent, cohesive nation, but rather, as an off stage peripheral location were characters awaited their return to the on stage action of the imperial centre, London.

Carey takes on this dominant concept, by writing a novel that seeks 'non repressive alternatives to imperialist discourse' and which refuses to indulge the metropolitan centre over the Colonial margins. This is a typical struggle of postcolonial cultures where decolonisation, "an ongoing dialectic between hegemonic centrist systems and peripheral subversion of them"[60] is endeavoured. Subversion is a characteristic of postcolonial discourse.

For a nation like Australia, a settler colony of Europeans, asserting one's national identity and culture assumes prime importance. This objective is achieved either by 'writing back' to the Empire or by pitting one's own ethnic culture against the culture of the colonisers. "Nationalist ideologies use cultural devices to demonstrate the process of collective self-definition, to provide feelings of pride and hope connected with symbolic forms so that these can be consciously de scribed, developed and celebrated."[61] The sense of national identity has in many cases been built upon national symbols.

Stuart Hall in *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* elucidates on 'cultural identity'. One position he talks of is looking at it in "terms of one , shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', ... which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common".[62] In post colonial societies, the rediscovery of this identity is often the object of what Frantz Fanon once called:

> [A] passionate research ... directed by the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation and abjuration, some very beautiful and splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others.[63]

This rediscovery attains the profile of either unearthing what the colonial experience had decimated or producing an identity by re-telling the past.

Culture refers to the customs, practices, languages, values and world views that define social groups such as those based on nationality, ethnicity, region or common interests. Cultural identity is important for people's sense of self and how they relate to others. A strong cultural identity can contribute to people's overall wellbeing. Defining a national identity can be done through a sense of national characteristics or traits, or through national symbols and icons. Myths are thus cultural signifiers and go a long way in according a national status to symbols, icons, or certain characteristics, and therefore assume grave importance in the creation of a national identity. Therefore story-telling and myth-making are traits paramount in the construction of national cultural history and identity.

Myth is defined as "a popular belief or story that has become associated with a person, institution, or occurrence, especially one considered to illustrate a cultural ideal" and also as "A fiction or half-truth, especially one that forms part of an ideology."[64] The word myth comes from the Greek "mythos" which originally meant "speech" or "discourse" but which later came to mean "fable" or "legend". The word "myth" is also defined as a story of forgotten or vague origin, basically religious or supernatural in nature, which seeks to explain or rationalize one or more aspects of the world or a society. Myths and mythologies seek to rationalize and explain the universe and all that is in it.

Therefore myths are also often used to explain human institutions and practices.

All myths are, at some stage, actually believed to be true by the peoples of the societies that used or originated the myth. Our definition is thus clearly distinguished from the use of the word myth in everyday speech which basically refers to any unreal or imaginary story. Some myths describe some actual historical event, but have been embellished and refashioned by various story tellers over time so that it is impossible to tell what really happened. In this last aspect myths have a legendary and historical nature.

Myths play a critical role in how a culture constructs its sense of time. In this sense myths are contrasted with history, which concerns recent, well-documented events, and to poetic epics and narrative legends, which concern an historical person, place, or incident from the distant past.[65] What human needs do myths satisfy? Myths authorize the cultural institutions of a tribe, a city, a nation by connecting them with universal truths. Myths justify the current occupation of a territory by a people.[66]

Carey, in his writings shows a keen interest in creating viable Australian origin myths. "We're the only country on earth that has its beginnings in a concentration camp, a penal colony, and a genocide, too"[67], Carey had once

acknowledged. It is for this country that he tries to create and recreate myths. Australia, for the Europeans, was initially "life as a hell on earth for transported convicts, and the imagery of hellish imprisonment …".[68] The other version of Australia was a "paradise, a new world, a virgin continent, a south land of the holy spirit, a social laboratory, where the ills of the European world might be put to right."[69] For a people whose origins are not glorious enough, looking at the past is uncomfortable. The veneration of outlaws and the hatred of cops and the seeing of the government as a potentially benevolent force even if it has been cruel in certain respects, is a reflection of the vagaries that the people had in their past. However, the search for a more pleasant past is not forgotten. The desire to create viable myths for Australia's beginnings that would show the past in a new light, a good light, is always on.

Carey acknowledges that his "fictional project has always been the invention or discovery of [his] own country".[70] The Australian past haunts its people, and is sought to either be done away with or in some way made more palatable. It is here that the 'tall-story', one of the dominant genres of Australian fiction comes into play. Fictionalising or lying, is one dominant factor that is shared by all of Carey's novels. Re-telling the story of the past and filling the narration profusely with untruths serves to reorient our understanding of the impossibility of knowing historically accurate facts. What adds to this tall story is the narrator making his motive of lying very obvious, which further serves to fictionalize the nature of the narration. Just as coming to terms with the past of

its country is necessary, making a myth of its history is one way in which Carey seeks to make peace with his country's penal origins. The myth is the most potent form to fictionalize facts and to make fictions seem like facts. In their attempt at story-telling, Carey's characters "attempt to create a past, the honourable past of folklore; but all they create is a present, and a captivity".[71]

So we see Herbert in *Illywhacker* sings paeans of his story-telling prowess, when, as the narrator, speaking from the omniscient point of view, he blatantly states, 'you may as well know, lying is my main subject, my specialty, my skill' (*I*11). He has no hesitation in letting the reader onto this secret of his. This seems to be a deliberate attempt to orient the reader towards not accepting the narration as the truth. His narration which begins in 1861, and recounts the story of three generations of the Badgery family, runs in tandem with the history of Australia from the time of Australian independence from England.

Harry too, enjoys his story-telling persona. He has grown up on the stories of his father which speak of New York and its greatness. Failing to understand the true meaning behind Vance's stories, Harry's subsequent narration is erroneous. He cannot get the essence of these stories. It is only in his role as the story-teller of Bog Onion Road that Harry begins to grasp the true nature of the stories he had always narrated. The novel narrated to us by Harry's children, also leaves one wondering at the end on the authenticity of the storyteller, and

amazed at the manner in which Harry manages to hand down the account of his life to his children.

Similarly, *Oscar and Lucinda*'s narration by Oscar's great grandchild also creates the same awkwardness as in *Bliss*. The mastery that the narrator has over the narration and the events that have taken place leaves doubts about the dependability of the narrator. Adopting an omniscient stand, the narrator seems to be aware of details that even his great-grandfather, Oscar would not be in possession of. Add to this, the fact that he informs us at the beginning of the novel that one should not believe local history too readily. Through examples he makes this point more comprehensible.

Benny, Tristan and Maggs too, subscribe to the story-telling genre. Tristan, like Herbert Badgery, narrates his own story, and his intimate knowledge and awareness of all the happenings in and without his presence creates similar predicaments as in *Bliss*, *Illywhacker* and *Oscar and Lucinda*. Benny and Cacka, as well as Gran Catchprice, living in their own solitary created worlds, also create an illusory aspect about themselves. Benny, in his desire for change, makes up the idea of a successful salesman, one who would "rescue the family business from debt and the tax inspector".[72] His makeover is disquieting and his subsequent torture of Sarkis and Maria, generates a very portentous appearance in the novel. Maggs, in his story-telling quest is more concerned about expunging the ghosts of his past. He desires to recount his life but fears

the impending consequences of his narration. His story finally appears in book form with no less than seven amendments, and incorporates a different ending to his life, thereby turning it to fiction, or just another well-told and interesting yarn.

Tristan is another of Carey's well-formed characters. Another omniscient narrator created by Carey, his commentary in the novel ends with 'At that time, although I did not know it, my unusual life was really just beginning.' (*ULoTS*414). This is besides the fact that we are already told of Tristan's life till then by Tristan himself, and this story is no less unusual and interesting than what one would probably expect if the novel had continued.

In this story-telling quest where they try to create and recreate reality around them, these narrators have a façade of control over their narration. One rarely gets the impression that they are unsure of their story. They appear totally self-assured and confident of the veracity of their tales. This self-confidence and poise serves to add truth value to even the most improbable stories, thereby making them plausible and convincing. Whether it is Herbert, who remains a showman till the very end, winning the confidence of all with his tales, even though he tells us that he is a trickster, or Harry's children, or Oscar's great-grandchild, both of whom could not possibly be in possession of the whole life story of their respective ancestors, or even Tristan, Carey proves to be a master at making the 'tall tale' believable.

Carey tries to create affirmative and constructive myths to help his people. Australia, looked upon by all and sundry as 'hell on earth', is construed by Carey more positively. He does this by trying to create the myth of the 'battler'. Ronald Taft informs us that with any traditional Australian hero, the "emphasis has usually been on their toughness and their suffering rather than their scientific skill, their vision or even their success".[73] It is "tradition that regards enterprise as alien and labour as indigenous to Australia."[74] One "affectation", Taft says, that is widely approved of is the "pose of extreme toughness and lack of fear. Hardships are meant to be endured without complaint and dangers to be faced without expressing fear".[75] Success is alien to these people and Carey acknowledges the presence of, what he calls the "tall poppy syndrome". Carey further elaborates in the Powell Books Interview[76] that "if you have a field of poppies and one poppy gets taller than the rest, the head gets chopped off. And that's how we celebrate success in Australia. ...it's fine for a minute and then – boom." But even though success is not forthcoming, one doesn't see despair or despondency creeping into them. Carey states that, "In our culture, **we don't call them losers. We call them battlers**. A battler is someone who struggles forever and will never, ever really get anywhere. And in Australia that's a really honourable position".[77]

Thus, we are told, 'there was a toughness in Harry Joy you may not have suspected' (*B*40). Hell is what frightens him more. He wonders what it would

be like, the kind of punishment that is meted out as penance for all the wrongs committed. With all his fears he doesn't know whom to approach, someone who would show him a way to circumvent the road to Hell. '...to believe (i.e., in the Christian God of his mother) just because he was frightened of hell seemed to him to be unreasonably opportunistic, and he could not do it. (He hoped, just the same, that God saw him and at least gave him some marks for his honesty.)'(*B*40). His wife Bettina wants to know if the television commercial he had written was 'great' (*B*99). All that he can say in reply is 'It worked... it wasn't great. But it makes us money' (*B*99). This is all that Harry desires. He is complacent in all he does.

Oscar fails in his attempt to show Lucinda his love. His hard and arduous trek through unmapped country, and getting the glass church to its destination seems reason enough for the reader to get the impression that Oscar's and Lucinda's love-story will culminate on a happy note. The end of the novel frustrates this impression and we read of Oscar's failure despite his success. He fulfils the wager, but loses it in the end as he feels duty-bound to marry Miriam. Benny, Maria, Gran, all lose out despite trying their best to get what they desire. Benny dies a horrifying death, Maria gives birth to her son down in a cellar under equally testing conditions, and Gran finally does what she always threatened to do, blow up the place with gelignite.

Badgery, regardless of his story-telling prowess which gains him access to power over people, never remains in control of the events in his life. This novel foregrounds the traditions of illywhacking and independence. But for all his success, Badgery remains a failure as he can never achieve stability in his life that he forever desired. Badgery's stories pilot his decline and play their grand part in his downfall.

One common strand that runs through all these characters is the need for social success. This success, however, is not for an Australian and therefore they end up as failures. As Carey says himself:

> … the Australian culture seems one that usually celebrates defeat and feels most uncomfortable with success. All our great stories are ones of defeat. …….. For whatever reason, we don't like success, and we don't like other members of our group when they separate themselves from us by having success.[78]

We see most of his characters as social failures. They are powerless against forces that come onto them externally. Carey himself describes his characters as 'victims of a way of living', people who have 'come to accept their own nightmares'.

Thus one notes the resourcefulness of Harry, or Badgery, or Oscar, or Tristan, or Benny, or even Maggs. All of them fight against odds that seem unsurmountable. They have grand visions of success. They fight dearly for their due, which is always denied to them. Despite it all, one can't help but notice an optimistic streak in all these characters. Fighting against all odds, is what Carey desires to ascribe to the Australian identity. This is in direct opposition to the negative view one has of Australia as a penal colony. He seeks to present Australia as a land of promise, which has people who are inventive, hardworking and who always look foward to walk on the road towards success, without worrying about the roadblocks that they may encounter on the way.

A distinct myth that Carey subverts, is the glorius myth of Empire-building. This refers to the hegemonic intentions of both, colonial England and the neo-colonial America. *Oscar and Lucinda* is most fundamentally about "belief systems—belief in Christianity, dreams of Empire and progress", says Dr. Randall Bass[79]. British imperialism was at its zenith during the 19th century. The novel deals directly with issues of British imperialism in colonial Australia, and deprecatingly comments upon the Victorian expansion of the British Empire. Lucinda resents her fortune because it has been acquired when her parents' land had been sold by her solicitors. This land, she feels, belongs to the Aborigines, and it is the colonisers, i.e., the British, and by extension, her family, who have stolen it from them. The zeal of empire building is also seen

in Mr. Jeffries, who agrees to lead the expedition, carrying the glass church up north to Bellingen, the unexplored and unmapped land.

In *Oscar and Lucinda*, "glass functions as the embodiment of progress for the colonizer and yet contributes to the physical and spiritual destruction of the colonized Australian Outback." opines Barnali Tahbildar[80]. According to Oscar, the white man, the glass church is a symbol of technology and progress; and to manage to transport the glass church into Bellingen is to transport the ideal monument of industry and Christianity, both important facets of the British Empire, into "unchartered" territory:

> Each pane of glass...would travel through country where glass had never existed before, not once, in all time. These sheets would cut a new path in history. They would slice the white dust covers of geography and reveal a map beneath, with rivers, mountains and names. (*O&L*374)

Although the glass church may be a sign of technology and progress in the eyes of the English, it is left finally as a symbolic piece of architecture that isn't compatible with the Australian Environment. The glass church traps heat, encloses and suffocates the smallest of nature's creatures:

> There were bush-flies inside the church. They did not understand what glass was. There were also three blue-bellied dragon-flies. For one hundred thousand years, their progenitors had inhabited that valley without once encountering glass. Suddenly the air was hard where it should be soft. Likewise the tawny hard-shelled water beetle and the hand legged wasp. They flew against the glass in panic. They had the wrong intelligence to grasp the nature of glass. (*O&L*418)

Tahbildar comments,[81] "by suffocating nature's smallest creatures within its hard and transparent walls, the glass church figuratively kills the stories and belief system of the native culture." As a missionary symbol, the glass church disturbs both physical and spiritual aspects of the Australian Outback. In Oscar and Lucinda, religious expansion or technological 'progress' (as embodied by the glass church) is the perpetuation of colonial power.

The intricate relationship between returned convict Jack Maggs and up-coming writer Tobias Oates forms the core of the text's reconfiguration of imperialist discourse. Carey, in the Bold Type Interviews states that[82]:

> *Great Expectations* is not only a great work of English literature; it is (to an Australian) also a way in which the English have colonized our ways of seeing ourselves. It is a great novel, but it is also, in

another way, a prison. *Jack Maggs* is an attempt to break open the prison and to imaginatively reconcile with the gaoler.

The relationship between Oates, soon to become the Empire's greatest living writer, and Maggs, the marginalised colonial figure, is one that parallels the manner in which the literary potential of the Imperial colonies was mined by Victorian writers. Oates is simultaneously fascinated and repulsed by Maggs: drawn to the convict because of his paramount interest in human nature and because of the literary potential of the man's life, yet always fearful around him. He desires to use Maggs in the same way as the greater part of Victorian writers (including Dickens) used the Colonies, as a blank imaginative space, a territory to be filled with fictional representations emanating from the metropolitan centre. It is a comparison that Maggs himself draws out when he writes to Henry Phipps, stating: 'I have left a blank map for you and you have doubtless filled it with your worst imaginings' (*JM*238).

Throughout the novel Maggs is identified with the colony of Australia, and often referred to as 'the Australian', negating his entire previous existence in England, and underscoring the fact that his decade in exile in Australia has had a far greater effect on his development and shaped his personality than otherwise. As with Magwitch in *Great Expectations*, for Maggs, Australia has served both as his prison, and as a means of creating a prosperous new life. Following his pardon from the New South Wales prison, Maggs has become so

successful that he was able to build a brick mansion, have a street named after him, and anonymously raise a poor English boy to the status of a gentleman back in England. The greater part of Carey's reworked narrative is thus devoted to the convict's attempt to work out his relationship with both his native and adopted lands.

Lawson's rhetorical question, "Who am I when I am transported?"[83], arises from the situation of the individual transported from the imperial centre to a peripheral outpost "where the climate, the landscape and the native inhabitants did little to foster any sense of continuity, where the sense of distance, both within and without, was so great that a new definition of self- metaphysical, historical, cultural, linguistic and social - was needed".[84] At the resolution in Carey's decolonising text, Jack Maggs is allowed to return to the distant continent, happily marry the servant girl Mercy Larkin, prosper in business, live to a ripe and peaceful old age, and father 'five further members of that race' (the race of Australians) (*JM*327). However, Jack's happy ending only comes about when he finally accepts that there are alternatives to the exploitive imperialist discourse of Britain, and ceases to privilege the abusive land of his birth over the adopted land that has given him so much.

Illywhacker, in its attempt to foreground the lies of the country, too, tries to expose the ill effects of the glorious pursuit of the white man to establish himself as a native of Australia. In characters like Herbert, one notices the

element of deception. They are constantly deluding themselves that they are honest and straightforward and that their understanding of issues is always correct. In his narration, Herbert constantly draws our attention, though very subtly at times, to this fact. The root of this deception lies in the first lie of the first white man to set foot in Australia that the land was 'occupied but not cultivated', and so the legal owners, the aborigines, were displaced and the white man assumed ownership.

This issue of the Aborigines is raised by Leah when she argues that 'the land is stolen. The whole country is stolen. The whole nation is based on a lie which is that it was not already occupied when the British came here. If it is anybody's place it is the blacks' (*I*307) and that 'It is a black man's country....We can only move around it like tourists' (or picaros?) (*I*323). By making the Aborigines an active absence, the novel, seeks to draw attention to their exploitation and denigration by the Empire and its forces, thereby debunking the myth of empire building.

Fletcher says that each of the three books of *Illywhacker* can be read as "chronicling the exercise of control over Australia by different foreign powers: England, the United States and Japan."[85] Along with debunking the colonial myth of empire building, Carey also attacks neo-colonialism and its after-effects. *Illywhacker*, portrays the degeneration of Australia, into the 'Best Pet Shop in the World', where so many of Hissao's 'fellow countrymen and

women [are put] on display' (*I*99). Just as America with its visions of progress and success lured Australians and indoctrinated them in materialism and capitalism, the later economic powers like Japan too did their own bit in furthering this indoctrination. Australia is thus only displayed as per the needs of these neocolonial powers. The display can be false, because as truth value is suspended, no one can really authenticate it. What matters is that the display be spectacular and attractive to the tourists who visit the place. Hissao, even though the owner of the Pet Shop, is powerless and has no say in the manner of the display. He is only a proprietor in name and is governed by the market forces, driven by the desire for profit.

The advertising business is highlighted as "the embodiment of the imperialist forces of Western capital".[86] Carey presents Australia as an "outpost of the American Empire"[87] with the people living in the world of American dreams. In *Bliss*, Harry develops this fascination for New York from his father, Vance Joy. When his father spoke of New York and 'its glass towers trembling in an ecstasy of magic' (*Bliss*19), Harry was filled with a thrill that seemed like 'a splendid book read by all mankind with wonder' (*B*19). This also turns out to be the seed of David's 'vision of New York' (*B*35). It is this fascination that drives David to get into business and makes him a drug dealer 'having dreams that swept the Americas from New York to Tierra del Fuego' (*B*34). Harry 'conducted his business more or less in the American style' (*B*13). Bettina dreams of New York, and these dreams, as Woodcock comments "are the

badge of her lust to succeed in business, to become 'an advertising hot-shot' (*B*96), in the service of which she 'became more American than the Americans' (*B*100)".[88] While she manages to convince herself that she would fulfil her American dreams, she goes on with life following all their habits and ideas and views. Even the most trivial of habits 'were adopted as articles of faith' (*B*100). Her whole life thus is woven into the American myth of making it big and successful.

Woodcock pertinently notes that "the element which reveals the nature of capitalist delusions most explosively is the cancer theme. The linkage between capitalism and cancer is part of the satirically apocalyptic side to the novel".[89] Cancer is spreading its tentacles around and many are getting caught by it. Harry first hears of it from Aldo, the owner of the restaurant Milanos, who is a victim of cancer. Aldo feels that 'this cancer business…is being sent to punish us for how we live, all this shit we breathe, all this rubbish we eat…cancer is going to save us from ourselves. It is going to stop us eating and breathing shit' (*B*67).

Alex Duvall, Harry's employee, 'a man of principle who had decided a long time ago, that men of principle can never win' (*B*83), had made it a habit of rewriting all his conference reports 'in which his role, seen by the revolutionary investigators he imagined would one day sit in judgment on him, would be blameless' (*B*83). The rewritten reports went thus:

> Client requested that Agency should prepare such and such. Agency expressed the opinion that such and such. Agency warned client that this practice was unprincipled, that this promise should not be made, that this chemical was carcinogenic, that this product could cause liver damage. (*B*84).

Alex, to get the great load off his heart had been making reports such as this for seven years. These reports were never sent out or viewed by anyone else. They were stored in a filing cabinet having just one key that was safely kept in his possession by Alex. It is at this chore that Harry finds him on Saturday morning when he comes to the office to 'find out who were Actors and who were Captives' (*B*4). When he views the report Alex is typing, Harry is shocked at the role his own agency was playing in the perpetration of the cancer epidemic. The reborn Harry thus takes a bold decision to clean up the business. To begin with he decides to fire Krappe Chemicals, when earlier 'he had ignored Alex when he had nervously, tentatively suggested there was something wrong with various Krappe Chemical products' (*B*91). Harry's cleaning desire leads to an obsessive cleaning of his house like polishing everyone's shoes, the glass, scrubbing the bathroom clean, etc.

When Harry reveals his intentions to Adrian Clunes, the representative of Krappe Chemicals, that he has evidence that their 'products cause cancer'

(*B*123), Adrian dismisses Harry. He doesn't deny it. He justifies his stand by saying, 'it's been going on for years. It's been in the papers' (*B*123). When Harry denies this knowledge and reiterates that he was only told that they 'used too much saccharine', Adrian accepts that 'you know and I know that's the company line'. When Harry refuses to see reason and is adamant on ending their association, all Adrian does is to toast 'To Harry Joy, the newest, most impossible idealist in the world' (*B*123). He then reveals to Harry a map, a cancer map, depicting the 'incidence of cancer according to place of residence and place of work'(*B*125). Later Adrian confides in Harry that he 'knows about cancer …from both sides' (*B*25). This is because Adrian's wife also has cancer. As Adrian's view goes 'the whole of the Western world is built on things that cause cancer. They can't afford to stop making them' (*B*124).

Various characters in the novel have their own explanations and views of the cancer theme. Alice Dalton, head of the Mental Hospital where Harry is admitted feels that 'it's their own fault' (*B170*) that people contract cancer. In her opinion it is 'emotional repressions' (*B*171) that are the cause of cancer. She believes that the Americans with their brand of capitalism 'are a very fine race of people' (*B*171), and if at all cancer is spreading, it is only because the people 'hate business…They are jealous of people with power, successful men who have made a name for themselves'(*B*171). Harry's daughter, Lucy and her boy friend Ken opine that 'we are into the late twentieth century, and definitely not fighting against it (cancer). Enjoy it… The sunsets wouldn't look so

beautiful if there wasn't all this shit in the air' (*B*213). Lucy feels 'it's too late' and that 'we are the last...we are the first people to come to the end of time' (*B*214). Lucy shows a fatalistic streak in her when she tells Honey that even though she uses demineralized water in the hope of escaping from the scourge of cancer, she will 'still get cancer, just like the rest of us' (*B*218).

However, in Bettina, Harry's wife, we have a victim of the cancer epidemic. From the beginning we see her as a selfish character who 'didn't want to be good, she wanted to be successful'. She believes in all her glowing visions of capitalism, her dreams of making it big in New York, etc. With the threat of cancer looming in the air, Bettina has made it a point to get herself checked once a year, and "the rest of the year she did not think about it' (*B*218). When she finally realises her longstanding dream of making it big in the advertising world, she is diagnosed with cancer. The doctor tells her that 'This is something we normally find in people who are exposed to petrol fumes over a very long period' and then confirms that 'petrol causes cancer' (*B*251). This confirmation coupled with the fact that she had barely a year to live fills her with a kind of dread or desperation. She realizes that all that she has held dear till now has been at the root of her destruction. She thus ends her life by blowing herself up alongwith the directors attending the Board meeting. All that is left behind as a clue to decipher her actions is an ad with the headline 'Petrol killed me' (*B*254), and the body copy where they learned that 'the death in the headline was a death by cancer' (*B*254).

Notes

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[13] Bruce Woodcock, Peter Carey, Contemporary World Writers Series (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996) 63,53.

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[25] Linda Hutcheon as quoted in Nina Caldeira, Multiculturalism and the Marginalised Psyche (New Delhi: Creative Books, 2004) 98.

[26] Hutcheon as quoted in Caldeira, 98.

[27] Ross, 75.

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[29] Hassal, MFS 644.

[30] Veronica Brady, "Birth, Death and Taxes" Overland 125 Summer (1991): 80.

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[33] Sue Ryan, "Metafiction in Illywhacker: Peter Carey's renovated picaresque novel," Commonwealth Essays and Studies 14.1 (1991): 36.

[34] Ryan, 37.

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III

Trapped in Hellish Worlds

In his analysis of Carey's fiction, M.D. Fletcher states the claim made by Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin, that postcolonial experience in the "settler" countries, being distinctly different from its other counterparts, the writing too is diverse. This factor is particularly evident in countries like Australia, with white Australia's origins as a penal colony, where the theme of entrapment or imprisonment gains pre-eminence.[1] Australia, with its penal past cannot shake off the related legacy handed down to it. Thus this engaging concern amounting to a discussion is reflected in most major writing as the foremost metaphor or metonym.

In Carey's novels too this is a dominant concern. The novels depict entrapment at various levels that the reader can perceive. This could be at the literal as well as the figurative level. It could be Badgery's being caged and displayed as an exhibit as in *Illywhacker*, or it could refer to Harry's being incarcerated in the asylum. It could also refer to Oscar's grand illusions of the missionary purpose on his embarking for Australia, or to Maggs' desire to be acknowledged and embraced by the land of his birth. Entrapment abounds in various forms in the novels of Carey. Hassall confirms this when he states that Carey's characters are all "caged in a hellish world"[2].

Hassall, in his references to Carey elucidates that he is:

> a poet of fear and the tales he tells explore the blacker recesses of the personal and the national psyches. The fear-haunted denizens of these Kafkaesque territories are typically trapped and powerless in roles, relationships and societies that are at once incomprehensible and inescapable.[3]

The result is that these characters go through a constant struggle against this very entrapment. Various methods to try and change themselves and their situation are devised as a means to get rid of this encumbrance. But entrapment persists and the characters are denied any form of escape from their situation.

Harry, the protagonist of *Bliss*, on his first death, begins to have a new perception of life. Till then, he was a 'Good Bloke' (*B*14), who got along fabulously with all those around him. It is only after the incident involving his life that Harry is awakened from his complacent existence and made aware of the 'worlds of pleasure and worlds of pain, bliss and punishment, Heaven and Hell' (*B*12). Harry has this overwhelming feeling that he is caught in Hell, as he tells Alex, his employee 'There are three sorts of people in Hell. Captives, like us. Actors. And Those in Charge' (*B*89). It is this perception of reality that influences his future interpretation of things and events, and further confirms his idea of now living in Hell. His resultant actions "create responses from others that re-enforce his suspicions"[4].

In an earnest endeavour to extricate himself from this supposed notion of Hell, Harry embarks on a series of actions that drastically alter his life. Exhibiting a 'curious stealth' he is 'throwing the whole emotional balance of the household out of the kilter, tipping the axis of his world and producing peculiar weather' (*B*55). He runs constant checks comparing his life before and after his first death. When he accidentally views the rewritten alternative and true reports that his employee, Alex is typing, Harry is shocked at the role his own agency was playing in the perpetration of the cancer epidemic. The reborn Harry thus takes a bold decision to clean up the business. To begin with, he decides to fire Krappe Chemicals, when earlier 'he had ignored Alex when he had nervously, tentatively suggested there was something wrong with various Krappe Chemical products' (*B*91). The reason Harry gives for this action is that 'we're going to be good' (*B*90). Being more aware of the happenings around him, his cleaning desire leads to an obsessive cleaning of his house like polishing everyone's shoes, the glass, scrubbing the bathroom clean, etc. His encounter with Honey Barbara gives him an opportunity to live differently. He makes concerted efforts to try and break away from his life in the city, but relapses into his old life with all its allurements. He willingly dabbles in advertising again as it offers him power and affluence. His final gritty efforts to free himself from this hell see Harry finally reconciling to life as the traditional story-teller of the Bog Onion Road Commune.

Alex, like Harry, is also trapped. He is "imprisoned in hell, at work and at home"[5]. Being 'a man of principle who had decided a long time ago, that men of principle can never win' (*B*83), he had made it a habit of rewriting all his conference reports 'in which his role, seen by the revolutionary investigators he imagined would one day sit in judgement on him, would be blameless' (*B*83). The rewritten reports went thus:

> Client requested that Agency should prepare such and such. Agency expressed the opinion that such and such. Agency warned client that this practice was unprincipled, that this promise should not be made, that this chemical was carcinogenic, that this product could cause liver damage (*B*84).

Alex, to get this great load off his heart had been making reports like this for seven years. These reports were never sent out or viewed by anyone else. They were stored in a filing cabinet having just one key that was safely kept in his own possession. When on the basis of Alex's reports Harry decides to fire Krappe Chemicals, Alex is distressed as he will lose his job and consequently his livelihood. Thus, even though he knows the lies that Krappe Chemicals works by and the ill effects like cancer that it propagates, the 'principled' Alex Duvall prefers to take the Krappe account to another agency that offers him a director's position, and thus in his own capacity serves to propagate falsehood. He is trapped and cannot sever himself from all this falsehood and deceit. M.D.

Fletcher confirms that, "Harry is trapped in the city and in advertising by his love of comfort, just as Alex is trapped in the dishonesties of advertising by his fear of losing his livelihood."[6]

Hassal suggests that Bettina (Harry's wife) and David and Lucy (Harry's children) are all "trapped in the socially approved roles he (Harry) has imposed upon them."[7] The expectations and the perception that Harry has of his wife and children do not correspond to reality, to what actually happens. Bettina, despite her desire to do advertisements and be famous, keeps this desire in check. She withholds it from Harry as he does not look favourably upon the idea. Instead she secretly nurtures this vision of making it big in New York and she will stop at nothing to fulfil this vision. Similarly, his son David, a drug dealer, also has dreams of success in South America, of 'journeying to foreign places, confronting dangers, laughing at lightning, falling in love in Columbia...[to be a] businessman adventurer and return with money and strange stories' (*B*39), which he withholds from Harry as he feels that 'he would never understand it' (*B*38). Both Bettina and David are ruled by their dreams and emerge spellbound by them, unable to let go. Lucy, too, has become a communist, but has preserved this truth from the family. Harry is trapped in the belief that he was a happy man who 'had a wife who loved him, children who gave no trouble, an advertising agency which provided a good enough living' (*B*13) When they realise later that he can see through their

falsehood, they feel threatened by him and the result of it is that they incarcerate him in a mental asylum.

Herbert Badgery, the head of the Badgery clan in *Illywhacker*, at the onset declares himself to be an illywhacker, meaning a professional trickster. The reader is subjected to Herbert's declaration of being a liar and with the narration of the history of three generations of his family, ending with the image of his being caged and on display in his son's Best Pet Shop in the World, which is, at the point of narration, managed by his grandson, Hissao. Hassal comments that "all the characters in *Illywhacker* are trapped, like Herbert and Phoebe, in the prisonhouse of the fictions they create".[8]

Lying and dealing in lies, the reader is made party to the entrapment of Herbert in his own lies throughout the novel. Where the first lies come to gain popularity and admission among people, as the novel progresses, we see these self-same lies gripping Herbert resolutely, so that he has to tell even more lies to sustain the earlier ones that he has told. Lies thus gain control over his life, and Herbert is destined to become a professional liar all his life as he states at the beginning of the novel. It is as Helen Daniel contends:

> from the very beginning of his relationship with his wife, Phoebe, and her family, he becomes trapped in his own lie about the snake he has with him – that it is a pet, a lie designed to impress Phoebe – and

causes her father's death in the process of attempting to substantiate his lie.[9]

As Herbert states:

> It was the trouble with the world that it would never permit me to be what I was. Everyone loved me when I appeared in a cloak, and swirled and laughed and told them lies... But when I took off my cloak they did not like me ... They ... turned away... [and sadly the only thing that appealed to his friends was] the bullshit version of me (*I*79).

Herbert is also trapped in another great fabricatory activity which gains control over him time and again. This is the activity of building. He declares:

> I had an aversion to ...anywhere where a man was forced into giving up money for a place to stay. I always built a place of my own when I could. I built from mud and wire netting. I was also a dab hand at a slab hut ... I made houses from wooden crates they shipped the T-Models in ... from galvanized iron. I even spent one summer living in a hole in the ground. (*I*33)

This activity is more pronounced because Herbert looks to it as a means of gaining stability or keeping himself tied down. He keeps searching for "permanence, a fixed identity and unity and thus he tries to build a house all his lifetime. Yet, he never succeeds."[10] This proves too oppressive for his wife Phoebe, who deserts him. The opening out of the emporium also is another instance of this activity.

For Herbert, entrapment clams its shackles at every turn in his life. He is always embroiled in events and occurrences over which he has no control. His life with his step-father, the Chinaman Goon; his life with Leah; his years with his son Charles and his wife Emma; or even his interaction with his grandson Hissao, with whom he got along very well, is always overshadowed by the tall tales he resurrects. These in turn trap him never allowing him to savour the pleasure and contentment of the moment. His lies lead him on and even though he realises the power his lies exert over him, he is helpless to unravel the labyrinthine mire that it drags him into. Hassal substantiates that, "Herbert ... for all his spieling is also trapped in it, unable to change. And Phoebe is also trapped, unable to change herself into a poet, despite a lifetime's determined effort."[11]

Charles, Herbert's son is also a victim of the malady of entrapment. Trapped at the farm of his future father-in-law because of the taking apart of his bike there, Charles' life with his wife Emma, sees his love and dependence on her. He is

so engulfed with his feelings for her that his whole life gets disrupted after the misunderstanding with her that leads to her living in and sharing one of the pet cages with a goanna. Charles is also "professionally trapped in the pet shop business."[12] Beginning the shop as a nationalistic dream, the business lends itself to pleasuring the Americans, and later the Japanese. Hissao too feels powerless against the forces that have pressed him towards constructing a cabinet where his family and other people are exhibited, being a proprietor in name only. Despite Badgery's assurance to us that 'Hissao has worked everything out well' (*I*598), we are told that 'late at night he walks around the clever cages he has made for us all, and blames us. And it is I, Herbert Badgery, he blames most of all.' (*I*599)

Fletcher reveals that "Oscar and Lucinda together conspire to construct an entrapping misunderstanding as elaborate and cleverly constructed in its way as the glass church itself."[13] This fabrication concerns their love for each other and the need for expression of this love. Lucinda, fearful that Oscar will think that she is an opportunist looking to entrap him in marriage, pretends that she still loves Rev. Dennis Hasset very dearly. She creates this impression even though Hasset has ceased to matter to her any more. When she feels that Oscar reciprocates her feelings, the fear of appearing too forward makes her wait for Oscar to speak his mind first. Oscar, on his part, loves her dearly, and is crushed to discover her passion for Hasset. He does not reveal his love to her for fear of offending her, and losing her friendship too. Imagining that he has to

compete with Hasset, Oscar sees hope in appearing to be a saintly, unselfish and self-sacrificing type, by offering to deliver the glass church as a love offering to Hasset. In a further misunderstanding, Lucinda wagers on the fanatical scheme only in the hope that after the church is delivered, Oscar will be her master, and thus can command her love too. By the time this misunderstanding has come to light, Oscar is beyond recall on his journey into unmapped country and Lucinda is left pondering, 'You [Oscar] knew my heart. How could you misunderstand me to such an extent,' (*O&L*450) Their love gets further entrapped in the vagaries of events and never reaches fruition.

Lucinda and Oscar, too, suffer from various kinds of entrapments. Fletcher notes that "Lucinda finds the entire world a prison, entrapped in the conventions and expectations of her society."[14] She refuses to submit to societal restrictions. She owns a glass factory, lives alone and has intimate friendships with men. Society retaliates against her fierce rebellion by making her an outcast. However she remains oblivious to any such remonstrance and lives on her own terms, not caring for what the more decorous members of society think of her. Having enormous wealth to her advantage, she is not compelled to interact with all and sundry. She creates a protective shell around her. She hates the confining guilt and responsibility of her fortune, yet she cannot escape from the constraint of responsibility and anxiety her fortune causes her.

Hassal explains that "Lucinda's determined feminism isolates her from the conventionally respectable society which surrounds her."[15] Thus when she wants to play with cards with her employees or exert her authority as the boss in the factory, her loyal and protective employees feel very awkward. All her resistance is of no avail, as she is coaxed to follow social norms much to her consternation. She loses Oscar's love as she expects him to make the first declaration as per the norms of the society.

Oscar experiences entrapment in different ways too. All through his life and the novel, he holds on to religion. His absolute dependence on religion curbs his progress. He is perennially attempting to create 'a structure for divining the true will of God' (*O&L*32). Through the game of hopscotch he joins the Strattons and their Anglican Church. His decision to 'bring the word of Christ to New South Wales' (*O&L*182) has more to do with his wish to atone his sin of gambling. His profound fear of the sea and water in general does not prevent him from undertaking this trip, as he thinks it to be a penance desired of him by God. Constantly misunderstood, the Reverend Oscar Hopkins accepts all suffering, pain and humiliation with a smile, justifying that God willed it. He views his end in a watery grave as an act of retribution. Both Oscar and Lucinda are caught in a trap. While Lucinda loses Oscar's love in waiting for Oscar to make the first move, Oscar loses Lucinda's love as he decides to be noble and virtuous. When they kiss passionately, he thinks he is 'seducing her' (*O&L*432), and that 'he lusted after a woman who loved another' (*O&L*433).

He believes himself accountable for seducing Miriam Chadwick and thus makes amends by marrying her, while the truth is otherwise. He believes that his marriage with Miriam was willed by God so as to punish him for his unholy passion for Lucinda. Thus Oscar frustrates all his desires by being trapped in his self-created world of goodness.

In *The Tax Inspector*, the Catchprices are locked in their history of abuse, says Christer Larsson[16]. It emerges gradually when matters at the Catchprice Motors come to a head, and to add to it there is a tax investigation. Karen Lamb[17] suggests that "every Catchprice suffers 'family damage', and their individual behaviours are less 'eccentricities' than a means of self-protective anaesthesia against the spiritual violence of sexual and physical abuse." Benny's psychotic behavior, subsequent to being fired, begins the reaction which reveals that he has been a victim of child abuse by his own father, Mort, who, in turn has been abused by his father, Cacka. The family is a:

> physical and psychological prison from which the inmates are trying to escape by reinventing themselves. At the same time they are trying to survive within their imprisonment and to find some justification for the way they live.[18]

Gran Frieda Catchprice, the matriarch of the family, still holds the position of the keeper of the keys of the Catchprice establishment. Hassal considers her to

be the "principal prisoner"[19] as it is her early decision that has triggered this catastrophe. She tells Vish:

> I never wanted this business ... I wanted little babies, and a farm. I wanted to grow things ... It was your grandfather who wanted the business ... now I look out of the windows and I see these cars, you know what I see?"
>
> "It's a prison," Vish said. (*TI*163)

All along she nurtures dislike for the agents 'pumping out poison' (*TI*163). While she wishes to set up a flower farm, which is eco-friendly, her husband desires to set up a motor dealership, which is disastrous to the environment. She can clearly see that the sexual abuse of her children by her husband is wrong. Her husband is one of the major cogs in the vicious cycle. However she refuses to see evil in him. Instead, she internalises the anger and frustration and thinks that she is somehow responsible for generating the poison. Eventually, when she is faced with the inevitable truth of her husband's exploits with her children, she admits, 'I didn't believe a man would do that, but I knew. I *knew* but I didn't believe' (*TI*245). The process of tax audit's investigation triggers the unfolding of the hitherto hidden history of her family. The lucidity of the truth hits Frieda hard and she reacts to it by blowing up the Catchprice establishment with gelignite, which she always carried in her handbag. Hassal notes that, "Frieda remains the most enigmatic of the Catchprices, an obsessed

and tortured figure whose ultimate acceptance of responsibility for the family comes too late to save it."[20]

Mort, Cathy and Jack, the second generation of the Catchprices are all embedded in this mire. All of them, with the exception of Mort, look for means to escape. Mort is a victim as well as a perpetrator of child abuse. When Benny attempts to seduce his father, Mort defends himself vehemently: 'My father did this to me. His father did it to him. You think I like being like this?' (*TI*155) Nonetheless he is aware of the bog he is embroiled in. He realises that Benny will be like him and that 'he will have a kid, and he will be the monster ... Today he is the victim, tomorrow he is the monster. They do not let you be the two at once.' (*TI*158) Mort realises the nature of the web he is caught in. He also presents the gloomy conclusion that there is no escape from it and also no end to it. The chain will continue as long as 'monsters' are created. Cathy and Jack look for ways of escaping. Of the two, Jack manages to move out from under the Catchprice roof. He is considered the lone survivor.

Benny and Vish, sons of Mort, have similar drives. Vish finds solace in the *Hare-Krishnas* and in moving out of home. Benny is embroiled in the family history of sexual abuse. His psychotic behaviour has roots in the abuse he underwent at the hands of his father. He indulges in bizarre and disturbing activities like shaving all his bodily hair. He has a cellar all to himself where he conducts his visualizing exercises, which supposedly transform him. In this

very cellar he experiments on Sarkis and ties him up in chains in most uncomfortable positions. The reader is led to feel that Benny has a different vision which is rather disturbing to the reader. To him, all the others in the family are 'creatures at the end of an epoch' (*TI*70). They do not change and so will not survive, whereas he is 'going to run this business effectively.... By various methods' (*TI*103). Benny is finally killed by Maria.

As a tax audit investigating Catchprice Motors, Maria too gets caught in this whirlpool. Thinking that the Catchprice business is a relatively harmless business enterprise, Maria unwittingly gets entangled with the Catchprices and their troubled lives. Larsson draws out "the fact that it is Maria who will be trapped is clear from the way Jack thinks of her, as 'his prize' (*TI*213)"[21]. Jack courts Maria, fixes matters for her, and even gets her removed from the investigation of Catchprice Motors. A "quixotic"[22] character, she is very committed to her job. However, she is not as firm and invulnerable as she appears to be as she succumbs to Jack's seduction. She draws out compromises, but still retains the distinction of being the most ethical character in the novel.

Larsson quotes Bradley when he comments that "Carey sees culture as a sort of prison ... that the storyteller, whether novelist, ad man or historian, has part in constructing."[23] In presenting to us the clash of two cultures, one dominant and the other, small, insignificant and beleaguered in *The Unusual Life of Tristan*

Smith, Carey strives to present the entrapment of people within cultures. Tristan is an example of a character who is caught in this tirade. Son of the actress Felicity Smith who owns a run-down theater and who runs a small, politically-active theater group, called the Feu Follet ("Foo Follay"), Tristan's mother makes Tristan aware of the intricacies of the cultural game, namely the hegemonic relationship between the dominant and dominated cultures. After his mother's assassination Tristan needs to fend for himself. Caught between Efica and Voorstand, Tristan's journey to Voorstand in search of his father has wider ramifications and close all around him. Being betrayed many times by his father Bill, Tristan takes on Wally as his surrogate father.

Trapped in his deformed body, Tristan is loved by the people close to him. His mother, just for a fancy, used to dress him up in the Bruder Mouse costume. This cultural icon of Voorstand grips Tristan. Tristan vanishes into Bruder Mouse. He is 'gone, submerged, consumed by Bruder Mouse' (*TS*16). When he arrives at Voorstand he is forced to take refuge in this cultural makeover. From here on Tristan is compelled to follow the lifestyle of the Voorstanders. His affinity to Peggy Kram, the cirkus produkter, intensifies his entrapment as she desires him. 'This is better than a man. I'm going to keep you' (*TS*400), thinks Peggy Kram. However as Tristan realises later, even though the culture of Voorstand is enticing, its influence over Efica is offensive. He sees no way of reconciling with it and thus looks for an escape. When Tristan resolves to give up the Bruder Mouse costume, he is symbolically rejecting the

Voorstandish culture. He reveals his true self under extenuating circumstances when he is shot at after being mistaken for a terrorist. His foster father Wally takes the shot on himself in a bid to save Tristan. Realising the error, Jacqui strips Tristan to reveal his true identity. His deformed nakedness appalls Peggy and leaves all horrified at the spectacle. Bill loses no time in escaping from this muddle. He carries Tristan on his shoulder and alongwith Tristan's nurse Jacqui, escapes from Voorstand. Tristan remarks that he did not know that his unusual life was just beginning at that point.

Jack Maggs in *Jack Maggs* is a character concerned with self-redemption. In *Jack Maggs,* Maggs materialises as a denizen of the Australian colonies let loose in Dickensian England. He is an ex-convict who moves all over London stealthily on a search. Carey says: "He's cast out, he's treated very badly, and all he can think to do, at risk to his own life, is to go and live with his abusers."[24] Imagining that his return to London would make good his life's toils and struggles, he finds that everything about it constricts him: his shoes are too small, his coat too tight, his feelings wounded by British scorn and contempt. He has anonymously raised a poor English boy to gentlemanly status. He maintains a freehold mansion at 27, Great Queen Street in England. It is this life that he longs to return to, as he feels his identity lies in England. However, Maggs also has a phantom, his past torment that has a firm grip on his life and manifests itself at the most inopportune moments.

Maggs is trapped in an identity crisis. His refusal to accept an identity other than that of an Englishman, forms the crux of Maggs' struggle. He denounces Australia, even though it has provided him a fortune. He refers to it as 'that vermin' (*JM*141) and censures his own blood back there as belonging to the Australian race. He very astutely states that he is 'not of that race' (*JM*40). However this notion is altered after a series of events. His own house is empty when he arrives in London after informing its occupant, his son, of his impending arrival 'yet he knocked, tapping and scratching against the pane' (*JM*10). When he finally succeeds in entering his house, his thoughts are, 'for this he laboured? To stand in Henry's hallway like a thief, his breeches smeared with London soot?' (*JM*40). Thus we see him feeling disappointed with everything he experiences in England. His effort to locate his adopted son also proves futile. When his adopted son points the gun at him, all his illusions are shattered. The act abruptly culminates his illusionary quest.

Tobias Oates in *Jack Maggs* too finds himself entangled. He seeks to exploit Maggs' story for his own personal gain in the guise of purporting to cure him of the phantom that troubles him. However, he ends up getting himself embroiled in a greater trap than he had ever imagined. In addition, his personal problems dog his life and serve as a hindrance to his otherwise prosperous future. His father is a murderer; he carries on an affair with his sister-in-law Lizzie whom he impregnates, the resultant death of Lizzie, his strained relationship with his wife, his fear of poverty, etc. are some of his major

personal problems. His problems shackle him and he turns to writing with vehemence. He writes, as Byrne notes pertinently, "for many reasons: fame, money, security, curiosity, artistic fulfillment, escape and to assuage his hunger for order."[25] The different endings that he accords to Maggs story as and when it was published coupled with the amended versions, themselves convey the extent to which his own personal demons had intervened when he was penning down *The Death of Maggs*.

All the main characters in the novel are driven by a deep craving to be accepted and cherished. Mercy is a character who lands herself in objectionable places. She is rescued by Mr. Buckle from imminent prostitution, Mercy regards him as her saviour and has fashioned herself into a slave for Mr. Buckle inorder to win his affection. She hopes that he will someday marry her and give her true respectability. Mr. Buckle however, has no such intentions and keeps her only as a mistress. After meeting Maggs, Mercy thinks of marriage with Maggs and gleans hope for some respectability. In hunting for an escape from her wretched position, she also manages to assist Maggs in exorcising his own demons. When she protects Maggs from being shot by Henry, losing her wedding finger in the bargain, 'the pair [i.e., Maggs and Mercy] were finally matched in their deformity' (*JM*355). Finally rescuing herself by realizing the truth of her situation, Mercy's choice liberates her. By the end of the novel she is, 'remembered best, not only for the story of how she

lost her wedding finger ... but for the very particular library she collected in her middle age' (*JM*356)

Colonization and imperialism as a form of imprisonment or entrapment is also explored in Carey's novels. The colonial subjects are trapped in the inferiority complex the colonizer imposes on them. They have somehow imbibed it. It is a trap from which they find it hard to escape even after gaining independence from the colonizing powers. They still mould their lives within these confines. They cannot break free from the notion that others or outsiders have or of that which is expected of them. In this sense they are powerless as these intentions control their actions and lives.

Harry produces advertisements unmindful of the truth behind them. In his successful advertising campaigns he manages to popularize falsehoods with a flourish. Harmful cancer epidemics do not deter him from his objective. Thus he acts as is desired of him, and not the way he knows is good. He willingly connives with deceit for the sake of material benefits.

In *Illywhacker*, this stance is corroborated by the Best Pet Shop in the World, where the "indigenes [are] seen as exotics on display"[26]. Here, Herbert's grandson Hissao has catalogued his fellow countrymen and placed them on display as if they were pets. This display, being all-inclusive and exhaustive, is "a spectacular machinery of attraction where truth and falsehood are effects and

come-ons"[27]. Leah exerts herself to make it known to the visitors that 'the exhibition is based on lies' (*I*599) and that she is not a 'Melbourne Jew' (*I*599), but the readers are made aware that 'visitors prefer to believe the printed information … [that] is written and signed by independent experts' (*I*599) and that ultimately what holds water is that 'the customers are happy' (*I*599) with what they have seen, even if it is not the truth.

Oscar and Lucinda deals primarily with the issue of imperialism, commenting upon the Victorian expansion of the British Empire. Carey foregrounds the zealous religious expansion or technological "progress" in the land. The glass church functions as a symbol for the perpetuation of colonial power. Oscar is trapped in the glorious pursuit of delivering the glass church and is under the impression that the glass church is a cultural symbol of technology and progress; little realizing that it is not suited to the Australian outback. It thus warrants destruction and will definitely meet its fate. For the Aborigine, 'the glass was sharp. This was the first thing they noticed-that it cuts. Cuts trees. Cuts the skin of the tribes' (*O&L*473). It serves to decimate the aborigines when they protest against the desecration of their land. The Aborigines supposedly do not understand the intentions of the white men. Lucinda despises her inheritance as she feels guilty about owning the land which originally belonged to the Aborigines. The Aborigines had been eliminated in the process of acquiring their land. Carey tries to articulate the dilemma of characters like

Oscar, Lucinda, and the aborigines who are trapped in this grand scheme of imperialism that offers no easy deliverance.

Capitalism, an evil manifestation of the imperial legacy is explored in *The Tax Inspector*. The rampant abuse of power and wealth that transpires due to the global market economy is showcased in the novel. Individuals, their integrity, their morals, are all compromised and trapped. Maria, an idealist, is posited as having questionable principles, and as the novel progresses she realises that "the moral mission [she] envisages for herself as a tax crusader is in no way a panacea for the social and political ills"[28] of the system. The corruption and abuse is all pervasive and one can only compromise with it. In liaisoning with Jack Catchprice, Maria signals her imminent corruption and sucking into the void that all are trapped in. Sarkis, as well as Maria, represent Homi Bhabha's 'in-between' people, the 'unhomely lives' of the post-colonial present[29]. These people live a life of constant fear of exploitation with no reprieve visible, as in Benny's torture of Sarkis or even Maria's demotion at her job.

Fashioned roughly on a contrast between two political states, Carey's *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* is a novel exposing the postcolonial experience of the smaller nations as victims vis-à-vis the larger nations. Carey's Voorstand is depicted as using and abusing the smaller Efica. It tries to impose its corrupt culture on the Eficans as well as uses its secret service to manipulate and disrupt Efican politics in a bid to overpower the latter. Carey draws characters

like Roxanna who are trapped in the hands of the Voorstand agents. In the process of painting the culture of Voorstand as enticing, despite its corrupt nature, Tristan is carried away and willingly takes to the Bruder mouse costume which is a symbol of Voorstandish culture. Thus he gets entrapped in the vagaries of life in Sarkis, blissfully oblivious to the fact that his life is being endangered.

Carey in an interview[30], when questioned on *Jack Maggs* commented that:

> *Great Expectations* is not only a great work of English literature; it is (to an Australian) also a way in which the English have colonized our ways of seeing ourselves. It is a great novel, but it is also, in another way, a prison. *Jack Maggs* is an attempt to break open the prison and to imaginatively reconcile with the gaoler.

The reader sees Maggs trapped by this 'Phantom'. 'Domestic colonization'[31] is an all-encompassing theme in *Jack Maggs*. Maggs is trapped in the inhuman process of colonization and sent to the prison island of Australia from where he cannot escape. He is forever trapped in the Australian country and rejected by England, as a part of Australia.

Literal imprisonment or entrapment is also present in the novels. Harry in *Bliss*, due to his newfound enthusiasm for goodness, finds himself committed to a

mental asylum managed by Alice Dalton, where Alex is also present. Here he undergoes a harrowing experience, because of a mistaken exchange of beds. Consequently Alex is mistaken for Harry and committed in the asylum. Harry is in turn committed and in effect "becomes" Alex. David is also arrested in Columbia with an illegal cache of arms and ammunition and later, shot dead on charges of treason. Honey too undergoes detention in the asylum that Harry is taken to.

Similarly, Badgery in *Illywhacker* also undergoes a jail term first at Grafton Goal and then in Rankin Downs gaol where he spends ten years of his youthful life. By 1939, when in jail, he becomes 'a student ... [gets] written up in the *Rankin Downs Express*' (*I*414) and clears examinations. From here he emerges as an author and intellectual, referred to as 'Professor', and even manages to pen down a book on his supposed experiences at Grafton Gaol called *Gaol Bird*, which he admits 'was a pack of lies' (*I*409). Fletcher states that, "in Herbert's terms, being in gaol forces him to shrink, to assume a character that does not attract attention or retribution and even to become physically shorter, leaving him permanently changed."[32] The imagery of being caged as a part of the Best Pet Shop in the World is also a kind of literal imprisonment that Badgery and Leah undergo, as the case with Emma who takes up residence in the cage after her misunderstanding with Charles.

Oscar in *Oscar and Lucinda*, in his journey with the glass church to Boat Harbour in the Australian Outback, on Lucinda's behalf, also suffers from literal imprisonment when Jeffries imprisons him. He is confined to the wagon labelled as "the Ladies Compartment" and is humiliated at every point in his journey. At every river crossing he is fed laudanum (opium dissolved in alcohol) through a funnel forced between his teeth. Oscar watches helplessly his own state and those of others in a state of horror, including watching a whipped man defecate in his pants which have become part of the trappings of the pioneering journey. To add to his mortification, Mr. Jeffries suggests that he should bathe with the rest of the expedition 'to reassure the men that [he] ha[s] all the correct equipment' (*O&L*464). Trapped in an engagement with a woman he does not love, Oscar enters the glass church for the last time before the church sinks into the water. Oscar finally meets his death when he gets drowned, trapped in the glass church. We are told that:

> The tilting platform became a ramp and the glass church slid beneath the water and while my great-grandfather kicked and pulled at the jammed door, the fractured panes of glass behind his back opened to let in his ancient enemy (*O&L*514).

Thus water imprisons Oscar in the church and claims his life.

Maria is captured by Benny in *The Tax Inspector* with the intention of raping her, a part of many visualizing exercises of his self-actualization course. She is trapped in the basement cellar of the Catchprice establishment. She realizes Benny's motive when he tells her that 'I *visualized* what is happening now' (*TI*261) and she realises what he is up to. She finally manages to kill Benny while he is occupied with her just-born baby. Sarkis, the Armenian, is also at the receiving end of Benny's torture in the cellar. He is chained and is treated as a guinea pig for all of Benny's visualizing exercises. He is too frightened of Benny to make an attempt at escape.

Tristan's tryst with Voorstand in *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith,* in search of his father after his mother's death, lands him in a position of literal imprisonment. Tristan is imprisoned as he assumes the identity of Bruder Mouse in order to hide his hideous face. He also senses the privileges that would be due to him if he does so. His mask gets him close to the most powerful produkter in Saarlim in Voorstand, Peggy Kram, till at a point when Tristan sadly realises that his own identity as Tristan is threatened. He is literally trapped in his mask and forced to assume the identity of Bruder Mouse. Where earlier he did wear the mask for convenience's sake, he later recognises that he could get killed if he ever appeared without it. Having only a zip that his nurse Jacqui had left behind for him to use in the bathroom, Tristan notes that, 'that aside, I was imprisoned by the Mouse' (*TI*390). When Wally is killed Tristan grasps the gravity of the situation and of the costume he is

wearing. He suffocates in the Bruder Mouse suit because of his retching in it. It is Jacqui who manages to get it off him despite Kram's desperate efforts to the contrary.

Jack Maggs is Carey's tribute to his ancestor, the convict. The novel is based on the imprisonment and incarceration of Maggs by his motherland, England. Maggs has been one of the banished convicts who cannot return ever again. If they do set foot in England they would be put on trial again. As such their free lives in Australia, with its convict scar, turns into a literal prison. Maggs is a veritable victim of this peculiar experience. He craves for liberation. All his attempts at liberation are, however, foiled and reconciliation with his past is the only avenue left for him to gain freedom from this entrapment.

i) Ensnared in a Glass: Strength and Fragility of Existence

The characters presented in Carey's novels possess contradictory yearnings. They are unable to adapt to the world and the limitations forced upon them by whatever circumstances they have to exist under. Oscar cannot undo his feminine traits nor can Lucinda deny her manly attributes. This inability goads them to "have one's cake and eat it too … a wish to simultaneously dispose of and save"[33]. Each of the characters undergoes a daily struggle with paradoxical forces which force them to action, leaving them susceptible to all kinds of dangers. The danger could take the form of Harry's incarceration in a mental asylum, or Herbert being finally ending up in a cage and being 'poked and prodded' (*I*11), or Lucinda losing her fortune to Miriam, etc. What is noteworthy is that the characters find no way out of this dilemma.

Harry, the protagonist of *Bliss*, on his first death, is awakened to the 'worlds of pleasure and worlds of pain, bliss and punishment, Heaven and Hell' (*B*12). Aged 39, it is revealed that he always

> believed what he read in the newspapers. In the provincial town where he lived he was someone of note but not of importance… but when he entered the best restaurants in his grubby suit and dropped his cigarette ash everywhere he was humoured and attended to… (*B*13).

Living a complacent and happy life till then, Harry reawakens after his near-death experience. Intensely aware of his surroundings now, he awakens to the possibility of being in Hell. Speculating on what living in Hell would entail, he is apprehensive about the kind of punishment that is meted out as penance for all the wrongs that one commits. With deep fears he hopes that someone would show him a way to circumvent the road to Hell.

> …to believe (i.e., in the Christian God of his mother) just because he was frightened of hell seemed to him to be unreasonably opportunistic, and he could not do it. (He hoped, just the same, that God saw him and at least gave him some marks for his honesty.) (*B*40).

Profoundly desiring to rectify his wrongs and to atone for his sins, Harry looks for avenues to gain salvation, to 'be good' (*B*90).

After his encounter with Honey Barbara, Harry begins to be aware of a way out of this predicament. He concedes the fact that there could be salvation from the damning life that he was leading till then. Honey, a 'pantheist, healer, whore' (*B*179) is also torn between the pleasures of the city and the life in the forest. After living in the country for a while, she waits expectantly for the life that the city affords. When she was in the country, 'she always forgot the fear when she remembered the city afterwards… she always forgot: the fear of the police, the

fear of narcs, spies, the fear of being ripped off' (*B*134-5). But when in the city, enjoying the comforts it affords, she finds that it is all 'so fucked up... [and] depressing and ugly' (*B*135). After she meets Harry she even develops a liking for good wines and luxurious city life. At Harry's house at Palm Avenue she goes about with vigour attempting to cleanse the house of all the impurities. She does this by doing away with all the bread, sugar, cans of beans, cornflakes, etc. She however, realises the futility of her 'cleansing efforts' at the Joys' house when she is seduced by David who looked upon the seduction as a triumph. Honey then realises that 'it was time to leave these people who had such trunk-loads of dreams, ideas and ambitions but never anything in the present, only what would happen one day' (*B*242).

Bettina, Joel, David and Lucy also have their own share of paradoxical and incomprehensible desires. Bettina's only heartfelt desire was to be a successful ad-writer and be famous in New York. She had dreams of making it big there. At the same time reality ties her down. She marries Harry, taken up by his tales of New York. However Harry does not allow her into his workplace and this effectively shuts her out. Fulfilling all her duties as a wife and mother, Bettina still refuses to let go of her dreams. She becomes ruthless to the point of even incarcerating Harry to get him to acquiesce. Ironically, her success as a writer of advertisements also bequeaths her with the dreaded cancer. She realises that she has little time, not sufficient enough to realise all her dreams. She resolves the predicament by blowing herself up alongwith the Mobil Board.

David desires his father's concurrence in all his efforts. Being a secretive and sly child, David grows up on visions of America and on 'the beauty of the world or, at least, the beauty of Other Places' (*B*31). He had eyes that would never reveal all they held 'the dark eyes that trembled with dreams' (*B*31). When he tries to tell his father the truth, he realises that Harry will never understand. Aspiring for the fields of South America, David even pays for his father's incarceration in a mental asylum. Lucy on the other hand is in touch with the reality around her.

Badgery in *Illywhacker* faces misgivings of conscience that know no release. A self-confessed liar, on the first page of the novel he insists that he is telling the truth about his age. Spinning a web of lies throughout his life for his own benefit, Badgery's actions are almost always forced by these very same lies. They take control of his life in such an all-embracing manner that he seems trapped in them. Desperately wanting to "believe in and to live his own stories as he invents them; … he also experiences qualms of conscience which cause him to retreat into truthfulness."[34]

One instance of the dilemma faced by Badgery is when he tries to sell the O'Hagens, a Ford. When he finally manages to convince them of the advantages of owning a car like the Ford, albeit with great difficulty, he is struck by the same scruples, and in all honesty advises them to buy the

Australian Summit instead. This lands him in a brawl in which he is badly battered and labelled 'a bloody hypocrite. You go around making a quid from selling the bloody things, and now you tell me I shouldn't buy one. You're making no sense' (*I*73). He expresses the same kind of paradox in his wooing of Phoebe. His story is so well taken by Phoebe and her family that they will not listen to anything otherwise. They all imagine him as would suit their own tastes. Exasperated by this wholehearted acceptance of all his tall tales of himself, Herbert attempts a confession of the truth. But he becomes conscious of the fact that:

> it was the trouble with the world that it would never permit me to be what I was. Everyone loved me when I appeared in a cloak, and swirled and laughed and told them lies. ... But when I took off my cloak they did not like me. They clucked their tongues and turned away. ... [They] could only like the bull-shit version of me. (*I*14).

Throughout his lifetime Badgery is struck by such a paradoxical existence.

Charles, Leah, Emma, are all consumed by the same spieling mania that engulfs Badgery. Charles' visit to Sydney in an attempt to meet his mother ends in disappointment. Still he presents a brave face to Leah. When he first meets the Chaffeys, Charles, 'not capable of such deceit' (*I*387) ends up telling them the truth about snakes and how he collected them. Consequently he is

detained at the Chaffeys for a very long time. Emma, Charles' wife, loves him dearly. When Charles attempts to enlist himself for the Second World War, Emma takes up permanent residence in one of the pet cages housing a goanna. In doing so she believes that she can hold her husband to ransom and hold on to his love too. Likewise, Leah is torn between the yearning to do 'one fine thing' and her own desires. Thus she sacrifices her family, her dreams and her career for Izzie. She writes constant letters to Izzie guiltily informing him of her infidelities as she feels that she does not want to be unfaithful and a liar. In all these characters, strength and fragility co-exist.

Phoebe is trapped in predicaments that offer no resolution. She is a fiercely independent girl of fifteen and 'an awkward misfit' (*I*14). She detests the pretensions and intricacies of the moneyed classes and eagerly awaits:

> a place in the world where she might not only belong but also be admired, a place where there were other problems than the price of wheat or wool, or whether the waterside workers would be engaged in Yarra Street or Corio Quay (*I*14).

Her only answer to the repeated remonstrations of her lover Annette is 'I will do something. … It will just be something unusual. It will not be something I can plan for. It won't be what you expect or what I expect either' (*I*17). When Badgery literally drops into her life when his aeroplane crash-lands, she takes

to him instantly, fascinated by his plane and his pet snake. As Badgery's wife she desires to fly, but cannot do so. Pregnancy adds to her quandary, and she finally flies away from Badgery after the birth of their second child. She looks for fame as a woman poet in Sydney.

When Oscar is introduced to us as a boy aged fifteen in *Oscar and Lucinda*, he is 'secretive and sullen' (*O&L*8) and accepts all his father's views without any reservations. Blind obedience to his father deters his reasoning power. Even the realisation that the Christmas pudding prepared by Fanny Drabble 'did not taste like the fruit of Satan' (*O&L*12) as stated by his father, cannot provoke him to question his father's beliefs. All he can do is pray to God that 'if it be Thy will that Thy people eat pudding, smite him!' (*O&L*20) He attempts to sort out this conflict by using the game of hopscotch. Such an arbitrary manner of resolution lands him with the Strattons and their Anglican faith.

Oscar is lured by the exploits of gambling. Fully aware that gambling is a sin, he is penitent but justifies the act by presuming that 'Wardley-Fish, had been sent by God, that he had been prayed for, that he was an agent of the Lord, that the 'flutter' was the means whereby God would make funds available to Oscar' (*O&L*108). His decision to go to Australia on a missionary undertaking is also a result of his attempts to do penance for the sin of gambling. When he decides to 'bring the word of Christ to New South Wales' (*O&L*182), he realises that it is not financially feasible. So he justifies his betting as necessary 'to

accumulate money for the trip'. He decides to go on the trip even though he is scared of the sea and he thinks that this is the atonement that God desires of him since he had 'changed' (*O&L*187). Throughout the course of the text Oscar is tempted by the lure of gambling while at the same time he is stricken by pangs of guilt and remorse. Inveigled by equally strong passions, Oscar's whole life hinges on this conflict. The result is that he dies a defrocked clergyman, losing his love and his life.

Lucinda's life too is a series of contradictory yearnings. A young heiress, she resents the hold her fortune has over her. At the same time she knows that it is only the money that makes her life comfortable. She believes that the money she had inherited from her parents by the sale of her land:

> did not belong to them [her parents], or to her either. The money was stolen from the land. The land was stolen from the blacks. She could not have it... And [yet] she wished to keep it... She trusted nothing so much as she trusted that money, which she wished, fiercely, passionately, to keep, even while she tried to give it away. (*O&L*126-7)

She takes to gambling in a big way only to rid herself of the money she possessed.

Right from the instant when Lucinda shows interest in the glassworks, Carey powerfully foregrounds the paradoxical nature of glass and in so doing raises pertinent questions interrogating the dependability of man on glass as a foundation for an existence and a livelihood.

> I am not suggesting that our founder purchased the glassworks to get more drops, it is clear that she had the seed planted, not once, but twice, and knew already the lovely contradictory nature of glass . . . that glass is a thing in disguise, an actor, is not a solid at all but a liquid...that it is invisible, solid, in short, a joyous and paradoxical thing, as good a material as any to build a life from (*O&L*135).

The image of glass is a very significant feature in most of Carey's novels. A house of glass is a recurrent vision in the novels, be it the skyscrapers, the cirkus arenas, the glass church, etc. This image, according to Christer Larsson, is very rich in meaning as it projects a basic conflict. Glass, being fragile and transparent, would hardly be practicable as a shelter. However, it would still be instrumental in defining the borders and limits that exist.[35] This paradoxical nature of glass is also evident in the Prince Rupert drops, small and hard drops of glass which can be hit with a hammer. It does not break but may be shattered into a fine dust by nipping their tails with a pair of pliers. Thus the glass drop was 'by way of being a symbol of weakness and strength; …it was a confession, an accusation…' (*O&L*134)

Deftly depicting nineteenth century England, Carey attempts to showcase the Victorian doubt that was a prominent feature of the time. The clash between Christian culture and human technological progress leads to serious doubt which is aptly depicted in *Oscar and Lucinda* with the help of the Prince Rupert drop. As Maya Rao states:

> made of seemingly unbreakable glass, the Prince Rupert drop exhibits amazing strength, but with a small clip of it's end the drop explodes. A symbol of belief systems, the Prince Rupert drop looks beautiful and strong in it's totality but "once even ever so slightly deconstructed" it falls apart.[36]

Glass being solid as well as fragile, portrays contradictory properties. This is taken as a symbol to show how belief systems that look firm and solid, can also turn fragile and disintegrate. This was precisely what was experienced by the Christian culture, under the blitz of technology in the nineteenth century.

In Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda*, "glass functions as the embodiment of progress for the colonizer and yet contributes to the physical and spiritual destruction of the colonized Australian Outback" opines Barnali Tahbildar[37]. According to Oscar, i.e. the white man, the glass church is a symbol of technology and progress; and to manage to transport the glass church into Bellingen is to

transport the ideal monument of industry and Christianity, both important facets of the British Empire, into "unchartered" territory:

> Each pane of glass...would travel through country where glass had never existed before, not once, in all time. These sheets would cut a new path in history. They would slice the white dust covers of geography and reveal a map beneath, with rivers, mountains and names. (*O&L*374)

Although the glass church may be the sign of technology and progress in the eyes of the English, it is left finally as a symbolic piece of architecture that isn't compatible with the Australian Environment. The glass church traps heat, encloses and suffocates the smallest of nature's creatures. It is in direct conflict with the Australian Outback.

On the very first page of *The Tax Inspector*, we are informed that 'In the morning Cathy McPherson put three soft-boiled eggs outside Benny Catchprice's door and in the afternoon she fired him from the Spare Parts Department. ... you could not predict them... she was still a Catchprice and it was not a contradiction that she fired him.'(*TI*3). Unpredictable and volatile, the Catchprices are a family one would not want to interfere with. They are people who are "self-divided, unpredictable, even psychotic"[38]. Immersed in social decay and disintegration, the reader is made aware of these people who

are a product of rampant capitalism. They forever offer a "heartbreaking contrast between what they are and what they imagine they can become"[39].

Thus Carey presents the character of Gran Catchprice, who 'wanted little babies, and a farm ... to grow things' (*TI*163). She however gives in to the wishes of her husband Cacka, for a motor business. Later she regrets for giving in and feels very resentful. Even when Vish urges her to 'let the business go to hell' (*TI*163) she cannot do so. The gelignite that she always carries on her person is proof of the constant thought of blowing up the place, which she does at the end of the book. When her children are abused by her husband, Cacka, she prefers to ignore it and chooses to think that 'he loved to tease [them]' (*TI*232). The worst hit due to child abuse in her family is her grandson, Benny. She refuses to acknowledge her complicity even when Cathy draws her attention to it. Only later when Mort repeats it she accepts that she 'knew it was happening ... knew but didn't believe' (*TI*245). Being supportive of her husband, Gran realises that she also encouraged his deviant behavior which in fact harmed her children. Totally shattered by the revelations from Mort and Cathy, Gran ends the whole saga by destroying the one thing she feels she made the mistake in acceding to, i.e., the Catchprice Motors establishment.

Benny, the youngest Catchprice, dreams of being successful with his motor business. When the novel begins we find Benny fired from his job by his aunt Cathy. However, he still retains visions of rescuing his family and business

from debt and the tax inspector. Benny's mental state is however, questionable, as one realises that his strange and unusual behavior could be because of the sexual abuse in his childhood. After a miraculous transformation in the cellar, Benny turns into a confident and assured salesman. He craves for attention and help and thus implores Vish to come to his aid, 'I need you more than ever in my life' (*TI*15). His way out of all these predicaments that he encounters is 'personal transformation' (*TI*18). He blackmails his father to obtain money to purchase the self-actualization tapes that would change him. The reader thus witnesses the most bizarre and "rampant enterprise culture ... which ... merges catching customers or 'prospects' with 'cut price' and 'cut throat'"[40], embodied in the actions of Benny.

Cathy desires escape from the Catchprice establishment. We are told that 'if [Cathy and her husband, Howie] had paid as much attention to Catchprice Motors as they paid to [the band they had formed], there would have been no crisis ever' (*TI*3). Desiring a career in music, however mediocre it may be, Cathy perceives it as an escape from her family. It is her sense of duty towards her mother and the business that does not allow her to abandon her mother and the Catchprice establishment. She however hates herself for not having the courage to leave it all and go onto the road with her band. She is haunted by the abuse she underwent at the hands of her father. That is why she refers to Howie as 'decent' (*TI*232), despite his shortcomings.

Mort and Vish too have their own qualms of conscience. Mort, fully aware of his actions and the resultant effects, realises that this cycle of abuse that started with his father sexually abusing him and he in turn abusing his sons, will carry on. 'Today he is the victim, tomorrow he is the monster' (*TI*158). He attempts to make amends for his abuse of his children by declaring to Benny that their sexual association was finished. But he cannot do so as Benny does not allow him to do it. Vish, fully aware of the goings-on in the family, escapes to the Hare-Krishnas. Even though he knows the despicable state his family business is in, and how it is threatened by ruin, Vish does not want to get entangled with the family again. Yet, when Gran wants to finish the business, he assists her in setting up the explosives all over the place. Jack Catchprice, the only one who manages to get away from the family, is the only one not severely affected by the saga of child sexual abuse. We see him ricocheting between being the perfect businessman, embroiled in the corruption of the city, and being able to 'fix' anything, and trying to acquire the affection of Maria by being honourable and upright.

A social idealist,[41] Maria Takis, the tax inspector, also swivels between her high idealism and vision for the State and the stark reality that she encounters when for example her friend Gia, is threatened. Sent on an investigation of the Catchprices, Maria goes out to do her job with great notions of the good she could do. But as the investigation progresses she resents the tax audit of Catchprice Motors. It is then that she resorts to ways like breaking into the tax

office computer to stop the investigation, and even letting Jack use his devious means to get her off the job. Despite all her good intentions, we see her predicament when she is with Jack. When she gives in to his advances, she also implicates herself. Dixon corroborates that Maria "is an idealist and a moralist, but in sleeping with the wealthy property developer, Jack Catchprice, she allows herself to be seduced by the evils of the city in which she lives"[42].

When Tristan remarks that his, 'birth was fast and easy. The life was to be another matter' (*ULoTS*11), there is a sense of foreboding in his announcement. The intuition that is given to the reader is of a life that is extremely eventful. Tristan gives the reader a glimpse into the innate contradictions in his narrative right at the outset of the narration. He informs the reader that he has 'no choice but to juggle and tap-dance before you, begging you please sit in your seats while I have you understand exactly why my heart is breaking' (*ULoTS*6). Yet, at the end of the novel, Tristan reminiscences that 'at that time, although I did not know it, my unusual life was really just beginning' (*ULoTS*414). This is in direct contrast to the expectations formed in the reader waiting to listen to Tristan's story. At the end of the whole recounting the reader is informed that all that has passed till then was only the beginning, and that the more interesting and 'unusual' part of the story was yet to come ahead.

As a child, Tristan is dressed by his mother Felicity in the mask of Bruder Mouse, during her election campaign for the Blues in Efica. Tristan dons the

mask then only because it was his mother's gift to her 'favourite actor' (*ULoTS*179). Wearing the mask gives Tristan confidence to 'dream his own flickering dreams, peering through the half-moon slits in the back of Bruder Mouse's eyes.' (*ULoTS*180). He feels 'pleased' (*ULoTS*184) to look at himself in the full-length mirror. When his maman is assassinated, he destroys the mask in anger, exhibiting contempt and anger for all who were responsible for his mother's death. He later cultivates a revulsion akin to that of any Efican towards the Bruder Mouse as a symbol of Voorstand. Yet, later he has to adopt the same mask, for "subversively infiltrating himself into Voorstand culture and into the embrace of Peggy Kram"[43]. This mask then takes on the guise of a prison for Tristan out of which he cannot and does not want to escape because of the rewards it affords. He is constantly reminded by Jacqui that he needs to escape. It is only when Wally dies that Tristan comprehends the danger he has unwittingly placed himself in and realises the urgency of needing to escape. He becomes aware that he cannot hold on to this deception forever. Tristan is thus forced to move out of the mask and run for his life.

Originally a Voorstander, Felicity uncovers her feelings towards the country of her birth and its cultural symbols vis-à-vis her adopted country. Her ambivalent stance on Bruder Mouse is one specific example. Fiercely nationalistic, Felicity believes in the nationhood and independence of Efica, and plays a vocal role in subverting the designs of Voorstand on Efica. This she does with the help of her theatre, the 'Feu Follet'. She publicly declares in her election campaign for

the Blues in Efica 'the sharp-toothed blue-coated Mouse as a paranoid– its white-gloved finger hovering above a button which might destroy the planet' (*ULoTS*180). Yet she gifts her son 'not merely a Bruder Mouse mask, but one far superior to the one [he] had destroyed' (*ULoTS*179). Tristan comments that 'no one who watched [his mother's] speech would have believed that she had dressed her own son in the visage of the enemy' (*ULoTS*180). He goes on to say that 'no matter what her critique of Voorstandish hegemony, my maman obviously held more complex feelings for Bruder Mouse than she ever admitted to the collective.' (*ULoTS*185)

Carey's *Jack Maggs* is about Maggs' search for self-redemption. It is also about Oates' struggle to retain control of his actions and its after-effects. What is perceptible in the novel is how "everyone is caught between the desire to keep their secrets and the urge to confess. All these are painful lives"[44]. "The bulk of Carey's reworked narrative is devoted to the convict's attempt to work out his relationship to both his native and adopted lands"[45]. It is this conflict and its resolution in Maggs that is the nucleus of Carey's novel. Having no desire for his adoptive country, Maggs feels the craving to return to England despite the threat of imprisonment and seizure. He "rejects his Australian family inorder to risk all in the search for an arrogant young man who cares nothing for his benefactor, but who, nevertheless, fulfils his naïve idea of an English Gentleman"[46]. He however cannot cut himself off from Australia, his

adoptive country, because it offers him the prosperity that he needs to establish himself as an honourable man in England.

Maggs is an illegal returnee from the prison island of Australia. Deported for a burglary in 1813, Maggs has done extremely well for himself as a brick-maker in New South Wales, infact well enough to purchase a house in England and support and raise the 'orphing' (*JM*287) who befriended him before he left England. Having great hopes that his return to London as Jack Maggs, Esquire, owner of a freehold mansion 27 Great Queen Street, would make good all his life's struggles, he finds everything the exact opposite when he does return. Not able to openly reveal his antecedents and his real position, Maggs goes through a series of conflicts, from realizing the truth about his adoptive son, Henry Phipps, to serving as Percy Buckle's footman, to getting compromised with Tobias Oates who sees in his story a lot of literary possibilities.

His life story is one that Maggs guards furiously. When he realises how much of his life Oates is in the know of, he becomes 'by degrees, severely agitated' (*JM*296), and 'from his bent bulk there now emerged a very peculiar series of sounds such as you might have imagined to be made by an injured animal' (*JM*304). All he can do to stop himself from killing Oates is to remember that Oates will lead him to his son Henry. He however 'forbid[s him] not to write Sophina's name, now or ever' (*JM*307). When he writes down his story for Henry's reading, the reader is made privy to the fact that they were written in

invisible ink with words written from right to left. Only Henry is to be informed 'how to make these words visible' (*JM*82) and instructed that he 'must burn everything when it is read' (*JM*82). Thus, one sees in Maggs a yearning to make his story known to justify his dark past, yet he also zealously guards it and is ready to kill for it too.

Oates is described by Lee in her review as "the latest in Carey's great line of self-inventive opportunists, creative gamblers. ... He is the thief who will make use of whatever comes his way"[47]. Obsessed with the 'criminal mind', Oates sees a golden opportunity when he encounters Maggs. He convinces Maggs that his painful facial tics are a result of a phantom residing in him and pretends to help him tackle the phantom. What he actually does is, steal Maggs story from him, to use it for his own benefit.

> Oates is simultaneously fascinated and repulsed by Maggs: drawn to the convict because of his overriding interest in human nature and because of the literary potential of the man's life, yet always fearful around him.[48]

At the beginning Oates manages to fool Maggs about the information he is revealing. He thus lends himself to even greater danger when he hides the truth from Maggs. When Maggs gets to know of the truth Oates is almost killed by Maggs. Despite the knowledge of the brutal experiences that have forged the

man Maggs, and also knowing that this man is dangerous, Oates undertakes the risk of associating with him out of greed for the possible favorable outcome. Immersed in his own financial and familial tribulations, Oates' bargain with Maggs lends him to blackmail by the latter. It is then that he is remorseful about meddling with Maggs. But by then it is too late, and Maggs refuses him release.

ii) Battlers or Losers? The Australian Prototype

It is a well accepted and established fact that the people who comprise any nation have "certain typical characteristics that arise by virtue of their national background, their cultural tradition, conditions of life and, very often, their biological heritage."[49] In the light of this affirmation, when one thinks of a 'typical Australian', Ronald Taft, in his essay *The Myth and Migrants*, informs us that:

> the popular image is that of a man of 30-40 years of age, dressed indifferently, speaking with an unmistakably Australian accent, bearing himself with a casual but confident air, friendly and wearing an easy-going expression, but betraying a ready propensity to become aroused by any attempt to dragoon him or to invade his rights to self determination. His occupation and class are vague … it matters little as he is quite adaptable…[50]

Taft goes on to inform us of studies done on national stereotypes that have formulated a collage of traits that could be associated with Australians. Some of these are sportsmanlike, tolerant, argumentative, boastful, materialistic, lazy, casual and informal, a fighter when aroused, addicted to gambling, etc. This stereotype of the Australian character seems to have been the consequence of 'a national tradition based on the behavior of a working class minority … the behaviour and values adopted … seem to have been widely … accepted as the

genuine Australian way of life.'[51] Carey himself substantiates this fact when he mentions in an interview that "the real people you [an Australian] should be writing about are the working class. That's how we [i.e., the Australians] see ourselves."[52]

Fletcher posits 'independence, toughness – even roughness- and loyalty to one's mates'[53], as associated in the crafting of the self-image of the Australian people. The foundation of the Australian character is shaped and thus defined under just 'three quaint Australianisms'[54]: the battler's all-encompassing sense of failure and isolation, intensified by the ineffective struggle with unknown and unfamiliar nature and authority, and yet retaining a scornful sense of humour; the larrikin's healthy disrespect for any kind of authority and its laws coupled with the ingenuity and self-reliance of those who take the law into their own hands; and later, there emerged the ocker's overconfident and brash eccentricity or vulgarity, which challenged the accepted European view of a 'civilised' society. Carey affirms categorically that "Australians will forever be affected by their convict origins"[55] and that in Australia they "hate the cops. Our relationship with the law is very complicated. ... We view the government as a potentially benevolent force even if it's been cruel in certain respects"[56]

Ronald Taft further informs us that with any traditional Australian hero, the

> emphasis has usually been on their toughness and their suffering rather than their scientific skill, their vision or even their success. [It is] tradition that regards enterprise as alien and labour as indigenous to Australia. [One] affectation [that is widely approved of is the] pose of extreme toughness and lack of fear. Hardships are meant to be endured without complaint and dangers to be faced without expressing fear.[57]

Carey explains that "Australians really believe in failure. Everything we celebrate has to do with failure... We're really distrustful of success." He goes on to add that:

> in our culture, we don't call them [those who fail] losers. We call them battlers. A battler is someone who struggles forever and will never, ever really get anywhere. And in Australia that's a really honourable position.[58]

Another facet of the Australian prototype that stands out is the ingenuity of the Australian people. Carey believes that all "Australians are like that ... You're working with limited resources, but because you have limited resources, you make something that's wittier and cooler than what you have anyway."[59]

Harry Joy from *Bliss*, a 'Good Bloke' (*B*14), adheres to this Australian prototype. Harry is 39 years old when the reader encounters him in the pages of the novel. The reader is told that he always

> believed what he read in the newspapers. In the provincial town where he lived he was someone of note but not of importance… but when he entered the best restaurants in his grubby suit and dropped his cigarette ash everywhere he was humoured and attended to… (*B*13).

Wherever he went he 'left smiles and whispers in the air behind him' (*B*13). 'He could walk into a room and sit down and everybody would be happy to have him, even if all he ever did was smile…' (*B*13). He 'conducted his business more or less in the American style' (*B*13) and any requests that came to him were interpreted in a manner which 'suited local conditions' (*B*13). He possessed a 'rich deep brown laugh' (*B*13), was 'something of a story-teller…' with a 'deep drawling confidence…' (*B*14). When Bettina wants to know if the television commercial he had written was 'great' (*B*99), all that he can say in reply is 'It worked… it wasn't great. But it makes us money' (*B*99). Having just enough for a comfortable existence is all that Harry aims for in life. He is complacent in all he does.

The narrator nonetheless notifies the reader that, 'there was a toughness in Harry Joy you may not have suspected' (*B*40). Harry is worried after his near-death experience. When he realises that he has to undergo a coronary bypass surgery he is even more terrified and convinced that he would die and go to hell. Hell is what frightens him more. He wonders what it would be like, the kind of punishment that is meted out as penance for all the wrongs committed. With all these fears he doesn't know whom to approach, someone who would show him a way to circumvent the road to Hell.

> ...to believe (i.e., in the Christian God of his mother) just because he was frightened of hell seemed to him to be unreasonably opportunistic, and he could not do it. (He hoped, just the same, that God saw him and at least gave him some marks for his honesty.).'(*B*40)

With Honey's help he succeeds in being on the alert for any agents from Hell who would come to punish him. Even though Harry is scared, he decides to do all he can to now 'be good' (*B*88) and tackle whatever is imminent. His first activity is to keep notes on all around him, 'comparing his life (termed "life" in the books) with his other life' (*B*55). Having confirmed for himself that this hell was 'not the childish Hell of the Christian Bible ... [but where] they planned more subtle things' (*B*56). He does all in his might to gain succour from Hell. He makes notes of the captives, actors and those in charge; he keeps

a close watch on the activities of all those around him upto the point of spying on them; and tries to scrub and keep everything clean.

Despite Harry's success in the advertising world, he still feels the need for escape. Success evades him whether it is in his storytelling quest or his life in the city. It is only after he gives up the city with all its accorded comforts and decides to live in the commune that he seems to have found his true calling. This calling is that of the storyteller of Bog Onion Road. As a man of the world he cannot find the middle ground in the city and celebrate his success. With Honey's departure and Bettina's suicide Harry decides to make a run for the commune, realizing that 'the cancer epidemic [had] really arrived' (*B*262) and that his only hope for escape was the prospect that Honey had laid down before him. Hassal suggests that "he has not undergone a conversion from the values of late capitalism to pastoral communalism, but simply wants to survive at any cost."[60]

Harry's encounters with the police too leave little need for doubt about Carey's position vis-à-vis the law enforcers. All the instances of these encounters have Harry implicated on the wrong charges. The first time is when he is taken in for driving a car that is smashed by a circus-elephant. At the station 'Harry didn't say anything. He knew he was in for it. He had been planted with drugs and he could only wait for his punishment.' (*B*74) He is released only when he tells them 'a completely original story.' (*B*76) Later after Bettina's and Joel's

suicide, Harry once again is in conflict with the police and the reader is told that:

> this time there was a pale excitement in their [the police] faces and when Harry saw the thin impatient set of Macdonald's lips he knew that there was no safety for him in Hell. He was *persona non grata* with Those in Charge. (*B*260)

Herbert in *Illywhacker* personifies the classic Australian myth of the 'battler' to whom Australia is a "veritable land of promise..."[61]. A picaro like figure, Herbert roams all about the country in the first and second books, "conning people left and right and amazing us with his fertile imagination"[62]. Forever having the urge to settle down, Herbert roams all over the countryside in search of 'a fire and slippers' (*I*538). His ability to adapt to any surroundings and make himself comfortable is so amazing that Leah comments that he 'could build a country from the towns and streets, ... even a good country, a happy one' (*I*537). He is very assertive about his right over the Australian country. His reply over any queries regarding this issue is a resolute, 'It is public land, It's a reserve, and if I take out a mining lease I'm entitled to build a hut here ... This is my country' (*I*307). At the same time he is ready to privately admit that 'the landscape had, indeed, always seemed alien to me, that it made me, in many lights, melancholy and homesick for something else' (*I*308). His life parallels the history and experience of the people of Australia, their struggle

with the environment, the land, the life as a settler forever trying to forge roots with the land, the struggle through the depression, etc.

Always weaving a web of lies around him, Herbert is caught invariably in this trap. His dreams and visions, for which he needs to use the ability of a spieler, make him create his persona as per the needs of the situation. As Phoebe pronounces, 'You have invented yourself, Mr. Badgery ... You are what they call a confidence man. You can be anything you want' (*I*91). His lies, also referred to as 'a gift' (*I*34) by Badgery, however control his actions to a great extent. We are informed that 'success always went to [his] head. I got too excited' (*I*29). He can easily adapt himself to all the events that he encounters in his daily life.

Herbert has always been in conflict with the people he meets in his lifetime. Having an anxious impression of being threatened, he says that 'I was always fighting people I didn't need to fight. I feel like I've been awake all my life with a gun across my knees, waiting.' (*I*50). This feeling keeps him forever on his guard, leading to a deep distrust of others. The result of this is that Herbert is always looking to have an upper hand in any of his dealings and believes that 'charity is good for no one' (*I*51). He has no hesitation in stealing the plans of making an aeroplane from Mr. Bradfield, and claiming them to be his own.

In Oscar in *Oscar and Lucinda,* Carey has presented to us a prototype of the Europeans who came to Australia on a civilizing or evangelising mission, and stayed on to become Australians. Oscar's descendant, the narrator, is informing us of his grandfather's role in the creation of Australia. In Oscar one sees the fortitude, the faith in God, the adaptable nature manifested. Oscar is forever engrossed in a conflict between his Christian faith inculcated in him by his father, and his worldly needs. His belief in God is very firm and all along his life he strives to do what God desires of him. When he cannot control his urges and desires, he indulges in them. He then prays and tries to find solace in the fact that if God desired that of him, he will get away with it, and if otherwise, he will be punished. As with the characters in Carey, Oscar too has to meet his end without attaining his love.

Oscar embodies the battler, perennially on a war-path, managing to stand up against all the advances made by society. Seen as effeminate, he is called "Odd Bod" at Oriel. Put under great constraints everywhere he goes due to this essential quality in him, Oscar bravely attempts to stand up to all the discrimination meted out to him. He has the strength and firmness to accept all calamities without complaint, accepting it as the will of God. When his room is being attacked at Oriel, 'the Odd Bod, meanwhile, had stood on his bed, his lips moving soundlessly' (*O&L*105). Despite his great fear of water and thereby of the sea, he doesn't hesitate to take up the task of travelling down

South to New South Wales only because he believed that 'God was sending him to New South Wales' (*O&L*189).

Benny and Jack in *The Tax Inspector* are projections of Carey's idea of modern day Australians, wrought by social decay and degeneration in ethics. They are emblematic of Australians with the drive to succeed by 'making it possible' (*TI*150), and 'run this business effectively … By various methods' (*TI*103). The methods they employ could be questionable morally and ethically. But as long as they produce the desired results their use is justified. Unable to reconcile himself to his sudden sacking, the readers are made privy to Benny's reaction to it. He desires to transform himself. He is also ruthless with Sarkis claiming that 'he's mine' (*TI*151). This gives an insight into the unbalanced state Benny is in after his dismissal from Catchprice Motors. His new-found confidence and supposed toughness stem from his new personal transformation. His attempts to fight against the evident results of the visit of the tax inspector, his desperate attempts to transform himself into an angel, his desire to save the business from debt, etc. are all suggestive of the fighting streak in Australians who over-rated the battler.

Jack symbolizes the new business class. A builder by profession, Jack has long hands that can manoeuvre and out-manouevre any calamity. Undeterred by rejection, Jack comes forth as determined when he finally manages to win Maria's affection. A popular figure, he has all the right friends who assist him

in all his dealings. This is evident when he fixes Maria's appraisal so that she is taken off the Catchprice audit. He even sorts out Maria's friend, Gia's problem with the gangland.

In *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith,* Tristan, the deformed but nevertheless theatrical narrator, is another one of a number of 'odd bods' in Carey's fiction, who have to fight their way through life. Tristan has to endure unknown hardships along with the debilitating fact of his deformity. He puts up with it all and finally escapes at the end of the novel, looking forward to the new 'unusual life [that] was really just beginning' (*ULoTS*414). He has always been a lovable child and has led a protected life. He cannot understand the deceit of the world, and very often finds himself confounded by it. According to Woodcock, "the whole drive of the book is towards stressing that the sense of Tristan's monstrosity is a function of the attitudes and assumptions of his perceivers"[63]. Once the others begin to see the person in Tristan, they find him lovable. Also evident is Tristan's involvement in revolutionary activities like being 'active in the January 20 Group and [writing] pamphlets and letters to the editor' (*ULoTS*233). Thus Tristan appears to be an individual who has ideas and views of his own.

Throughout the novel, Tristan has just one objective, to narrate his tale. It is a tale of being betrayed, protected, loved, living with infirmities, deceit, etc. Having been tremendously influenced by his mother, Tristan holds a lot of

anger for her assassins. He however ceases to lay blame on any one individual for it. He does not 'blame you [i.e., Voorstanders] personally for everything your government has ever done' (*ULoTS*231). He also tries to clarify that when he made the journey to Voorstand 'it was not – as Mrs. Kram would still have you believe – to do your nation harm' (*ULoTS*231).With his mother's death, he loses all his sense of security, and is afraid for his life. And yet, he says, 'I would not be a total coward' (*ULoTS*232). When he is made to get into the Simi of Bruder Mouse, he enjoys the adulation he receives, and even though he could also feel the 'small solder points and amputated wires rubbing at my skin' (*ULoTS*329) he says that 'there is no analgesic like an audience' (*ULoTS*329).

Maggs in *Jack Maggs* is another of Carey's characters "concerned with self-redemption"[64] A denizen of the Australian colonies, he returns to England 'for the culture' (*JM*7), and as he has 'English things to settle. I am not to live my life with all that vermin. I am here in London where I belong' (*JM*141). Through the character of Maggs, Carey strives to re-present Magwitch from Dickens' *Great Expectations* because he felt that "Magwitch was behaving in a really Australian way"[65]. Thus Maggs has been "cast out, he's treated very badly, and all he can think to do, at risk to his own life, is to go and live with his abusers"[66]. He is treated very badly by his adopted son, Phipps who refuses to even meet him after Maggs lands in England. Yet, Maggs is not ready to acknowledge the reason behind this behaviour of Phipps. He does not realise

that in reality he is not welcome in his mother country any more. The awareness of the rejection by England comes across to him in various ways. His own house is empty when he arrives even though he has informed the occupants, i.e., his son, of his impending arrival. Yet he finds that his house is empty and his son absconding. He gets disappointed with everything he experiences in England. His efforts to locate his adopted son also prove futile. The last straw in his string of disappointments that shatters all his illusions is when his son points the gun and shoots at him with the motive of killing him.

Maggs is also deceived by Oates, "soon to become the Empire's greatest living writer"[67].Oates shows an interest in Maggs seemingly because he has sympathy for the fugitive's plight. But in reality he is more interested in the literary potential that he envisages in the fugitive's story. Maggs' brutal and unhappy life story is thus a result that appears from Oates' pen. The core of Carey's Jack Maggs is "the convict's attempt to work out his relationship to both his native and adopted lands."[68] Refusing to formulate a new stable identity in Australia, Maggs harks back to his origins as the new penal origin is nothing to be proud of for him. Thus he feels compelled to risk all the prosperity he has acquired in Australia, only to return and make his peace with his beloved England by justifying his dark past. Maggs manages to finally find a resolution to this conflict with the help of Mercy. It is Mercy who gives him the support to give up all hope for a life in England. In all these travails, Maggs actually emerges as a character who is full of love despite all he has gone through. A brutalized

and tough man he still has great affection and love for his adopted son, to the extent of murdering the man who tried to steal his son's photograph. All this affection arises only because that small boy had helped him before he had been deported.

According to the traditional myth exemplifying the Australian prototype, Australia is home for two types of women, "half-prostitute and half-mother"[69]. In her home she is expected to be the "monarch of the home", dominating and nurturing her family and outside her home she is required to be "self-effacing and to keep out of those spheres that are perceived as belonging to men."[70] Carey however has always had powerful women characters in his works and has always asserted that "it is the women ... who have the drive and the ideas"[71]. Hassal also corroborates that "Carey's women are typically stronger than their menfolk."[72]

Bettina, in *Bliss* with her "creative energy, however cynical or misguided"[73], is one of the powerful women characters populating Carey's novels. An advertising genius, she is exemplary because of the single-minded devotion and effort with which she pursues her dream of making it big in the ad-world. Having being swept off her feet by Harry with his stories of New York, Bettina feels stranded in a marriage where she has had to play the dutiful wife and mother. When she gets an opportunity to take charge of the advertising agency after Harry's indisposition, she grabs, manipulates and even bargains to have

Harry accept her new bearing. The reader is kept informed that a new agency has been set up and that "the artworks that lift the agency out of the ruck are not Harry's, however, but Bettina's, though she still needs Harry to sell them for her"[74]. Bettina's success can be attributed to her yearning for the "the delights, the cargo, that an advertising- driven society aspires to and exalts"[75]. Finally, when she realizes that she is going to die just at the time when her career is set to take off, she petrol-bombs the entire Board of Mobil, whose product poisoned her. The only advertisement that survives the resultant inferno is one with the headline that read 'petrol killed me' (*B*254).

Bettina is made to fight a battle with Honey Barbara for Harry's soul. Entering Harry's life as a whore, Honey becomes the agency for Harry's change. A 'pantheist, healer and whore' she imagines she 'could heal' (*B*179). One notes a contradiction in her attitudes where she is fascinated by the attractions of city life, yet she prefers the commune as a much cleaner way of living. Harry sees in her a saviour and Honey notices in this man 'a passiveness and knew he was easy to handle', also 'he looked like Krishna' (*B*129). Becoming 'Harry's trusted guide to Hell' (*B*133), she gets herself entangled in Harry's world of cunning and deceit. It is, however, left up to her to muster enough of courage to give up all that she had gotten used to and leave it for her earlier way of commune life with 'better and deeper pleasures with smaller, more ordinary things, pleasures so everyday …' (*B*242). The effort she had to put in to take this decision is evident in the discomforts she had to face due to her familiarity

now with luxuries and city life because 'she flinched from time to time when a sharp rock bit into her soft bare feet' (*B*249). It is only Honey who manages to steer Harry on his flight from the city, and becomes his redeemer albeit inadvertently.

Phoebe, Leah, Emma are some of the women in *Illywhacker* that Carey creates. Phoebe, always daring to hold on to her own views rejects commonly held notions in society. On the lookout for 'something' (*I*17) unusual to happen in her life, she forever desires to move out of "the provincialism of Australian society, the limits set on the dreams and visions of individuals by the lack of opportunity, resources, or connections with the individual arena"[76]. Appropriating a passion for flying from Herbert, she rebels against his desire to settle down to family life and being content with her husband and children. Instead she trades the birth of her daughter with the ownership of the Morris Farman aeroplane Herbert has. She escapes from the jerry-built doll's house and the unwanted family in which Herbert attempts to contain her. Her flight from Herbert and his settling impulse leads her to Sydney "and the delusory achievement of her literary efforts and soirées"[77]. The reader reads of Phoebe "naked and seductive on the roof tiles, or even Phoebe the passionate aviator who is sexually excited by flying, to the Phoebe who demands a legalistic calcification of her relationship with Herbert"[78]. Thus the reader is made privy to an inversion of conventional sexual politics.

A celebrated emu and snake dancer, Leah Goldstein meets Herbert on the road and forms the half of their theatrical company, Badgery and Goldstein. It is Leah, an intelligent woman with outspoken leftist political opinions, who sees through Herbert's building impulse, 'you think you can put up some shanty and that makes it your place, but you can't, and it never will be' (*I*307). She is unlike the conception of a traditional Australian woman and laments that 'there is no tradition of intellectual discussion ... When a subject is discussed the women simper and say they have no ideas and the men want to settle it with a fight.' (*I*230). Leah's story, her antecedents that are narrated portray her as a strong woman who is capable of great sacrifices. Leah teaches Herbert that his vision, enthusiasm, dreams and arrogance on behalf of Australia should be tempered with kindness. It is she who 'deserves the credit' (*I*12) for getting him to read. Leah also takes on Herbert's narrative at various instances to reveal the untruths that he narrates to the reader.

In *Oscar and Lucinda*, Lucinda's suddenly finds herself powerless to control her life after the death of her radical mother. Forced to wear an 'obscene bustle' and a 'crippling crinoline' (*O&L*81), she continues to stumble into trouble:

> But Lucinda did not know what to do in Parramatta. She tried to behave well, but as long as would not wear the bustle it seemed no one would behave well toward her. She sat by her mother's grave until it was judged morbid and she was taken away (*O&L*81).

Setting her own standards to live by, Lucinda often finds herself in unenviable positions, in conflict with the general norms of society. Escape from this constraint is inevitable, as it results in exclusion by society. After her eighteenth birthday, with exclusive control over her legacy, she asserts herself and lives as she pleases, without paying heed to what the others think of her. 'She was a despicable person. Then she was despicable, and that was that' (*O&L*177). She refuses to conform to the standards set by society for women of her class. 'It was remarked ... how oddly she dressed ... It was as if she had broken some law of nature - been ice and steam at the same instant - the two activities were mutually exclusive.' (*O&L*174) She cultivates the gambling habit which turns out to be an obsession, she becomes the owner of a glassworks factory, she begins to live with Oscar, etc. In all she does she attempts to follow her wishes even if it means a revolt against the norms of society.

Maria, a tax inspector eight months pregnant, in *The Tax Inspector*, sees herself as a Robin Hood-like figure. She believes that it is the duty of the tax authorities to bring the tax defaulters to justice and thereby give to the deserving their due. An independent woman with a world-view of her own, who has decided to go ahead and give birth to the love child of her married lover, she has a steely moral sense which strengthens her in all her decision making. She is shaken by the desertion of her lover and the subsequent loss of

her earlier important position at the Tax office. Yet, Maria is extremely conscientious even while investigating small and unimportant establishments like the Catchprices. Her firm belief, as she recounts to Jack, is that 'you don't need socialism to fix that [the unequal distribution of wealth], you just need a good Taxation office and a treasury with guts.' (*TI*216). Her influence on Jack turns out to be an essentially transformative one even though her idealism ends up compromised due to her association with him.

In the same novel, Frieda Catchprice, the matriarch of the Catchprice clan "has outlasted her husband and still dominates her children"[79]. The "guardian of the prison and the keeper of the keys, locking its cyclone gates at night and unlocking them in the morning"[80], she appears trapped in the Catchprice business. The reader is influenced to ponder about her role in the setting up of the establishment which she has now come to detest. Giving up her own dreams of a flower farm, she allowed her husband Cacka to follow his dreams. She believes that this led to the poisoned atmosphere that is prevalent. She professes ignorance of the fact that her children were sexually abused by her husband. When her children, Cathy and Mort openly state that they were abused, she is forced to confront it. She breaks down and accepts that she 'knew but didn't believe' (*TI*245). How strong-willed a woman she was, is evident from the fact that she 'had made her life, invented it. When it was not what she wanted, she changed it. ... There was no car business, she gave it to him, out of her head, where there had been nothing previously' (*TI*228). The

reader is also informed that in the Catchprice family 'it was Frieda who read books and had opinions ... she had been the smart one' (*TI*167).

Felicity, Jacqui, Peggy Kram, in *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* all characterize the new woman who is in control of her life and destiny, exerting authority over others. Woodcock states that "Like Maria in *The Tax Inspector* and Lucinda in *Oscar and Lucinda*, Tristan's mother [Felicity] is one of a number of strong women characters in Carey's work who challenge the roles and limitations imposed on them"[81]. A theatre owner, she also runs a small, politically active theatre group called the Feu Follet. A radical actress, Felicity is originally a Voorstander but has embraced Efican nationality which she upholds with a vengeance unknown for even an Efican. She has no hesitation in acknowledging her son, despite his hideous appearance, and it is only through her labors that Tristan survives to live and narrate his tale. Tristan tells us that if 'she had ... decided on [something] she was a woman who always carried out her plans' (*ULoTS*7). A resilient woman who always 'got her way' (*ULoTS*18), she is used to living her life on her own terms and has her way always. She meets her death by virtue of her foray into active Efican politics.

Jacqui, Tristan's nurse, disguised as a male named Jacques Lorraine, is described by Tristan as an 'individual who turned out to be the most curious young man I ever met, [and] had more to do with the course of events than any of us understood.' (*ULoTS*244). An undercover agent when she gains

employment with Tristan, she is a strong, athletic person, 'with considerable reserves of self-esteem' (*ULoTS*244), for whom no job was anathema. While it is her undercover blunders that get Tristan implicated as dangerous, she nevertheless goes to the extreme in protecting him and catering to his special needs.

Peggy Kram is another woman who lives by her own set of rules. A powerful Sirkus Produkter, she 'owned twenty Ghostdorps (where she had whole families of actors playing out the 'The Great Historical Past') but also four Sirkus Domes in Saarlim City.' (*ULoTS*358). Getting enamoured with Tristan in the guise of Bruder Mouse, she decides to keep Tristan because she finds him 'better than a man' (*ULoTS*400) to keep her company and satisfy her desires. Peggy is a woman 'whose wealth and power were envied everywhere .... is thought to be ruthless ...and is [ruthless]' (*ULoTS*402).

Mercy Larkin, the maid of Percy Buckle, helps Maggs through his difficult reconciliation with the truth that England has severed ties with him. A seemingly inconsequential and saucy girl, she is looking for stability too. Very observant and inquisitive, it is she who first notices Maggs in her neighbourhood stealthily entering the household of Phipps. She takes a fancy to Maggs. When she realises he is in danger she tries to help him out. It is she who finally tells Maggs the whereabouts of Phipps. She does so to make Maggs aware of the truth that he is not loved and respected as he assumes he is. Mercy

reveals to him that 'he looks at no clouds for you' (*JM*340).With great courage, defying Maggs anger, she makes Maggs realise that he owes more to his own blood back in Australia. When she saves his life by getting her wedding finger blown off in the bargain, the reader is informed that 'the pair [Maggs and Mercy] were finally matched in their deformity' (*JM*354). Finally she shows her steel by engineering to 'help the convict recognize the claims of Richard and John to have a father kiss them good night' (*JM*354). We are told that:

> she applied herself to being their mother with a passion ... she became a disciplinarian ... she moved the family away from the bad influence ... she not only civilized these first two children, but very quickly gave birth to five further members of "That Race" (*JM*355-6).

At the end of the story of Maggs' life, it is 'Mercy who is now remembered best' (*JM*356) among the people they lived.

iii) Solitude and Unstable Relationships

All of Carey's characters, battlers that they are, appear to constantly look for stability. Owing to their peculiar past that significantly affects their present, they are engaged in a perennial search for love, acceptance, and success. They yearn for stability in their existence and go after it with gusto. Though living among people, Carey's characters always experience a strange sense of solitude. Despite Lucinda having all her well-wishers, or Gran Catchprice having her whole family, or Harry having his children and popularity, all of them are misfits in one sense or the other.

This feeling of loneliness goads them towards battling the odds that they encounter in the hope of finding some resolution. Thus one sees Maggs fighting to gain his rightful place as a respectable man in his beloved England or Harry looking for redemption from the evils of Hell or Herbert yearning for a place of his own or Tristan struggling to be acknowledged as an individual in his own right. The result is confusion and anxiety and diffidence in one form or the other, which leaves them bereft of the ability to forge strong and steady relationships. Woodcock[82] concedes "human isolation" as an ongoing concern and "failure of communication" is a significant element in Peter Carey's works. Their illusions and dreams and the web of untruths that they weave serves to strengthen the walls of solitude that they build around themselves. The result is "crossed wires" and "isolation of individuals within relationships"[83].

Harry Joy the 'Good Bloke' (*B*14), 'humoured and attended to...' (*B*13) has till his first death, lived a very complacent life enjoying all that came his way. With a family and an advertising business, Harry is everyman's idea of a happy man who 'left smiles and whispers in the air behind him' (*B*13). When he does realise the implications of his behaviour, he imagines he is in Hell. While earlier his complacency made him oblivious to the behaviour of his family, now he feels even lonelier as he is suspicions that his family members are 'Actors' (*B*89) playing their respective roles in Hell, and who work collectively to bring you to justice for all the wrongs committed. His loneliness finds solace in Honey Barbara. However, he ends up losing her when he introduces her also to the world of luxury and money.

Bettina, Joel, David, all look for social recognition and fame to cover up the insecurities that plague them. Forever dreaming of New York, Bettina 'wanted power and success, not vicariously, not through a lover or a husband, but directly, for herself alone' (*B*18). She looks at advertising as a stepladder that will help her gain fame and recognition. To this end, she is ruthless enough to strike a bargain with Harry for Honey's release, inorder to have Harry work to sell her ads. David desires success through his drug smuggling. Even though he creates an impression of being cold, 'he was so full of emotions he could not speak ... he dreamt of wealth and adventure, and yet he was frightened of almost everything' (*B*32).

All of these characters have very troubled relationships. Harry's son is a drug peddler and has an incestuous relationship with his sister Lucy. Lucy is in turn a communist and uses drugs. Harry's wife is having an affair with his business partner and his clients vitiate the environment. Harry believes he has found a partner in Honey. However, in introducing her to his world he compromises her integrity too. Harry's relationship with his son David is also complicated. This is best revealed in the episode where David visits Harry in the hospital. Where both feel the need to tell each other the truth about themselves and their lives, they simply fail to do so. 'They wanted to hug each other but it was not what the family did' (*B*39). In this set-up, Harry ends up being incarcerated in a mental asylum due to the relentless efforts of his son and his wife who even bargain ruthlessly for his soul.

Illywhacker presents a plethora of characters such as Herbert, Charles, Hissao, Phoebe, Leah, Molly, Emma, etc. who are "trapped … in the prisonhouse of fiction they create"[84]. Solitude and loneliness engulf all the characters as a consequence of being trapped in their dreams. 'Spawned by lies, suckled on dreams, infested with dragons' (*I*359), Herbert and his children 'could never have been normal, only extraordinary' (*I*359). Having run away from his father, Herbert is taken in by a Chinese immigrant, Goon Tse Ying. Having lied to Goon, the reader is made privy to all of Herbert's lies. These lies in turn introduce him to situations and people. The lying habit serves to undo Herbert as it returns to haunt him and make his life unsteady. He cannot settle down

anywhere as he is shunted around. He has a family of his own yet appears a loner. There is no one who understands him and his desires, leaving him alone to weave his dreams.

Phoebe, despite all the attention, cannot find her true calling among her people. Even Herbert's love cannot satisfy her. She yearns 'to do something' (*I*17) exceptional, and that opportunity lands in the guise of flying. Unable to cohabitate with either Annette or Herbert, Phoebe looks for glory in an artistic circle in Sydney. Leah gets into situations she can not extricate herself from only because she wanted 'to do one really fine thing' (*I*257). But this desire entangles her so profusely that she gets caught in undesirable circumstances entirely off tangent from what she envisaged. She marries Izzie despite feeling a bodily revulsion for him only because she wants to be close to Rosa.

Depiction of any relationship that is stable is unheard of in Carey. Relationships like the one between Herbert and Leah, or Herbert and Phoebe, or Charles and Emma, or Herbert and Hissao, are all fraught with misunderstandings leading to remoteness on the part of one or both of the characters. What aggravates the loneliness is the fact that these same relationships were forged with great love and joy, giving immense happiness to both. A misunderstanding between Charles and Emma makes the emotionally fragile Emma desert her husband and take up residence with a goanna in a cage. Similarly, Herbert's desire to settle down to 'a fire and slippers' (*I*538)

restricts Phoebe and compels her to fly to escape the cage of domesticity that he was building for her. Leah also resists Herbert's motive of acquiring stability, desiring to retain her independence. What happens to these characters and their relationships can be succinctly stated in Leah's words: "We are all perverted. Everything good in us gets perverted. I wanted to be good and kind and I made myself a slave instead" (*I*473)

Lucinda defies the obligations society attempts to impose upon her. She owns a factory, lives alone, and has intimate friendships with men. Society retaliates by making her an outcast. A recurring lesson that Lucinda learns from her life is that if ever one manages to break away from the constraints that people impose upon one, one will be excluded. Lucinda refuses to protect 'that more precious and fragile asset: her reputation' (*O&L*100). A woman in Australia, or anywhere, cannot live without an honorable reputation. Until she turns eighteen, she has no control over her life; 'everyone wish[es] to steer her this way and that, have her sit down, stand up, while all the time they smirked and thought her simple' (*O&L*127).

> She was alone in the world, orphaned, unprotected. She trusted nothing so much as she trusted that money, which she wished fiercely, passionately, to keep, even while she tried to give it away. There was no one she could talk to about her feelings. She was pinned and crippled by her loneliness. In the afternoons she lay on

> her bed. There was a spring coiled tight around her chest. She held her arms straight and rigid by her side, like a trap waiting to be triggered (*O&L*127).

Subsequently, all her actions result only from avoiding being 'at their mercy' (*O&L*127).

In contrast, Oscar, abused since childhood for his delicacy and general lack of so-called manly qualities, finds himself restrained and at everyone's mercy. Oscar also exists outside defined gender boundaries. As a child, 'more robust' (*O&L*69) boys beat him, make him 'eat dirt,' and 'put coarse mud on his skin because they could not bear it so soft and white' (*O&L*41). As he grows older, 'more robust' men still abuse him, although in more subtle ways. He is called 'Odd Bod' by his companions at Oriel. Mr. Borrodaile, angered by Oscar's agreement with Lucinda in a debate, mimics Oscar's walk in an attempt 'to make all that was good and kind in the young man appear to be weak and somehow contemptible' (*O&L*245). More explicitly, Mr. Jeffries suggests that he should bathe with the rest of the expedition 'to reassure the men that [he] ha[s] all the correct equipment' (*O&L* 464). Oscar's failure to live up to standards of manhood makes him vulnerable to these attacks.

Oscar and Lucinda, misunderstood by all, discover a kind of kinship when they meet. The brief period in the novel when these two characters share time with

each other is fraught with immense misunderstandings. They mistake each others' motives so blatantly, looking for their own ways to explain even the most obvious of happenings. 'They were strangers to each other, two vessels on the one stove, the kettle whistling out great clouds of joy, the stew pot quietly burning, and each blind to the condition of the other' (*O&L*371). When they begin to realise their love for each other, each refuses to reveal it. Oscar fears that Lucinda loves Hasset, and so 'it did not matter that she took his arm. It was the prior action, the snatching away, that stayed in his mind. ... in... the taking of the arm, he saw only pity' (*O&L*384). When they kiss each other passionately, he 'did not think, She loves me. He thought, rather, I am seducing her' (*O&L*432), and retained the impression that he 'lusted after a woman who loved another' (*O&L*433). Lucinda refuses to divulge her affections for fear of appearing to take advantage of Oscar's position as her employee. Having tried to shield herself from the entire world, Lucinda's 'armour she had hitherto used to keep herself safe' (*O&L*393), proves to be her undoing. She cannot break free and reveal her love in full honesty to Oscar. With the transportation of the glass church to Belligen, Lucinda wagers her entire fortune so that when it is delivered, Oscar can be her master. Oscar, on the other hand sees this as an accomplishment that will make him worthy of Lucinda's love. They look towards this event to consummate their love. But this too is not meant to be.

Carey's *The Tax Inspector* is "driven ... by a guilty secret at the heart of family life ... it is incest"[85]. It is this facet that has shaped and guided the destiny of

the people in the Catchprice family. Deep in debt, the members of this family, Gran, Mort, Cathy, Jack, Benny, Johnny, all wish to escape from the Catchprice Motors establishment. Their lives are shattered by incest which was initiated by Cacka. They are all fragmented sorts, having dreams of their own. Mort wants to sing in operas, Cathy aspires to be a country music star, Johnny has turned into Vish and joined the Hare Krishnas, Gran Frieda dreams of a flower farm, and Benny, the most affected of the whole lot, dreams of becoming an angel. Jack is the only member of the family who can escape, but he too remains a Catchprice essentially with his dreams of "as his family name suggests… cut price and cut-throat"[86].

There is a streak of hatred that runs through all of them, and they cannot really find support from each other as a family. Gran refuses to acknowledge the truth about the abuse going on in her family. She holds sway over everyone's lives with her fierce will-power and her gelignite that she carries in her bag. Mort cannot accept that his father did any wrong, as he is himself complicit in the matter. Cathy hates the business, and holds Gran responsible for her failure. She is in the process of deciding to abandon the family business and follow her yearning to be a country singer, while also trying to get her mother put in an old age home.

Deserted by her lover, Maria is eight months pregnant with his child. At the time of her tax audit assignment she is very low on self esteem as her idealism

is challenged. She is trying to come to terms with her being removed from the more important tax audits and shunted into tax investigations that are of little or no importance. Using self-actualization sessions to help her accept the baby and collect her life together, Maria, the daughter of an immigrant, seeks to find her place in society. When she meets Jack Catchprice and perceives his enormous affection and love for her, she cannot make up her mind about him. Allowing herself to be seduced by Jack, she is 'relieved to have him present in her life' (*TI*217). Happy with the attention she gets from Jack, she is also aware that her moral integrity is compromised.

With incest being inherent in the family, all the relationships revolve around it. Jack and Vish both manage to stay away from the family. Veering away from any kind of attachments totally, Vish has joined the Hare-Krishnas which advocate frugal living. Jack, with 'his sexual radar somewhat confused' (*TI*166), has his life always in chaos. Infact, his attraction for Maria is centred on the fact that she is pregnant. He liked the idea of 'keep[ing] her, and the child too, of course, the child particularly – another man's child did not create an obstacle' (*TI*213). Benny dreams of reforming himself and becoming an angel. In this new role he lures his father and kidnaps Sarkis and later Maria.

In *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith*, Carey handles "the issue of severe disability"[87], and the resultant affectations. Tristan, born with many diverse congenital conditions, has to overcome a lot of antipathy from people. As long

as his mother is around, Tristan is taken care of. Yet, Tristan was made to believe that he 'was different, but superior' (*ULoTS*67), to shield him from the unpleasantness that he would have to endure. Turning out into a 'furtive, even sneaky child, one given to wild and dangerously unrealistic dreams' (*ULoTS*70), he begins to shut himself from the outer world which does not give him credence.

A victim of betrayal time and again, Tristan learns to cope with it by steeling himself to all these instances. His father Bill betrays him, Vincent too fails to be there for him. It is only Wally who sticks around with him. In all this he only struggles to assert his individuality. When chance comes his way in the guise of Bruder mouse, he allows himself to be submerged, if for nothing else, atleast to do away with the aversion people feel towards his deformities. Misunderstood throughout his life, Tristan yearns for the life of a normal individual, having the same desires and cravings that a young man would have. When Peggy Kram takes a fancy for him, Tristan is exuberant that fate affords him a chance to assert himself. This too is not to be. Tristan realises that his identity cannot lie inside the Bruder Mouse costume.

Tristan's relationship with Kram is an instance of how he seeks love and acceptance. But it fails as Tristan does not reveal his true self. When it does happen, Kram mortified, 'could no longer see him. She could only see the horrid creature that had put its red prong between her legs' (*ULoTS*411). In her

turn, Kram takes up Tristan because she feels that he was 'better than a man' (*ULoTS*400). Tristan's relationship with his father, Bill, is again ambivalent. Having 'three fathers' (*ULoTS*411), Tristan looks to Bill as his father, but Bill repeatedly lets him down. This relationship despite all its deficiencies endures till the end and Tristan escapes in his arms.

Maggs, Mercy, Oates, Buckle, all carry burdens from their past that create in them a strong desire for love and affection. Maggs, flogged and ill-treated needs respectability, Mercy wants a secure and safe household, Oates desires the security that name and fame have to offer, Buckle needs to maintain his authority and position in society and in the eyes of his employees. However, due their insecurities, none of them can forge a kinship. Each tries to manipulate the other and hide their actual intentions. For Mercy, having seen the fate of her mother, 'finding favour' (*JM*337) becomes a matter of utmost importance, whether it is with Percy Buckle or with Maggs is not important. Having risen to his position by way of a stroke of good luck, Buckle is always trying to tide over his insecurity of not being authoritative enough. Having taken Mercy as a companion, Buckle feels threatened when Maggs appears to snatch her from him.

Owing to the peculiar conditions of his appearance in England, Maggs cannot reveal his true identity to anyone. Being the owner of a freehold mansion in England, Maggs is forced to conceal himself. His need to come to England is

urgent as he feels that he belongs there. Forming a stable identity elsewhere is unthinkable for him. Being deported to the Prison Island of Australia, Maggs feels the need to justify his position and clear himself of the charges against him. His actions are thus a result of this very desire to clear his name and banish all the ghosts of the past. His disposition, on his arrival in England, creates a lot of speculation among the fellow passengers in his coach. He is said to have 'hooded eyes' (*JM*3) and doesn't desire conversation with anyone. Being extremely secretive he cannot establish a good rapport with any of Percy Buckle's household. He guards his secrets zealously and when indications are that his secrets 'had been burgled' (*JM*296), he is severely agitated. Burying his secrets deep within him, it enrages him to know that they had been revealed.

Oates also shares a fate similar to Maggs'. An upcoming and famous writer, Oates has always feared being unsuccessful or unpopular. This insecurity in him makes him even more conniving and forceful when he is in the know of a story that would benefit him financially. He "writes for many reasons: fame, money, security, curiosity, artistic fulfillment, escape and to assuage his hunger for order."[88] Fancying himself to be a cartographer of the human mind, he tries to draw out the story of Maggs. Having a disastrous private life, Oates tries to shield himself from the consequences by solely blaming Maggs for all the wrongs that occur in his life after the entry of Maggs into it.

Despite having two sons back in Australia, a prosperous business that had made him rich, Maggs is ready to forsake it all for a respectable return to England. All his hopes are thus pinned on his son Phipps. He kills the man who tries to steal his son's photograph from him. He strongly feels that 'this boy has kept me alive these last twenty-four years, and I will not have him taken from me. Nor will I permit him to be placed in harm's way. ... I will not abandon him' (*JM*288). He refuses to accept the truth that he could be erroneous in what he feels. Wanting only a stable relationship with his adoptive son, Maggs' efforts there are frustrated as Phipps does not humour him. Instead he is scared of Maggs. Oates too has tribulations that bear resemblance to the ones Maggs undergoes, and which leave him distraught. Having 'come from no proper family himself, or none that he could remember without great bitterness, he had for all his short, determined life carried with him a mighty passion to create that safe warm world he had been denied' (*JM*41). In love with his wife's sister, he cannot do justice to either his wife or his lover. He ends up as an opportunist who does not even have any feelings of sympathy, but who only looks for personal gain.

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IIII

Writing in the Postcolonial/Postmodern Space

Carey is well-known as one of the "writers in the English Commonwealth who 'write back' to the 'centre', who react to dominant Eurocentric views and attitudes in that they engage with their imperial experiences, problematize their post-colonial position and create their own aesthetics"[1]. He embodies the "postcolonial artist writing back against the colonial legacy, creating a new hybrid out of the suppressions of the past, validating otherwise marginalized experience"[2] With Carey, nation building is not a linear historico-cultural process. Truths and lies are interspersed in the narratives of the nation. His novels are also known to not only "play with established myths and histories of his country to expose their fictionality but also demonstrate the creation of new myths through their self-conscious and metafictional qualities"[3].

Postcolonialism and postmodernism both work subversively, using and misusing components of the systems and ideas they want to challenge, and undermining them from within. Though Carey repudiates any categorization into a specific literary mould, in the process of nation-building he invariably pursues some of the issues and concerns fundamental to postcolonial writings. According to Krassnitzer, Carey "uses the techniques of imperialist cultures only to subvert and undermine the same, working in a typically post-colonial fashion"[4]. Carey's novels operate on multiple levels and "lend themselves to innumerable readings on various levels and within different reading

conventions."[5] Both postcolonialism and postmodernism engage in "the de-centering and subverting process" and "a kind of game which challenges fixation of any kind"[6]. Opposing and challenging the given monolithic constructs, both postcolonialism and postmodernism, suggest "multiplicities and multiple possibilities"[7] thus provoking and permitting the reader to participate in providing meaning to the text.

Postcolonialism probes the given truth of the preeminence of the white race, and the myths and power structures shaped in the course of imperialism. Post colonial writing does not attempt to adapt European models. Instead in the subversive activity that is undertaken, there is a conscious drive to create a discourse that would provide an expression to the inevitable hybridization that has taken place in post-colonial cultures. Thus the aim of postcolonial writing is "not to subvert the dominant in order to take its place, but to problematize the dangers of dominant discourses and authoritative narratives with all their cultural implications and political power"[8]. Post colonial writers aim at translating their cultures and placing them before the world gaze. In the process they attempt to foreground their difference also as another reality, thereby suggesting multiple truths.

Postmodernism prefers fissures, which may be of elements like gender, class, race, etc. It endorses expressions like "decentering", "discontinuity", "disruption" or "distortion"[9]. Thus it approves of notions of heterogeneity,

multiplicity and pluralism[10]. Postmodernist literature experiments with blending literary genres, cultural and stylistic levels, the serious and the playful, so that they resist classification according to the traditional literary rubrics. It also takes upon itself the task of subverting the foundations of our conventional modes of thought and experience, with its constant questioning of the given structures and concepts.

In postmodernism, an awareness is created that people need to locate their own reality, thereby giving credence to multiple notions of reality and truth. Linda Hutcheon states that:

> postmodern art similarly asserts and then deliberately undermines such principles as value, meaning, order, control, and identity that have been the basic premises of bourgeois liberalism. Those humanistic principles are still operative in our culture, but for many they are no longer seen as eternal and unchangeable[11]

She defines postmodern writing with the term 'Historiographic metafiction':

> by this I mean those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages … In most of the critical work on postmodernism, it is narrative – be it in literature, history, or theory

> – that has usually been the major focus of attention. Historiographic metafiction incorporates all three of these domains: that is, its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and concepts of the past.[12]

Historiographic metafiction attempts an expose of the postmodern ideology of plurality and recognition of difference, encouraging multiple truths and subsequently making the accuracy of truth irrelevant.

Postmodern fiction, thus in accordance with the strategy of historiographic metafiction, plays upon the truths and lies of historical records, endeavouring to perform a rethink and consequently attempting a reworking of its predecessors. It problematizes narrative representation and aims at multiple meanings and multiple realities. While writing or re-writing histories, there is no attempt to record or reproduce factual details. Instead, in keeping with its attempt to debunk objectivity and verisimilitude, postmodernism prefers to imagine and invent histories, blurring the distinction between fact and fiction due to a clever amalgamation of the two. Attempting to drive home the point that absolutist history is an impossibility, in its deconstruction of history it draws attention to the fact that subjectivity is imminent in the process of recording history, thus making the whole idea of having a neat construction of history or neat historical records a virtual impossibility.

Carey makes use of the postmodern mode to further his postcolonial concerns. In an interview Carey states that "his fiction involves a form of political questioning: Do people want to, or have to, live the way they do now? What will happen to us if we keep on living like we do now?"[13] His fiction is known to explore experiences bordering normality and is inhabited by hybrid characters "living in in-between spaces or on the margins"[14]. He often stretches or challenges our views of the world and of what is normal. Taking to metafictional strategies immensely, Carey's fiction is a hybrid "crossing and confusing genres, juggling in the borderlands between the popular and the serious, the high and the low"[15]. Carey deftly substantiates the views of Homi K. Bhabha who says:

> the colonial experience is an interstitial, in-between experience, a matter of border-lands rather than fixed border-lines, a place of hybridity, figuratively speaking, where the construction of a political object that is new, neither the one nor the other, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very form of our recognition of the moment of politics.[16]

Carey's novels are well known for their ability to play with the established myths and histories of his country. In *Bliss* he attempts an exposé of the deceit that ensues due to the corrupting influence of cultural hegemony. In

Illywhacker he plays with the history of Australia and the lies propagated with reference to the original inhabitants and owners of the land. *Oscar and Lucinda* delineates the pioneering intentions of the settlers who ended up claiming ownership of the land and the ensuing fracas. In *The Tax Inspector* he once again tries to foreground the corrupt nature of Australian society and the degeneration of societal values and morality. *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* portrays the struggle of a deformed mutant to survive in a world of deceit and treachery. *Jack Maggs* is a tale of the Australian finally disengaging the umbilical cord that held him to the mother country that behaved ruthlessly towards him. In each of the novels Carey attempts to present a reality from the disadvantaged point of view. There is a retelling of the stories of marginalized characters who are outsiders or outlaws.

Carey creates new myths for his country. One of these is of the battler, who struggles against all odds to survive, most of the time ending up a loser. A battler is one who tackles all adversities head-on, significant of the first Australians who had to battle the odds of climate and other harsh conditions. He weaves a world of lies around himself that makes it easier for him to confront the harsh truths around him. Yet invariably this web of lies entangles him, leaving him entirely at their mercy. Another myth created is that of the spieler or trickster, who can sweet-talk his way out of any situation.

In *Bliss*, Harry exemplifies the Australian character. He takes life easy till his first heart attack. But later the reader is witness to his constant struggle to prevent being captured by the 'Those in Charge' (*B*89). He feels that he is in Hell and thus all his actions veer towards salvation from being damned in hell. His drastic act of giving up his life of luxury and comfort for the vagaries of the Bog Onion Road Commune in the hope of salvation also point to the battler instinct of the Australians. Herbert Badgery in *Illywhacker* is a wanderer on a quest for stability. His whole life is a constant struggle against all the odds he faced, from a term in gaol to being caged by his grandson and exhibited in the Best Pet Shop in the World. A self-confessed liar, Badgery is forever entrapped in his lies. Oscar and Lucinda's respective tales are no different in *Oscar and Lucinda*. They are both misfits who have to endure all forms of chastisement as they fail to conform to the desired norms of society. Their lives are a constant struggle to assert themselves and attain their wishes. In *The Tax Inspector*, Benny, Maria, as well as the others are shown struggling to come to terms with the realities of life in modern day Australia. Where Benny loses his mental balance and adopts bizarre means to regulate his life and his failure at his job, Maria is always endeavoring to bring tax defaulters to justice. Tristan is also another of Carey's battlers in *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith*. A deformed mutant, he lives his life, despite all the odds he faces. In this he has the assistance of people like Wally who love him a lot. Jack Maggs in *Jack Maggs*, a denizen from the prison island of Australia, also fights against all ordeals that he encounters in his chequered life. Having had to face the worst in his

lifetime, the reader is made privy to the fact that he still retains his affectionate nature, as is evident in his behaviour towards his adoptive son Phipps.

Carey attempts to rewrite histories of his country, often imagining and inventing the same. He also makes the reader conscious of the fact that the narrator is deliberately attempting to fictionalize. The narrator presents himself always as a conscious liar, embroiled in a false world created of his own volition, oblivious to the reality of things around him. In the bargain he also goes about setting right the wrongs that have been written in histories, exposing histories as just another story, a narrative account presented from one point of view. Thus he also foregrounds the voices that have been unheard of till then, those of the marginalized.

Illywhacker, *Oscar and Lucinda*, *The Tax Inspector*, *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* and *Jack Maggs* all attempt a reworking of the histories that they portray. *Illywhacker* and *Oscar and Lucinda* try to put right the history of the country. The aborigines who remain an active absence in *Illywhacker* are given a voice in *Oscar and Lucinda*. Herbert in *Illywhacker* is constantly reminded by Leah that the ownership of the land by the settlers who came to Australia itself is a big lie. This is the first lie that has spawned so many more nullifying the existence of the aborigines. In *Oscar and Lucinda*, Carey presents the pioneering zeal of the Englishman who mapped the country and claimed it as his own. Oscar is a witness to the decimation of the original inhabitants of the

land. In *Jack Maggs* the reader is provided with a narration that reverses the upto-now held notion of the early Australian convict settlers as violent and dreadful. Maggs is shown humanely and in possession of tremendous affection despite all that he has endured in his life.

Carey employs multiple modes of writing in his novels. Whereas novels like *Illywhacker* and *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* predominantly employ the autobiographical form, the other novels have a first person, third person or an omniscient narrator. Yet in these novels one finds journal entries, letters, poems, etc. that are inserted.

In *Bliss*, stories are given significance. This could be the 'completely original story' (*B*76) of Little Titch that Harry narrates to the policemen, or the role he later plays as the storyteller at Bog Onion Road. Thus the reader is presented with stories within stories. One story is of 'The Man with the White Suit' (*B*248) i.e., how David met his end 'with the sun coming out as he falls, and they say *Pero era solo una mariposa* (but it was only a butterfly) *que se volaba* (flying away)' (*B*248).

Illywhacker has insertions of letters that Phoebe writes to Annette (*I*154), (*I*189), a portion of the letter from Sid Goldstein to his daughter Leah (*I*286) or even Leah's letters to Badgery when he is in jail. There is also an insertion of a

legal document that Herbert Badgery signs on the insistence of Phoebe (*I*192). Badgery also quotes from the poems of Phoebe (*I*205).

In *Oscar and Lucinda*, Carey puts in the record that Theophilus makes of the 'pagan signs scratched on his path' (*O&L*29). The narrator also gives the readers a rendition of a creed that they believed in (*O&L*75). Letters like the one Elizabeth writes to Marian Evans (*O&L*90-1) and Mr. Ahearn's letter to the *Parramatta Argus* (*O&L*95) are also included in the novel. Songs also find mention in the novel like the one sung by Wardley-Fish (*O&L*111) or the Narcoo man, named Odalberee's song on glass (*O&L*474).

Insertions of songs are found in *The Tax Inspector*. These could be Cathy's songs like the one she sings for Maria (*TI*137), or the Midnight Oil tape from which Mort sang out loud (*TI*110). *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* is replete with maps drawn to scale, references and footnotes on every page as well as a glossary of Efican English and Voorstand English for the benefit of the reader. There are also insertions of Efican folk songs (*ULoTS*4), (*ULoTS*229) in the novel. Carey also includes an excerpt from '*Bruder Duck's Travels*, Badberg Edition' (*ULoTS*3).

In *Jack Maggs* also Carey includes an excerpt from *Du magnetisme animal (1820)* by Armand Marie Jacques de Chastenet, Marquis de Puységur, before he begins the narration. The novel has narrations within the main narrative.

Maggs narrates his own tale in the form of letters (*JM*81-85), (*JM*101-117), (*JM*167-171), (*JM*226-329), etc. written in invisible ink to his adoptive son Phipps.

i) Narratology

M. H. Abrams[17] elaborates that:

> Narratology denotes recent concerns with the general theory and practice of narrative in all literary forms. It deals especially with types of narrators, the identification of structural elements and their diverse modes of combination, recurrent narrative devices, and the analysis of the kinds of discourse by which a narrative gets told, as well as with the narrate – that is, the explicit or implied person or audience to whom the narrator addresses the narrative.

Narratology thus views a narrative as a systematic formal construction, unlike the earlier view of it being a fictional representation of life. Writers therefore aim at foregrounding the narrative medium and devices themselves, inorder to disrupt our regular expectations and responses to the writing in question.

As is the case with most postmodernist writers, Carey does experiment a lot with narrative devices. He challenges the authorial authority by disrupting our faith in the narrator. The veracity of the narration never appears to be in doubt till the reader is made aware of the narrator's credentials. With the narrator relinquishing authenticity and factuality, the reader is often betrayed. Neither the tale nor the teller has any credibility, and it all rests with the reader who has to be engaged in reading thereby inviting reader-response. Carey problematizes

narrative communication by making the narrator's position in the text ambivalent, thus making an allowance for the narrator to intermingle objectivity and subjectivity.

Carey makes constant references to the fictional status of the narrative in his novels. Larsson points out that "a device which is used to point to the ... narrative's status as fictional discourse, is the first person narrator."[18] *Bliss*, *Illywhacker*, *Oscar and Lucinda* and *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* all employ first person narrators. The genuineness of the account provided by these narrators is, however, questionable due to the unrealistically detailed knowledge of events and thoughts or feelings of the other characters that they possess and subsequently display. Thus, this "reveals the narrators themselves as fictional constructs."[19] In *Bliss*, the narrative voice is that of the children of Harry Joy and Honey Barbara. *Illywhacker* is a narration by the central character, Herbert Badgery himself. *Oscar and Lucinda*'s narrator is a descendant of Oscar, his great-grandchild. Tristan is the narrator of his story in *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith*. Larsson[20] believes that in these four novels "their narrators are evidence of how time has progressed after the story ended" since all these novels, with the exception of *Illywhacker*, are narrated long after the events that have to have occured.

In *Bliss* the narrator's identity is the last thing revealed to the reader in the novel. All along the reader is guided by the narrator under the impression that

it is a narration by an omniscient narrator. This provides occasions for the narrator to address the reader too. The identity of the narrator constitutes part of the plan of the novelist and serves to reorient the reader response to the novel. When the reader is made aware of the identity of the narrator, there is a realization that the story of Harry Joy has been passed on by his children making it theirs. Thus, in the process of making it their own story they have added and given the reader information Harry could not have possessed and thus not passed on.

The narrator in *Oscar and Lucinda* is Oscar's great-grandchild. The narration is done after almost a century after Oscar's death. Oscar's and Lucinda's story is narrated to the reader more or less chronologically. The reader is given historical evidence to support the veracity of the narration. Oscar's father is in 'the 1860 Britannica' (*O&L*7). Lucinda's father is also included 'in the Encyclopedia Britannica' (*O&L*80). However despite all these factual details to prove the truth of the narration, the reader is also given information that betrays an unrealistically intimate knowledge of all the characters and events. The narrator, being Oscar's great-grandchild, seems highly improbable to be in the know of such intimate details as to what transpired between Oscar and Lucinda when they almost kissed, or what Mr. Jeffries thought of Oscar, etc.

Revealing his identity at the beginning of the novel, the narrator leaves the reader in no doubt about the position he is speaking from. Occasionally the

narrator also seeks to pass implicit judgement on events or conditions in the narrative. He also comments on the received ideas of history. In *Oscar and Lucinda*, chapter 103, deals with the treatment received by the Aborigines from the settlers who traveled into Aborigine land on a pioneering expedition. The narration here is almost taken away from the narrator by a voice that the reader is informed is that of Kumbaingiri Billy, an Aborigine. This account is taken to be the truth by the narrator and is contrasted with the account given in historical records maintained by the settlers.

Tristan in *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* presents to the reader historical documents and background information, replete with fairly precise footnotes to prove the existence of the country of Efica. He takes great care to mention to the reader the exact dates of everything that happens in the novel. Yet, he reveals things that would be beyond his knowledge. Unlike the other novels, Tristan addresses a specific audience in *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith*, i.e., the citizens of Voorstand, an imperial power that exerts great influence over Efica. Having a specified audience, Tristan is more explicit and clear in what he desires to reveal. His foremost concern appears to be the need to tell a different, a more truthful version of his country's history and his own story too.

Herbert Badgery in *Illywhacker*, as a first person narrator, also betrays a detailed knowledge of the characters in the narration than is realistic. He admits this fallacy when he says that 'as I tell you these things I cannot

possibly know' (*I*165). He orders the events in a manner that is not chronological, shifting to different strands of the story as suits his narration most effectively. He is also the protagonist of the novel, one around whom all the characters revolve. He introduces himself to the reader at the beginning of the novel as 'a terrible liar' and emphatically stats that 'I have always been a liar. I say that early to set things straight. *Caveat emptor*. My age is the one fact you can rely on, and not because I say so, but because it has been publicly authenticated' (*I*11).

In *The Tax Inspector* and *Jack Maggs* Carey makes use of omniscient narrators. These narrators are thus allowed to drift from the consciousness of one character to another, make pertinent observations about the setting as well as provide vital information about the occurrences. They are also given the chance to make comments that would have a bearing on the course the narrator would want to chart out in the novel. They have the freedom to draw attention to any strand in the story that they may deem fit.

In *The Tax Inspector*, the narrator takes us over four important days in the Catchprice family. Threatened by tax ruin, the reader is made privy to the internal goings-on in the family. Secrets like the child-abuse prevalent tumble out in the course of the narration. The transformation that Benny, the youngest Catchprice, undergoes is emphasized, as is his new ethic of being in control.

Maria Takis, the tax inspector, is portrayed as the trigger to all the pent-up emotions and feelings lying dormant in the Catchprice clan.

Tobias Oates in *Jack Maggs* takes on an assignment to write the biography of the convict Jack Maggs. His narration runs through the course of the novel which is again a narration of the life of Maggs. In the account given by the omniscient narrator of the novel, Maggs returns to Australia to live upto a ripe old age. In Oates' account, Maggs dies in England without returning to Australia. Further, Oates' biography appears in seven editions each giving a different version of Maggs' end. The narrator in *Oscar and Lucinda* is the great-grandchild of Oscar who clearly states that he had long ago stopped trusting local history. The narration is further complicated by the fact that it has been handed down to him through three generations of his family.

In Carey's novels the role of the audience in the reception of a work is highlighted. The narrator-the text-reader relationship is of vital importance. The reader plays a greater role in making sense of the narrative.

> Fictionality, in Carey's novels, is primarily a product of the speaker's intention. When deciding to share his discourse with an audience, the author determines its status as fictional. The audience recognizes fictionality as a conventional mode and understands that the ensuing story is not to be interpreted as true or false.[21]

Culler too lays emphasis on the role of the reader when he states that interpretations of a text are achieved as per "the ways we [the readers] succeed in making various codes come together and cohere."[22]

Helen Daniel in her article on *Illywhacker* writes that "Carey sabotages our sense of order and sequence ... dislocating our sense of time and continuities"[23]. In his novels, by presenting events in an order that is not chronological, Carey strives to accentuate the artificiality of a narrative work. Larsson comments:

> far from appearing disorganized or muddled, Carey's novels are like well-structured mazes: intricate and complicated, with their excessive wealth of detail and illusions of alternative options, but carefully organized and perfectly rational.[24]

The chronology in the novels is often jumbled with a constant shift in focus from one character or situation to another. This allows the narrative to allude to its own artificiality where there is a deliberate placing of events in places where they will receive maximum elucidatory power. Larsson feels that "chronology in Carey's novels is carefully manipulated inorder to highlight Kermodean 'moments of significance' and form a foundation for a coming revelation"[25].

Morson in *Narrative and Freedom* indicates the device of foreshadowing that "involves backward causation, which means that the future must already be there, must somehow exist substantially enough to send signs backward"[26]. All fictions have an ending and this ending is signalled at different points in the narrative. Foreshadowing is a strategy that is used by writers to signal these endings. Thus the reader is expected to wait till the end of the narration to have a complete and fully intelligible understanding of the narration. Foreshadowing can be identified only after the incident hinted at, occurs. Larsson states:

> Foreshadowing, then, is identified after the fact, when whatever event is signaled has happened, when we have the opportunity to see what we have read in a new light. The end rewrites the text and allows us to identify seemingly innocent descriptions of scenery as foreboding and ominous.[27]

Herbert Badgery in *Illywhacker* claims he has 'a salesman's sense of history ...the intervals on my whirling clock are dictated by the time it takes to make a deal, and *that* is the basic unit of my time' (*I*343). All of Herbert's actions are calculated ones. His lies lend credence to all his actions. Constantly getting into deals as a salesman would, Herbert manages to even negotiate his own independence. In the last pages of the novel we see the salesman's sense of history being proved when he is set up as an exhibit by his grandson Hissao. The Pet Emporium is an extension of the lies that were engendered by Badgery

and that have now gained gigantic proportions. Badgery now waits for the end of the lie, i.e., the destruction of the Pet Emporium, to begin. When it finally begins, Badgery explains to the reader that with the sound of the 'crashing glass' (*I*600), the end begins. The end will reveal that Hissao and the Pet emporium are all lies and thus they will be done away with. They are only a mirage.

In *Oscar and Lucinda*, Oscar's death is foreshadowed twice. The first time is when he sets out to transport the glass church to Belligen. It occurs in one of his opium induced dreams. Oscar fears the water. Since they have to cross various rivers which would otherwise be problematic for Oscar, Jeffries keeps him constantly sedated with opium, so that most of the time he is drugged and not in his senses. This is also to humiliate him. It is at that point that Oscar dreams that he is 'somehow inside his father's aquarium' (*O&L*464). The second instance is when he is seduced by the narrator's great-grandmother. The reader is informed that after she seduces him and attends to him, Oscar looked 'like a tropical fish in his father's aquarium' (*O&L*499). Oscar meets his end when he returns to the glass church, despite his phobia about water, to pray after he has been seduced by Miriam. He also marries her. When one of the rafts on which the church stood snaps and the church sinks, Oscar is trapped inside it helplessly. The crumbling glass church is described as 'aquarium glass' and Oscar has 'a vision of his father's wise and smiling face, peering in at him' (*O&L*4510).

When Jack Catchprice in *The Tax Inspector* tells Maria that 'the angels are not winning' (*TI*202), he is foreshadowing the end of Benny Catchprice. Benny has been trying to transform himself into an angel and even has an angel's wing tattooed on his back. Jack's comment thus suggests that Benny will not be victorious in his undertaking as is evident when Maria manages to subdue him and save her baby. It is only after Benny is dead that Maria notices Benny's tattoo and thinks it to be a serpent. 'Then she saw it was not a serpent but an angel, or half an angel – a single wing tattooed on his smooth, boy's skin – it was long and delicate and it ran from his shoulder to his buttock – an angel wing' (*TI*279). Jack's statement also indicates that idealism will not win and that Maria's battle against corruption is a losing one. The end of the novel sees Maria inadvertently giving in to her disillusionment. She is further implicated because she has linked herself to Jack, and in doing so, has already compromised herself.

In *Jack Maggs*, Oates' sister-in-law, Lizzie's death presents the element of foreshadowing. Having conceived Oates' illegitimate child, Lizzie takes the abortive pills that Oates has procured for her through Maggs to abort her unborn child. She does not realize that her sister, Oates' wife, has put the same pills she brought into her tea and that she has thus taken a fatal double dose of the abortive pills. When Maggs and Oates are together burning and destroying all the material Oates has collected on Maggs, Lizzie contemplates:

> It was then she understood that her life had always been travelling towards this point. There was always to be this storm. The poor woman was always going to fall. This moment had lain there waiting since the day when Tobias had first come to court her sister at her father's house in Amersham. (*JM*333-34)

Similarly when 'the black ash' (*JM*334) from the burning of Oates' material falls on her, it is indicative of what the end of her and her unborn child will be. She ultimately dies from a mishandled abortion, an overdose of abortive pills. When Oates visits the mortuary he sees one of the dead bodies covered with a white muslin cloth 'the same material as Lizzie's night gown .... The muslin felt exactly as it did when it clothed his sister-in-law's young body' (*JM*145). When Lizzie dies, all her clothes are burnt in the fireplace by Oates.

The end of Maggs that Oates finally lends to his *The Death of Jack Maggs* is also foreshadowed by different incidents that Oates has. The first one is the visit to the mortuary inorder to research an article about a fire which claimed the lives of several children. It is here that he conceives the end for Maggs:

> God save him, *this* was how Jack Maggs would end. He did not know how he knew this, or why this appalling spectre forced itself into his mind .... This horrifying vision: Jack Maggs trapped inside

> his burning house, a whirl of fire blazing all about him ... He had glimpsed the ending of his book (*JM*146-47).

This is the same vision he sees on the night of Lizzie's death when Oates is burning Lizzie's clothes and the sheets she has used to destroy all evidence of the cause of her death.

> In those flames he saw, as he would throughout his life ... the wraith of their dead child, ...Lizzie herself ... folding into the horrible figure of decay.
>
> ... He poked at the black linen and found in it one abhorrent face ...
>
> It was Jack Maggs, the murderer, who now grew in the flames. Jack Maggs on fire. Jack Maggs flowering, threatening, poisoning ...
>
> It was now, on the seventh of May, in the darkest night of his life, that Jack Maggs began to take the form the world would later know. (*JM*354-55)

Maggs never meets the death that Oates accords him. Neither does he ever read Oates' book as he dies three years before it is published. Oates' end of Maggs is more a resolution of his own story, i.e., his life has been ruined, burnt alongwith Lizzie's clothing.

A prolepsis is defined by Gerard Genette as "any narrative manoeuvre that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later"[28]. Prolepsis attempts to present a future event as if it had already occurred. It helps the narrator to manipulate and control the course of the narration as desired. Carey in his novels makes extensive use of prolepses to chart the course of his novels and the readers' expectations.

In *Bliss* Carey exhibits the "Marquez-like manner of anticipating future action through changes of tense and the use of the future in the past"[29]. The first sentence of the novel reads 'Harry Joy was to die three times, but it was his first death which was to have the greatest effect on him, and it is this first death which we shall now witness' (*B*11). Similarly David's introduction that the narrator recounts refers to him as 'Harry's son, who ... contemplated arrest and murder by knife; he stood before these visions with his hands clutched, his body rigid, while the lightning danced around the nearby hills' (*B*33). Another instance is when the reader is informed that 'when he was about to die in a foreign country, years later ...' (*B*29). Both these instances serve to inform the reader of the fate of Harry and David.

In *Illywhacker* and *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* the story is narrated in "one enormous flashback"[30]. Thus in *Illywhacker*, Herbert Badgery introduces himself as being 'something of a celebrity' (*I*11), who is kept on display in a

cage by his grandson Hissao. Even though he reveals himself to be a hundred and thirty-nine years old, he states that 'it's only the curiosity that keeps me alive: to see what my dirty old body will do next' (*I*11). Thus the reader is warned of an eventful life that Badgery has lived and which tale he is going to narrate. As Herbert reaches the end of his narration he conditions the reader to expect The Badgery clan to have 'more interesting times ahead' (*I*600). In *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith*, Tristan's narration begins after he has lived for around thirty years of his life. He also tells us the story of his life till then. While talking of his birth, Tristan affirms that 'the birth was fast and easy. The life was to be another matter' (*ULoTS*11). As Tristan nears the end of his narration, he also brings to the readers' notice that 'at that time, although I did not know it, my unusual life was really just beginning' (*ULoTS*414).

In *Oscar and Lucinda*, the narrator brings to the notice of the reader that:

> There would have been no church at Glennifer if it had not been for a Christmas pudding. There would have been no daguerreotype of Oscar Hopkins on the banks of the Bellinger. I would not have been born. There would be no story to tell. (*O*&L7)

This reveals that somehow the Christmas pudding and the church play a major role in the existence of the narrator. Another instance is when Lucinda's mother is upset with her for destroying an expensive doll. The reader is told

that 'the air was filled with a violence whose roots she would only glimpse years later when she lost her fortune to my great-grandmother and was made poor overnight' (*O&L*81). Thus the reader is subtly informed that the love story of Oscar and Lucinda will not be successful, as Oscar will marry someone else.

Maria Takis' continued relationship with the Catchprice clan and more specifically with Jack Catchprice is hinted at in one of the prolepsis in *The Tax Inspector*. The narrator notifies the reader that:

> it was not the last time Maria would judge herself to be too tense, too critical with Jack Catchprice, to feel herself too full of prejudices and preconceptions that would not let her accept what was pleasant and generous in his character. (*TI*194).

The indication is thus that Maria's life will still not be without the Catchprices even after the events in the story have come to a conclusion.

Jack Maggs also has an important prolepsis. The reader is told that when at Wallingford with Maggs, Oates 'wrote the famous line with which, thirty years later, *The Death of Maggs* would finally begin' (*JM*252). Thus the reader can be sure that even though Maggs attempted to destroy all evidence of his story with Oates, Oates was still victorious over him as he managed to publish a

book on Maggs' life. Another instance is when Maggs promises Ma Britten that he will come to see her, the narrator utters that 'there is no doubt that Jack Maggs planned to keep his promise, but the morrow held events he could not foresee. Three weeks would pass before he would call at Cecil Street again' (*JM*8). Thus the reader is alerted that Maggs' quest will not be a smooth and successful one.

ii) Intertextuality

According to Abrams[31], the term *Intertextuality*, popularized particularly by Julia Kristeva:

> is used to signify the multiple ways in which any one literary text is made up of other texts, by means of its open or covert citations and allusions, its repetitions and transformations of the formal and substantive features of earlier texts, or simply its unavoidable participation in the common stock of linguistic and literary conventions and procedures that are always already in place and constitute the discourses into which we are born.

Kristeva formulates that "any text is in fact an 'intertext' – the site of an intersection of numberless other texts, and existing only through its relations to other texts"[32].

The concept of intertextuality assumes that every text exists in relation to other texts. Michel Foucault observes:

> The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full-stop, beyond its eternal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network …

> The book is not simply the object that one holds in one's hands ... Its unity is variable and relative. [33]

Roland Barthes, in this relation states:

> A text is ... a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations ... The writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them.[34]

Writers such as Carey, who are products of post-colonial cultures, are acutely aware of their past with its binary oppositions of colonizer and colonized, oppressor and oppressed, etc. In Carey's fiction intertextuality operates within the mode of parody, a technique generally employed by postmodern writers. It installs and subverts. Thus the reader has a greater responsibility of being knowledgeable of the past so as to read texts within texts. The relationship between the reader and the text assumes primary importance. The retold stories are presented from a newer perspective leading to questions on the veracity of past narrations.

Bliss is the tale of Australian entrepreneurship gone sour due to American hegemony and materialism. The title Carey furnishes for the novel is in itself an ironical one. Harry's life till he escapes to the rainforest is purported to be a blissful one, according to the title. However a reading of the novel does away with all such illusions. Harry's life till his first death, seemed a happy one to him. When the novel begins he has just undergone this experience, and the novel deals extensively with Harry's struggle against all the 'Actors' in Hell.

Carey makes use of several Australian aboriginal cultural myths like the oral Hopi myth. Harry arrives at Bog Onion Road after his flight from the city. After around six months of hard living at Bog Onion Road, Harry is ready to build a place for himself. On the morning of the day on which he was to chop down the five tallow trees he had marked for the building of his house, Harry sneaks out earlier to the site inorder to perform the ritual of the oral Hopi myth. This ritual involved placing a few stones at the base of the tree to be cut and explaining or rather seeking permission from the tree to be used. It also added a promise to be made by the tree cutter to grow another tree in its place. Harry initially, 'shy in the presence of the tree ... did not use the full words' (*B*286). But with encouragement from Daze 'he used the proper words, the formal words, as they are known' (*B*287). Thus, placing the stones at the base of the tree Harry, with 'face burned bright red, eyes bright' (*B*287) recited to the tree:

> You have grown large and powerful. I have to cut you. I know you have knowledge in you from what happens around you. I am sorry, but I need your strength and power. I will give you these stones, but I must cut you down. These stones and my thoughts will make sure another tree will take your place. (*B*287)

Obviously, he attempts to foreground the historical as well as the literary heritage of the country's colonial past, at the same time transgressing it from within with the use of irony and parody.

Illywhacker has the country's history retold. It parallels the life of the protagonist Herbert Badgery, covering the period from 1896, when he is ten years old, to somewhere in the 1980s. Alongwith narrating the life story of the protagonist and his family, it creates the history of Australia, passing insightful comments on the veracity of historical narratives that exist. In short, *Illywhacker* uses the history of Australia to debunk notions of Australia that have existed.

Illywhacker draws on the Australian story-telling or the spieling ability. The novel has many stories culminating together unified by one figure, that of Herbert Badgery. Seeking to describe Australian history Carey quotes Mark Twain in one of the epigrams of the novel that describes Australian history as

> almost always picturesque; ... the chief novelty the country has to offer ... does not read like history, but like the most beautiful lies; and all of a fresh new sort, no mouldy old stale ones. It is full of surprises and adventures, the incongruities, and contradictions, and incredibilities; but they are all true, they all happened.

The immigrant experience is also explored in *Illywhacker*. Herbert refers to 'his head full of stories about John Chinaman: opium, slavery, how they ate the hands of Christian babies' (*I*209). Carey alludes to events like the massacre of Chinese miners at Lambing Flat by English miners through the character of Goon Tse Ying. Goon dares to adopt the orphaned Herbert as his 'little Englishman' (*I*211) despite opposition from his community. He wants to teach Herbert the 'magician's gift' (*I*216) 'to show you the terror of we Chinese at Lambing Flat. Because it is only possible to disappear by feeling the terror ... I am giving you this gift as revenge' (*I*216). He re-enacts the massacre at Lambing Flat for Herbert and makes Herbert learn the terror of the Chinese miners.

Illywhacker also draws on numerous historical and literary myths. Herbert makes his living by selling T Models. He was an accomplished salesman who 'sold T Models with such ease' (*I*60). Yet he isn't happy doing it because he tells the reader:

> I loathed Fords on principle, that I was eaten up with selling them, that I did it from laziness because the Ford had the name, because it was American and people were more easily persuaded to buy a foreign product then a local one (*I*61).

The Summit car was known as Australia's very own indigenous car. In *Illywhacker*, Badgery sets out to promote the car as Australia's own, yet he has to back off and admit that it is not good enough. Even though he is aware that the T Model is a better car, his feelings of nationalism make him favour the more indigenous car. All he can say is that the T Model is preferred by all because they had an agency in Geelong while the Australian-made cars like the Summit did not. At his first meeting with Jack McGrath, Herbert manages to convince Jack McGrath about the feasibility of setting up 'a factory that was going to build Australian-designed aircraft' (*I*34). Herbert thus constantly appears preoccupied with Australian ownership and dreams of an independent Australian industry.

Oscar and Lucinda presents the history of imperialism and the civilizing ideal of the British in Australia. The pioneering abilities of the British are revealed to be false. Tales narrated by the Aborigines foreground their plight too. In chapter 103 Kumbaingiri Billy gives the reader his own people's version of what happened when the white man came to his land with glass. This narration is a different point of view from the versions recorded in history. Another

instance when the narrator of *Oscar and Lucinda* comments on received versions of history is when he refers to another episode of elimination of the blacks that the white man conducted:

> Darkwood, for instance, they will tell you at the Historical Society, is called Darkwood because of the darkness of the foliage, but it was not so long ago you could hear people call it Darkies' Point, and not so long ago before that when Horace Clarke's grandfather went up there with his mates – all the old families should record this when they are arguing about who controls this shire – and pushed an entire tribe of aboriginal men and women and children off the edge. (*O&L*2)

One of the novel's most obvious intertexts is the biography of Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son,* of which Carey states in his acknowledgement of *Oscar and Lucinda*

> I am much indebted to … and lastly, of course, to Edmund Gosse from whose life I borrowed Plymouth Brethren, a Christmas Pudding and a father who was proud of never having read Shakespeare.

Carey also quotes directly from Edmund Gosse's father, Philip Henry Gosse's book *A Naturalist's Rambles on the Devonshire Coast*, which appear in book form as *Hennacombe Rambles* authored by Theophilus Hopkins.

The Tax Inspector reveals the darker side of Sydney that is never revealed. Corrupt businessmen, builders, mafia, etc. are all exposed in the novel. It also portrays the immigrant experience. It also tries to pierce through the inner sanctum of the family to reveal the abuse that is so prevalent.

In *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* Tristan tells his tale from the point of view of a deformed individual. His tale possesses the poignancy that comes out of feeling from the heart. His reaction to all that is around him, is specially noteworthy. His portrayal of himself as an individual having normal feelings, passions, desires, etc. despite his physical deformities is commendable.

Intertextuality is at full play in Carey's *Jack Maggs* which largely echoes Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. The author of *Great Expectations*, Charles Dickens becomes a persona in *Jack Maggs* as Tobias Oates who writes the flawed biography of Maggs. While Magwitch in *Great Expectations* is portrayed as an essentially evil persona, his prototype Maggs in *Jack Maggs* is largely humanized. The play of texts within texts is essential for subverting imperial discourse.

Carey has infused all his novels with the Australian idiom. One finds words like 'illywhacker', 'chook', etc. used extensively.

iii) Magic Realism

Magic realism challenges the traditional perception of an ordered and rational world where reality is in attendance. In shunning a conventional linear plot, the magic realist presents a bizarre configuration of events and stories, many of them often exploring myths.

In keeping with postmodernist concerns that debunk notions of objectivity and verisimilitude, Carey has used magic realism extensively. He has clearly admitted that Marquez and other practitioners of magic realism have largely influenced him. In the process he ends up constructing worlds that seem real but are bizarre enough to be deemed unreal too. Carey's novels have realistic presentations of historical facts alongside fantastic and unrealistic elements.

Carey has admitted that he finds "reporting reality" boring and would much rather construct his own[35]. In the same interview he goes on to claim that:

> [he likes to] turn the world around to odd angles, to transform reality to make it clearer, like looking at the world from between your legs (everything becomes dislocated and the relations of things to each other become more apparent).[36]

The amalgamation of unrealistic elements with realistic presentations is so complete that the reader is reminded of the fictionality of the narration. As Krassnitzer states:

> They [the readers] are neither fully drawn into the text, nor can they totally flee into the realms of fantasy, but have to be aware that through their reading they participate in the creation of a fictional reality which comments on the actual reality they live in.[37]

Harry Joy in *Bliss* 'was to die three times, but it was his first death which was to have the greatest effect on him' (*B*11). This clinical death lasted nine minutes which Harry watched 'in a calm, curious, very detached way' (*B*11). He observes himself dying and he rises 'higher and higher' (*B*11) discovering on the way that 'there were many different worlds, layer upon layer, as thin as filo pastry' (*B*12) and recognizing 'the worlds of pleasure and worlds of pain, bliss and punishment, Heaven and Hell' (*B*12). In Harry's childhood that was 'suckled on stories' (*B*18):

> The sky was full of Gods and Indians and people smiled at him, touched him, stroked him, and brought him extraordinary gifts from the world outside where there were, he knew, exotic bazaars filled with people in gowns, strange fruits piled high, the air redolent with spices, ... and, far away, New York, its glass towers trembling in an

> ecstasy of magic which was to become, his father said, one day, after the next flood, a splendid book read by all mankind with wonder. (*B*19)

Vance also narrates to Harry 'the story of the Vision Splendid' (*B*20) during the deluge that came about when all prayed for rain. He tells Harry of his

> mother, her long black hair blacker than coal, standing in the front of a boat which was piled high with all the things from the church vestry ... holding the cross and her eyes, ... such luminous eyes (*B*21)

Harry, after his first death, anticipates living in Hell. While in the hospital before undergoing surgery, Harry is terrified of dying and of the prospect of going to Hell. In fact he is so convinced of the possibility of a living Hell that he explores options he could possibly take to circumvent it to the point of 'making a list of religions' (*B*44) to check a God who would offer salvation from Hell.

While at the Milanos, a circus elephant trained to sit on red boxes, sits on Harry's red Fiat making Harry 'the first person whose car has really been sat on by an elephant. What a story' (*B*71). When Harry attempts to explain this to

the police who detain him, they refuse to believe his 'funny stories' (*B*75) and demand 'something original' (*B*75).

When Harry's family tries to get him committed into a mental asylum, the doctors take Alex Duval by mistake. When Harry is taken later, at the asylum, their identities are exchanged, and Harry behaves like Alex and Alex like Harry. When a problem arises on the Social welfare computer because of the presence of two Harry Joys, Alex convinces him to take on the name of Alex. With their identities interchanged, the reader is made privy to the changes that come over both.

At the beginning of the novel, Herbert Badgery, the narrator, introduces himself as being 'a hundred and thirty-nine years old and something of a celebrity' (*I*11). He informs us that

> independent experts have poked me and prodded me and scraped around my foul-smelling mouth ...measured my ankles and looked at my legs ... photographed me ... I think I'm growing tits. They stuck their calipers into me and measured them (*I*11).

Again, towards the end of the novel, Badgery claims that he is 'growing tits' (*I*587). At the end of the novel, Badgery consoles Hissao by 'put[ting] him to

my breast ... with my swollen blue-veined breast I give my offspring succour – the milk of dragons from my witch's tit' (*I*600).

When at the McGrath's, Badgery refers to his ability 'like Goon Tse Ying, capable of becoming invisible, sliding under doors, lifting rugs from floors on windless nights...' (*I*57). At the beginning of Book 2 he again mentions 'the ability to become invisible' (*I*209) that Goon Tse Ying refers to as 'a magician's gift... [that] is both good and evil' (*I*216). Goon teaches this art to Badgery only to show him 'the terror of the Chinese at Lambing Flat [and] because it is only possible to disappear by feeling the terror' (*I*216). Thus Badgery tells the reader that 'I disappeared and the world disappeared from me. I did not escape from fear, but went to the place where fear lives ... I was nowhere' (*I*220). Goon also teaches him that 'if you make yourself feel the terror when there is no terror to feel, you are making a dragon ... if you make dragons in you head you are not strong enough and you will have great misfortune' (*I*221). When Badgery makes a dragon to gain the attention of Leah,

> the dragon came and it was bigger than the dragon I knew before ... thirty-four years of locked-up terror came spurting at me and I knew I would drown in it. I tried to talk, but the dragon had me and dragged me away ... (*I*233).

This disappearing trick is also attempted by Badgery's children, Charles and Sonia. Badgery reveals that it is only Sonia who probably 'knew this was not a trick' (*I*291). Sonia holds on to a picture of the Assumption of the Virgin on which 'the Virgin rose above a great cloud of smoke while down below the adoring crowd raised their heads to what they could not see' (*I*337) and claims that 'she herself intended to do likewise and that her father Herbert Badgery could do it any time he liked' (*I*337). Where Charles gave up the disappearing trick when he found out he was unsuccessful at it, Sonia persisted. She 'wished to dress like the Virgin Mary' (*I*360), arranging herself exactly like the Virgin in the picture of the Assumption of the Virgin. When at Clunes, near Ballarat, Sonia attempts the disappearing trick when alone with Charles, and disappears never to return. Badgery informs us that 'Clunes, in case you do not know it, is bored full of mine shafts' (*I*361).

At Phoebe's attempt to abort Charles by consuming poison, the reader is made privy to the fact that Phoebe's attempt was unsuccessful only because Charles 'was stubbornly clinging on, holding out against the raging seas that threatened to sweep him from his foetus world' (*I*181). Charles' stubborn quality is attributed to this event by his wife and Badgery too accepts the fact that 'it was Charles who fought and won the battle' (*I*181).

Badgery tells the reader about the ghost of his father-in-law, Jack, that he saw very often during Phoebe's first pregnancy. This ghost:

> was not a single solid shape, but rather a confluence of lights nestling in a lighter glow … It sat at the kitchen table with the snake. The snake slithered like a necklace around the ghost, entered into it and streamed out of it. You could see the snake's innards pulsing: liquids, solids, legs of frogs and other swarming substances with tails like tadpoles. The ghost was Jack. (*I*194)

This ghost caused the death of a rooster who died of fright and 'smelt of snake' (*I*194). The night when Charles was born, Badgery observes the ghost do 'a jig, a little dance, hop-ho, a shearer's prance, around the house and out across the mud of Dudley's Flat' (*I*195) never to be seen by Badgery again. But Badgery states that 'as Charles grew and came slowly into focus I saw exactly what had happened: Charles was Jack with bandy legs on' (*I*196).

Badgery gets hold of a bleeding finger of Goon in a scuffle while he is stealing Goon's *The Book of Dragons*. When he is arrested Sergeant Moth takes the finger and later gives it to Badgery in a Vegemite jar with formaldehyde as 'a souvenir' (*I*412). Moth is disgusted with the finger in the bottle, and Badgery when he has ownership of the bottle avoids it and hides it from his view. When he sees it after some time, he notices 'the liquid in the bottle turned gin-clear … [and] what looked like a wart behind the knuckle' (*I*414). Later whenever he happened to see it he 'could not help noticing that the wart was growing

bigger' (*I*414). This takes over his thoughts and he keeps having glances at it. He noticed that:

> the finger changed. It changed all the time. It changed like a face in a dream [till one day] I woke early and found it filled with bright blue creatures that darted in and out of delicate filigree forests, like tropical fish feeding amongst the coral (*I*415).

Years later it is revealed to the reader that Emma, Badgery's daughter-in-law and Charles' wife, is in possession of an old Vegemite Jar. This jar contained 'a tiny foetus ... no more than an inch long' (*I*432). She told Hissao that it was 'his half-brother and which ... was half goanna and half human' (*I*432). Where earlier Hissao had looked at the formless and unpleasant contents of the bottle as a ritual, on this occasion when he looked closely he found that:

> it had fingers (they were perfectly formed) and a face in which you could make out features which had that mixture of soft-mouthed vulnerability and blandness that is the hallmark of the unborn. Where you might expect toes there were long claws, thin, elegant, shining black like ebony; there was also a tail which was long, striped, with very obvious glistening scales (*I*564).

Emma holds onto it very dearly, protecting it from being destroyed by Charles. On Charles' death, Badgery gains possession of it again. For him, the jar contained 'a dragon, a solid being, two inches tall … a nasty piece of work' (*I*579) that killed his son. Yet when finally Leah sees the jar, it was back in Emma's possession 'its lid now rustfree … it contained filigree, like coral, and bright blue fish were flitting in and out of it' (*I*586). The dragon had thus been let loose by Badgery and Emma.

Hissao, is given a Japanese name because he is 'snub-nosed and almond-eyed' (*I*432) and has the features of a Japanese. Badgery attributes Hissao's features to the fact that his birth coincided with 'the Japanese bombing Darwin and Emma [not being] a stupid woman' (*I*432).

It was Hissao who came up with the idea of the pet shop. He got the idea when he perceived 'the family he had worked so dangerously to support for what they were – an ugly menagerie as evil as anything you might ever see, fleetingly, before your eyes in a bottle' (*I*594). His hatred of them all made him plan revenge against his family. Thus in 'The Best Pet Shop in the World' (*I*598), owned by the Mitsubishi Company, Hissao has:

> put so many of his fellow countrymen and women on display. Yet he has not only fed them and paid them well, he has chosen them, the types, with great affection … The very success of the exhibit is in

their ability to move and talk naturally within the confines of space (*I*599).

The narrator of *Oscar and Lucinda* attributes his existence to 'a Christmas pudding' (*O&L*7). Theophilus Hopkins, Oscar's father refers to it as the 'flesh of which idols eat' (*O&L*9). The narrator himself states that 'you would not think it was not such an abnormality were it not for the fact that it was cooked in the cottage of my great-great-grandfather …' (*O&L*7). The occasion leads to an altercation with his father, which initiates the doubts that Oscar begins to have about all his father says. Angry with his father over the denial of the pudding, Oscar 'talked to God' (*O&L*19) 'if it is your desire that your flock eat pudding in celebration of Thy birth as man, then show Thy humble supplicant a sign …. if it be thy will that Thy people eat pudding, smite him [i.e., his father]' (*O&L*20). When he sees his father's wound in the thigh, Oscar realises that 'his father had been smitten' (*O&L*20). Silently he goes about with his tasks thereon 'frightened of what he had begun' (*O&L*21).

Oscar is enamoured of his friend Tommy Croucher's story of angels. What confirms his belief in the reality of the presence of an angel is the sight of 'what the angel had left behind … three small stones which made the points of a triangle … they stood for 'Father', 'Son', and 'Holy Ghost' … the sign was the mathematical symbol for 'therefore it follows'' (*O&L*20). He thus comes to place great emphasis on the 'sign' (*O&L*20). Doubting his father's beliefs,

Oscar endeavours to find the path that God had preordained for him. Thus he 'made the 'witches' markin's' ... a structure for divining the true will of God' (*O&L*32). Modelled roughly on the game of hopscotch, it remains the sole guiding force for Oscar's decision to go against his father and join the Anglicans.

Oscar, possessing traits overtly feminine, can never live his life free from taunts. Right from his childhood, he is at the mercy of the world where he is constantly berated for his effeminate nature. He was 'made to eat dirt ... sing songs he was not allowed to sing ... put coarse mud on his skin because they could not bear it so soft and white' (*O&L*41). Later at Oriel he is called as 'Odd Bod' (*O&L*105), and made to endure all kinds of privations like having 'water poured into his bed ... his room had been made a venue for a rat hunt ...' (*O&L*105). Always possessing a great fear of the sea, he undertakes a voyage to Australia to perform missionary duties. He boards the Leviathan in a cage. As a clergyman, he is defrocked over baseless allegations which he never clarifies because of his delusion that it was a punishment for wrongs he had probably committed. Even the loss of Lucinda's love and his marriage to Miriam is perceived by Oscar as an obligation due to his wrongful seduction of the innocent Miriam, whereas the truth was the opposite, it was Miriam who had seduced Oscar.

Glass assumes gargantuan proportions in the novel. Lucinda, enamoured with the Prince Rupert drops wants to own a glassworks. She admires the Crystal Palace and 'her head was burning with dreams of glass, shapes she saw in the very edges of her vision, structures whose function she had not even begun to guess. She would build a little pyramid of glass' (*O&L*287). Desiring passionately to 'build something Extraordinary and Fine from glass and cast iron ... Glass laced with steel, spun like a spider-web' (*O&L*365-67) she holds on to her dream. This desire is given shape by Oscar's suggestion of a glass church that could be packed in crates and thus enable them to 'transport an entire cathedral and assemble it across the mountains' (*O&L*390). This highly impractical scheme, where the glass church would have to travel in uncharted territory to reach its destination, is agreed upon by both Oscar and Lucinda as a wager to finally declare their love for each other.

Hassal[38] says of *The Tax Inspector*:

> surrounded as it is by the halo of Carey's surreal imagination, the mimetic detail is also scrupulously precise, as Sue Gough observes: "[Carey] knows, like God, the size of the bubbles in Dom Perignon, the order numbers for spare motor parts, the smell of gelignite, the quality of the pain of a birth contraction, how many patterns a good drummer can keep going." This gritty, police-court realism, and the

> relatively secure and authorized status of the narration, make its content all the more starkly challenging.

In this novel, Carey has attempted to bring out the reality of Sydney, a city that thrives on "corruption and abuse, and which harbours little justice and precious little love"[39]. In doing so, Carey has merged the waking world and the nightmare thus generating "the effect of collapsing the boundary between ... dreams and life"[40], disturbing the reader.

On the Monday following the Sunday on which he was fired, the reader meets Benny who has undergone a 'personal transformation' (*TT*18). A careless worker at the workshop, Benny decides to transform himself into a smart and smooth salesman who would take care of their inheritance, Catchprice Motors.

> His rat-tailed hair was now a pure or poisonous white, cut spiky short, but – above the little shell-flat ears – swept upwards with clear sculpted brush strokes, like atrophied wings (*TT*19).

Frieda Catchprice's, the eighty year old matriarch of the Catchprice clan, roams around with gelignite in her bag that she carries along with her all the time. A lady who has always been the driving force behind her husband's initiatives, she has sacrificed her desire for a flower farm for a motor business. Realising the folly of her actions later in life she is always threatening to blow

up the business with the gelignite she has been carrying around in her bag right from her unmarried days when she began to bottle up her resentment against her parents. When she finally does use it, the gelignite is there for so many years in her bag that, according to her own admission 'you can see it's old by how it sweats. When it's like this you can let it off just by throwing it' (*TI*95).

When Benny tells Vish that he had 'changed' (*TI*18), he was referring to the changes that he underwent due to the ''Self-Actualization' cassettes' (*TI*21). These cassettes guided the individual through a series of visualizing exercises meant to better self-esteem and self-confidence. According to the instructions, thus, Benny was required to be 'descending the imaginary coloured stairways to the mental image on the imaginary Sony Trinitron which showed the object of his desire' (*TI*21). Maria also uses these exercises to help her make it through her rough patch during the later days of her pregnancy.

Woodcock asserts that "*The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* is undoubtedly the strangest of Carey's novels. It marks a return to the overt alternative world-building … with their fantastic and fable-like scenarios"[41]. In this novel Carey has created two fictitious countries replete with their own calendar, myths, etc. The readers addressed are the population of a fictional country. Efica is 'a country so unimportant … a name so unmemorable … remains, nonetheless, the home of nearly three million of the earth's people' (*ULoTS*5). Voorstand is the superior country, more powerful where the citizens 'stand with your hand

over your heart when the Great Song is played, you daily watch new images of your armies in the vids and zines' (*ULoTS*5).

Tristan's birth was a very novel and unusual affair. Felicity, Tristan's mother, 'when her waters broke ... quietly excused herself [from the rehearsal of a Scottish play] and walked out of the Feu Follet without telling anyone where she was going' (*ULoTS*7). While walking towards the hospital she saw the Voorstand Sirkus in the process of construction and all her anger towards the Sirkus flooded her being. At this moment 'as the great slick machine of Sirkus rose before her, her muscles came crushing down upon my brain box' (*ULoTS*10). After this contraction 'she limped through the confusion of the circus ... up the front steps of the Mater Hospital' (*ULoTS*10-11) where Tristan was born.

Tristan also narrates the process of his birth from his mother's womb. The reader is informed that:

> When she [Felicity] came down the brick ramp in Gazette Street, things started happening faster than she had expected. Oxytocin entered her bloodstream like a ten-ton truck and all the pretty soft striped muscles of her womb turned hostile, contracting on me like they planned to crush my bones. I was caught in a rip. I was dumped. I was shoved into the birth canal, head first, my arm still pinned

> behind my ear. My ear got folded like an envelope. My head was held so hard it felt, I swear it, like the end of life and not its glorious beginning (*ULoTS*7).

When Felicity laid her eyes on Tristan for the first time she 'put her hand across her mouth' (*ULoTS*17) and wondered 'I am the mother' (*ULoTS*17). He was:

> a gruesome little thing ... so truly horrible to look at that the audience can see the witches must struggle to control their feelings of revulsion. He is small, not small like a baby, smaller, more like one of those wrinkled furless dogs they show on television talk shows. His hair is fair, straight, queerly thick. His eyes are pale, a quartz-bright white. They bulge intensely in his face. He has a baby's nose – but in the lower part of his severely triangular face there is, it seems, not sufficient skin. His face pulls at itself. He has no lips, but a gap in the skin that sometimes shows his toothless gums (*ULoTS*31-32).

Despite all his physical deformities, in Tristan resides a brain that works as any normal human one would. He has his dreams, his wishes, his affections, desires, passions, etc. which are all swept away and denied to him by his deformity.

This novel can be approached as "a myth-making fantasy"[42]. The Sirkus culture that Carey invents replete with all its extravagance is the stuff of fantasy with its skyscrapers and domes, etc. The story narrated displays "fabulatory extravagance"[43]. With giant vid screens erected, the Sirkus was:

> looming high above our heads, halfway up its gleaming shaft, was a mixing booth, a glass-walled, air-conditioned cube which … housed the hologram projectors, the computer consoles, the mixing board. (*ULoTS*164).

There is also the 'Water Sirkus' (*ULoTS*335) where the 'walls of the tent are made from water' (*ULoTS*335). At the Water Sirkus

> the BUSINESS-GJENT was sitting on a chair. As he opened his zine, SPOOK-GANGER DROOL materialized behind him, softly, subtly, like smoke. So deftly did he materialize that I was sure he was a hologram image, but then the ghoulish drool snickered and produced a very solid rope. (*ULoTS*338-39)

With very unlikely events like keeping the Gjent submerged in water without air for minutes, having fountains of water rising from toilets, etc. form the opening part. The show too is a 'breathless, relentless entertainment'

(*ULoTS*341). The final act was a performance 'beneath the water .... [where] the performers said their lines underwater' (*ULoTS*342). Tristan comments that he 'had witnessed one of those technical feats, the invention of which had probably resulted in the form of entertainment we had just witnessed' (*ULoTS*342).

In *Jack Maggs*, Tobias Oates pays a very heavy price for his designs on the story of Maggs, the convict. His sister-in-law and lover, Lizzie, dies after a double dose of pills to abort her foetus poison her. After Lizzie's death, while he is burning the sheets she lay on while she died,

> in the flames he saw, as he would throughout his life, the figures and faces of his fancy dancing before him. He saw the wraith of their dead child folding and unfolding in the skirts of fire. He saw Lizzie herself, her face smiling and folding into the horrible figure of decay (*JM*354).

He holds Maggs responsible for Lizzie's death and the reader is told that as Oates:

> poked at the blackened linen and found in it one abhorrent face, that of the man who had led him to Mrs Britten's door, who had

> placed those dung-coloured pills where they would poison that precious life.
>
> It was Jack Maggs, the murderer, who now grew in the flames. Jack Maggs on fire. Jack Maggs flowering, threatening, poisoning. Tobias saw him hop like a devil. Saw him limp, as if his fiery limbs still carried the weight of convict iron. He saw his head transmogrify until it was bald, tattooed with deep wrinkles that broke apart and floated glowing out into the room (*JM*355).

The jar of formaldehyde with its unusual contents reappears in *Jack Maggs*. Oates, due to his 'obsession with the Criminal Mind' (*JM*49) had:

> recently paid ... for the hand of a thief. With the exception of the tell-tale little finger, which was malformed, the fingers of the hand were long, thin, very delicate; sadly in opposition to the skirt of skin which trailed back from the harshly butchered wrist. This hand floated in a large wide-throated jar of formaldehyde identified by a brown discoloured label, on which was inscribed a legend in Arabic the meaning of which was not, as yet, available (*JM*49).

Being 'much of the scientist' (*JM*49), Oates hides many such secrets in the hope of uncovering their mysterious services for the furthering of his literary career.

Mercy Larkin, a maid, dreams of marrying her employer Percy Buckle. Taken in by him when her mother had sold her out for prostitution, she is his 'Good Companion' (*JM*326). Satisfying all his sexual needs she dreams of gaining a position as the mistress of his household. It is only when he dismisses her for kissing Maggs that Mercy sees through all his affection for her. She makes good her life with Maggs in Australia, as a wife to him and a mother to his children.

Notes

[1] Hermine Krassnitzer, Aspects of Narration in Peter Carey's Novels: Deconstructing Colonialism (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995) 9.

[2] Bruce Woodcock, Peter Carey, Contemporary World Writers Series (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996) 19.

[3] Krassnitzer, 5.

[4] Krassnitzer, 5.

[5] Krassnitzer, 5.

[6] Nina Caldeira, Multiculturalism and the Marginalised Psyche (New Delhi: Creative Books, 2004) 93.

[7] Nina, 95.

[8] Krassnitzer, 13.

[9] Krassnitzer, 18.

[10] Krassnitzer, 19.

[11] Linda Hutcheon, Poetics of Postmodernism: HistoryTheoryFiction (New York: Routledge, 1990) 13.

[12] Hutcheon, 5.

[13] Woodcock, 1.

[14] Woodcock, 1.

[15] Woodcock, 12.

[16] Woodcock, 12.

[17] M.H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms 7thedn. (New Delhi: Harcourt India Pvt. Ltd, 2001) 173.

[18] Christer Larsson, "The Relative Merits of Goodness and Originality: The Ethics of Storytelling in Peter Carey's Novels" diss., U of Uppsala, 2001, 12.

[19] Larsson, 12.

[20] Larsson, 28.

[21] Larsson, 14.

[22] Jonathan Culler, Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1975) 224.

[23] Helen Daniel, "'The Liar's Lump' or 'A Salesman's View of History': Peter Carey's Illywhacker," Southerly 46:2 (1986): 167.

[24] Larsson, 18.

[25] Larsson, 22.

[26] Gary Saul Morson, Narrative and Freedom: The Shadows of Time (New Haven: Yale UP, 1994) 7.

[27] Larsson, 39.

[28] Gerard Genette, Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980) 40.

[29] Woodcock, 41.

[30] Richard Todd as quoted in Larsson, 54.

[31] Abrams, 317.

[32] Abrams, 317.

[33] Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge (London: Tavistock Publications, 1974) 23.

[34] Roland Barthes, Image, Music, Text (Health Fontana, 1977) 146.

[35] Featherstone's video Beautiful Lies as quoted in Woodcock, 2.

[36] Featherstone's video Beautiful Lies as quoted in Krassnitzer, 37.

[37] Krassnitzer, 39.

[38] Anthony J. Hassal, Dancing on Hot Macadam: Peter Carey's Fiction (St Lucia: UQP, 1994) 146.

[39] Hassal, 147.

[40] Hassal, 147.

[41] Woodcock, 108.

[42] Woodcock, 113.

[43] Woodcock, 113.

Conclusion

The main objective of the present thesis was to explore how the fictional writings of Peter Carey strive to create a National Identity of Australia and its peoples through his narratives. The National Identity of Australia, like most other nations evolves out of the nation's historical processes. After a minute critical reading of Carey's fictional works, the study concludes by stating that a dominant theme in Carey's writing is of National Identity, a theme largely acknowledged by the writer. In fact, all the select texts reverberate throughout with a profound quest for identity.

Carey has been greatly successful in rendering the quintessential image of the nation of Australia, never denying its imperialist or penal heritage, however, offering multiple readings of its historical past other than the imperialist interpretation. He reworks imperial narratives about Australia, questioning their veracity by employing postmodern modes all along subverting myths about the nation's convict past and the myth of Empire-building by hegemonic forces. His fiction successfully challenges the common notion of Australia as a 'cultural wasteland' or as a land 'Down-Under.'

In Carey's works, the literary discourse intermingles with the nationalist discourse. To make his discourse sound convincing and authentic, he ransacks the history and the cultural evolution of the nation. As Homi K. Bhabha aptly

states, "from those traditions of ... literary language ... the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea."[1] A nation is not merely a state, a political entity but as Bhabha continues to state, the nation is "the language of those who write of it and the lives of those who live it."[2] The notion of the nation then, is imaginative. The matrix of a literary fiction is also imaginative. Clearly, in Carey's novels nation and narration are interlocked and the fictional device proves to be very potent in constructing National Identity.

> If nation states are widely considered to be 'new' and 'historical', the nation states to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past and...glide into a limitless future. What I am proposing is that Nationalism has to be understood, by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which-as well as against which-it came into being.[3]

Perceptibly, the idea of a nation has a historical, cultural as well as a sentimental component to it. The nation is a system of historico-cultural signification and its representation is more of that of social *life* rather than the discipline of social *polity*.[4]

The peoples of Australia are not homogenous. Officially adopting the policy of multiculturalism, like Canada, Australia is committed to celebrate cultural

pluralism. As a multicultural society, the nation of Australia faces the problem of projecting a common or homogenous identity. It can no longer claim British identity by virtue of being its settler colony. Stephensen argues that although Australian culture may have begun in Britain, "a gum tree is not a branch of an oak."[5] "Race and place" are the "two permanent elements in a culture, and Place...is even more important than Race in giving that culture its direction."[6] In fact, Peter Carey's writings are an address more to the Australians than to the international readers. In Carey's fiction, the aborigines, the convicts, the several waves of immigrants find due representation. As Sneja Gunew puts it:

> multiculturalism was designed to lay to rest both the iniquitous White Australia policy and the official immigration policy of assimilation... national identity might benefit from acknowledging the realities of cultural diversity.[7]

Australia's national identity, as constructed in Carey's fiction, co-opts all. Australia tries to define itself in resisting the British cultural paternalism or American cultural hegemony or Asian economic imperialism. In *Jack Maggs*, Jack Maggs, the banished convict, after repeated attempts to identify with England is forced to face the stark reality that England would never receive him back. He has to break free from the hold that his mother country England has over him, which comes about when his son shoots at him. In *Bliss* Carey explores the cancer theme as a consequence of the new life culture of

materialism and fast foods, obviously the effect of Americanism on Australia. It is the success culture that finally causes Bettina's death, who blows herself up leaving only one clue to the cause of her action; 'Petrol killed me'. In *Illywhacker* Carey presents the fast moving Asian economic hegemony that was rapidly prevailing in Australia. In *Illywhacker* the owner of the Pet Emporium is the Mitsubishi Company and Hissao, Badgery's grandson, is only the face of the Emporium, not the real owner. Hissao actually manages to put all his countrymen and women on display for tourist consumption. Carey subverts the foreigner's stereotyping of the essential Australian and offers another dimension to the Australian personality.

The typical Australian in Carey's work is a battler, a survivor against all odds: the unmapped wilderness, the harsh climate, the uninhabitable geography, all of which shape the Australian personality. His works adumbrate the general legend of the typical Australian, as Russell Ward opines in *The Australian Legend*:

> A practical man, rough and ready in his manners and quick to decry and appearance of affectation in others. He is a great improviser … He swears hard and consistently, gambles heavily and often … he is usually taciturn rather than talkative … he believes that Jack is not only as good as his master, but, at least in principle, probably a good deal better.[8]

The aesthetic expression of National Identity in Carey's fiction is not merely thematic but also structural. He writes back to the empire most often using the postmodernist mode to advance his postcolonial concerns. Being highly influenced by Latin American writers such as Gabriel García Márquez and Jorge Luis Borges, Carey makes extensive use of prolepses, magic realism and presents multiple truths in a discontinuous, disrupted and distorted narration. Adopting the form of historiographic metafiction, Carey reworks the history of Australia in a self-reflexive manner because "history's problem is verification while fiction's is veracity."[9] The metafictional self-reflexivity propels him to employ diverse techniques such as challenging authorial authority, use of parody, use of multiple generic forms, playing with truths and lies about the myths and histories of the country and the like.

In Carey's fiction, an element that looms large is that of powerful resistance of fixations of any kind, be they of the land of Australia, its peoples, or even Carey's own fictions. Though Carey's novels lend themselves to a neat post-colonial and post-modern reading, Carey refutes any post-colonial or post-modernist concerns. He refuses to be fixated into any mode of writing. For example, he is "wary of being labelled a magic-realist."[10]

Notwithstanding Carey's argument, the postmodernist practice is most suitable for denouncing the many lies told about the nation. On the other hand, his

fiction does not offer a neat reading of the truths of the nation. Lies and truths are intermingled in many fabulations, the real and the fantastic are amalgamated. Many a time, Carey has been criticized for writing from the 'outsiders' position as he writes from New York. However, more than seeing this as a hindrance, Carey works this outsider position to his advantage, stating that it affords him objectivity. The view of an outsider is more detailed and more enlightening, opines Carey.[11] In Carey's situation, the outsider and the insider juxtapose before each other. Being born and raised in Australia, Carey carries first-hand information about his homeland and time and again, he acknowledges that his fictional project has been the invention or discovery of his nation. Thus his project propels him into the nation's historical past so as to comprehend its present.

From the in-depth reading of Peter Carey's works of fiction, the present thesis concludes that certainly literature carries the ability to signify and to emanate nationhood, i.e., "the institution of literature works to nationalist ends"[12] and concludes that *the aesthetic rendition of Australian National Identity in Peter Carey's fiction is best echoed in Australia's historical processes.*

Notes

[1] Homi K Bhabha, "Introduction: Narrating the Nation", Nation and Narration, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990) 1.

[2] Bhabha, 1.

[3] Bhabha, 1.

[4] Bhabha, 2.

[5] P. R. Stephensen as quoted in Sneja Gunew, "Denaturalizing Cultural Nationalism: Multicultural Readings of 'Australia'", Nation and Narration, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990) 101.

[6] P. R. Stephensen as quoted in Gunew, 101.

[7] Gunew, 103.

[8] <http://www.petra.ac.id/asc/people/immigrants/national identity.html/>

[9] Linda Hutcheon as quoted in Nina Caldeira, Multiculturalism and the Marginalised Psyche (New Delhi: Creative Books, 2004) 98.

[10] Bruce Woodcock, Peter Carey, Contemporary World Writers Series (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996) 11.

[11] Peter Carey, Interview, Bold Type, 28 January 2003 <http://www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/0399/carey/interview.html>

[12] Simon During, "Literature- Nationalism's other? The case for revision", Nation and Narration, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990) 138.

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