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HISTORICAL NARRATIVE AND CULTURAL MEMORY IN PETER CAREY'S NEO-VICTORIAN FICTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Peter Carey stands out as one of the preeminent contemporary writers hailing from Australia. His historical narratives, situated in the Victorian era, are widely labeled as neo-Victorian novels. These works not only encourage readers to reassess Australian history and culture. The effects of imperialism have distorted Australian history and culture through the lens of literature, and provoke deeper reflection on the complexities and challenges Australia faces in the post-colonial reality. The current analysis delves into three of his novels, adopting a new historicism perspective, to explore the diverse cultural tapestry portrayed in his neo-Victorian creations.

Keywords: Neo-Victorian fictions; historical narrative; cultural memory; Peter Carey

1 Introduction

Modern Australia was once a convict colony of the British Empire. When the United States gained its independence, Britain lost not only an overseas colony, but also a vital place for convicts. They looked to the southern hemisphere continent of Australia. It is a break in the literary landscape of the transition from white monoculture to multiculturalism in Australian society, which is essentially the construction of an independent national identity and cultural identity. Peter Carey is one of Australia's most distinguished contemporary writers after Patrick White, and one of the country's most internationally recognized Australian literary icons, as well as one of the most original and talented of Australia's novelists. In many of Carey's works, he has deeply analyzed and reinterpreted Australia's history, culture, and characters, often in the context of the Victorian era. On the one hand, he uses literary works to make people re-examine Australian history and culture distorted by the empire; on the other hand, he thinks more deeply about the reality of the dilemma faced by Australia after the British colonization.

1.1 Victorian Australia

In 1788, Philip, Australia's first governor-general, landed the first group of exiles in New South Wales with more than 200 naval officers. They massacred the indigenous people who had long

inhabited the area and opened the way to colonialism with blood and fire. Australia thus developed on the basis of a 'prison', as it was imagined to be by early Europeans. Early settlers in Australia also brought English literature and culture with them to the colony when they migrated. There has been a return to examining colonial history and constructing national narratives in Australian literature. These national narratives, which carry a sense of historical mission and social responsibility, seem to have found their belonging in historical memory and have been given a new meaning in the present historical context. Far from the motherland, they have a strong attachment to the motherland literature and culture, the development of Australian literature and culture is deeply influenced by British culture and the two have cultural similarities.

1.2 The Rise of the Neo-Victorian Fiction

The rise of the Neo-Victorian fiction is closely related to the "the turn to history" in post-war British fiction. The publication of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) in the 1960s is regarded as the beginning of the creation of the Neo-Victorian fiction. It was Dana Shiller who first introduced the concept of Neo-Victorian fiction. She argued that the setting of these novels was often the Victorian era, and that the reproduction of history in the novels was no longer restricted to the realistic approach of realism, but utilized a combination of postmodernist narrative strategies to write about history.

For the authors of the Neo-Victorian fiction, the irreversibility of time declares the fundamental impossibility of returning to the Victorian era. In the face of this irreversible time barrier, with the help of new ideas from the humanities and social sciences, including the discipline of history, the creators of Neo-Victorian fiction discovered cultural memory and thus found the key to unlocking the door to Victorian time. Because of the insurmountable temporal and cultural distance between the past and the present, writers, in their attempts to reinterpret the contingent and improvised history, have turned their attention to the paradoxical and variable, but also more dynamic, phenomenon of memory. Some forgotten or hidden memories, on the contrary, record or preserve historical facts that have been overlooked. Thus, the search for memory has become an artistic way for writers of Neo-Victorian fiction to construct history, especially in the imagination.

1.3 Neo-Victorian Writings by Peter Carey

Peter Carey has received many honors and awards for his outstanding literary contributions and has twice won the British Booker Prize. In 1974, he published a collection of short stories, *The Fat Man in History*, which became famous. 1981, he published his first full-length novel, *Bliss*, which won the Miles Franklin Prize, the highest honor in the Australian literary world. In 1988, he published Oscar and Lucinda, which became his most renowned novel, winning the Miles Franklin Award and the Booker Prize. In 1990, he was invited by New York University to be a writer-in-residence, which he has been doing ever since. In 2000, he published *True History of the Kelly Gang*, which won him a second Booker Prize. After the publication of *War Crimes*, Peter Carey's work was widely praised as adding to the Australian novel, and he was described as a writer with an international flavor who has at last moved Australia out of the narrow corners of intransigent localism and towards a new breadth and complexity. His novels reverberate with the echoes of history and combine black humor, allegory, and science fiction, highlighting the qualities of fantasy and reality.

Carey is good at grasping the pulse of society and has a strong spiritual sensibility. 1988 was the bicentennial of Australian anti-British campaign. Australian society once again turned its attention to the history of colonialism and began to pay attention to the survival of marginalized Aboriginal people and ethnic minorities. New Historicism as a new historical poetics also came on the scene. It no longer emphasized the so-called official history, the narrative of great events and leading figures, but rather, through fragmentary anecdotes, encounters, and episodes of minor characters, it sought to revise and rewrite the cultural codes that dominated in a particular context. Historians set out to modify the

archives of the past, sociologists revisit a lost colonial culture, and the history-literature debate is in full swing.

On the question of the historicity of national narratives, Peter Carey does hold a different viewpoint from those who accept colonial history indiscriminately. From Oscar and Lucinda's examination of how British values and Christianity clashed with the Australian landscape, to the rewriting of Dickens' tale of convict Magwitch, who was escorted to Australia in *Jack Maggs*, then to the Australian national figure Ned Kelly in *True History of the Kelly Gang,* Australia is ruled by a fabulously powerful nation. Peter Carey's fictional feast demonstrates Australia's quest for national identity and its deviation from the textual history of the empire.

Both memory and history pertain to the past and are intertwined with the present. Memory is a constant reconstruction of the imprints left in people's minds by past experiences, while history is a continuous dialog between the present and the past. Human self-consciousness is closely linked to memory. It is through memory that the subject acquires knowledge of his or her past. The acquisition of historical consciousness is also made possible by memory, which is why memory is so important in historiography. The involvement of cultural memory in the writing of history is both possible and necessary. When history writing and cultural memory meet in Peter Carey's neo-Victorian fictions, he recreates and reconstructs histories that have been ignored or marginalized by the dominant cultural memory, and at the same time directs our attention to the phenomenon of memory, which full of contradictions and variations, and thus more dynamic. So why and how has Carey revised history? What are the characteristics and values of his historical writing? In the following, the author will analyze his creative activities and the texts of his three novels to complete the answers to these questions.

2 Literature Review of Peter Carey's Works

After the 1990s, Peter Carey's position in the English literary world gradually became solid. His novels were published in Australia, Britain, and the United States at the same time. Peter Carey and his works can come into the research field of literary critics in English-speaking countries more easily, and become the object of their attention and comments. For the three novels covered in this paper: *Oscar and Lucinda*, *True History of the Kelly Gang*, and *Jack Maggs*, scholars have mainly studied them from the aspects of writing technique, genre, and the theme of the novels.

Due to the intertextual relationship between *Jack Maggs* and *Great Expectations*, the study of the intertextuality of the two novels has taken up a considerable amount of space. Bruce Woodcock reads *Jack Maggs* as Peter Carey's "*Wide Sargasso Sea*" and argues that it is through his rewriting of the English literary classic that Carey defends Australian ancestry and provides a voice for the "convict" to defend himself from the imperial discourse (2003). Paul Eggert, on the other hand, explores the anti-colonial, anti-hegemonic resistance of Ned Kelly's bushranger figure, and by extension, his neo-liberal, post-modern writing of history through the contrast between the Jerilderie Letter and *True History of the Kelly Gang* (2007). Anthony Hassall argues that the novel is not only a rewriting of *Great Expectations*, but that the similarities between the character Oates and the imperial writer Dickens add to the characterization of *Jack Maggs* (1997). While Pellow points out that magicalism, intertextuality, hyperfiction, mimesis, and postcolonialism are all strategies of Carey's writing (2013). Lyn Innes analyzes the similarities and differences between the styles and voices of the Jerilderie Letter and *True History of the Kelly Gang*, with one major difference being the fictional character Mary Hearn. Lyn shows that it is Carey's distinctive narrative technique that attracts a large number of readers (2003). Victoria Reeve argues that the multiple strategies that Carey employs in his novels, such as polyphonic discourse and grammatical person switching, examine the impact of Carey's writing on the reconstruction of Ned Kelly's characterization from a narratological perspective (2010). To some extent, these studies share the common thread that by rewriting national myths. Carey encourages Australians to reconstruct their

national cultural identity. Bruce, on the other hand, has argued that *Oscar and Lucinda* is a "retro-speculative" fiction, which blends historical realism with the fictional overtones of fiction, and which demonstrates the depth of Peter Carey's creative skill (2003).

In the study of genres and themes, critics have mainly explored them, which are difficult to categorize and ultimately lead to political or cultural criticism of the novel's themes. Bruce Woodcock insightfully concludes that the novel is a post-colonial counter-discourse and meta-fictional strategy by Carey to deal with historical and crime themes, thus breaking the historical fiction and crime fiction (2003). In her article, Annegret Maack analyzes in detail the hybrid character of *Jack Maggs*. Drawing on stories and characters from Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, Carey mixes elements of historical fiction, fictional biography, and meta-fiction (2005). Gerster Robin in his review of the book, regards *True History of the Kelly Gang* as the autobiography of the "real" Kelly. Kelly has the capacity for guilt and self-pity, he longs for a fairer and better world (2001). Marija Pericic examines the significant impact of the selectivity of cultural memory on Ned Kelly's struggling Irish-Australian identity construction, and points to the challenging nature of cross-cultural dialogues between individuals and nations (2009).

3 Reproduction of Victorian History

In traditional historiographical thought and historical writing, grandiose and capitalized historical narratives are in absolute dominance. Major national wars, monarchical sequences, and heroic leaders are the main content of historians' writings. In this process, historiography attempted to become a discipline with the same disciplinary qualifications as empirical science, which consciously pursued objectivity and rationality. And emphasized a holistic, monolithic history of the political state. Along with the rise of postmodernist deconstructive thinking, the capitalized monolithic historical narrative and traditional historiography have been questioned in numerous ways. People began to find that this historiography, which emerged along with the nation-state and defended the nation-state as its purpose, was a tool for suppressing and expelling or marginalizing the history of the local, the colonized, the irrational, the marginalized, and the feminine, as well as the history of the lowercase. New Historicism is concerned with the narrative and textual nature of history, deconstructing the grand narratives promoted by traditional philosophies of history and beginning to write the history of the obliterated and the marginalized.

3.1 *Jack Maggs*—The Personal History of the "Convict"

In *Jack Maggs*, which Carey created after "tampering" with *Great Expectations*, the status of the characters in the novel changes significantly, with Magwitch being the prototype for Jack Maggs and Phipps being Pip. "In Carey's Jack Maggs, Dickens himself is brought into the novel, although he is fictionalized as the character Tobias Oates." (Hadley, 2010: 38) The novel focuses on Maggs' return to London from Australia in search of his "son". In Dickens's text the central position is the main character Pip, the convict Magwitch is only a marginalized character, he is a rude speech, full of criminal atmosphere not accepted by the English middle class ugly characters, while in Carey's text, the central position is no longer Pip. Rather, it is the convict Maggs, that is, the Magwitch in *Great Expectations*, and Maggs is no longer the ugly criminal image, but a brave, strong-willed and kind-hearted hero, on the contrary, Pip's incarnation of Phipps has become a timid, cowardly and hypocritical gentleman from the upper class. At the end of the novel, when he raises his gun to shoot Maggs, his ugly human nature is exposed. Carey deliberately subverts Dickens's text, which actually has a profound historical allegory. This section will compare and contrast the intertextual roles of Maggs and Magwitch, analyzing how Peter Carey's rewriting subverts history and empowers the discourse of the "convict" to dismantle the grand historical narrative.

The opening pages of *Great Expectations* present the readers with the image of Pip encountering the exiled prisoner Magwitch in the marsh. "A fearful man, all in coarse gray, with a great iron on his leg. A man with no hat, and with broken shoes, and with an old rag tied round his head. A man who

had been soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles, and torn by briars; who limped, and shivered, and glared, and growled; and whose teeth chattered in his head as he seized me by the chin." (Dickens, 1999: 2) Magwitch's vicious face is portrayed by Dickens. This is best exemplified by the criminal's words at the time threatening and intimidating Pip, who threatens to rip out his heart and liver if he doesn't do what he says. "'You get me a file.' He tilted me again. 'And you get me wittles.' He tilted me again." (Dickens, 1999: 4) Dickens would even suggest that Magwitch possesses animal traits; when Pip brings food to the criminal Magwitch, he quickly nibbles at it, like a dog afraid that someone else is going to come and take his food. "I had often watched a large dog of ours eating his food; and I now noticed a decided similarity between the dog's way of eating, and the man's. The man took strong sharp sudden bites, just like the dog." (Dickens, 1999: 13) Dickens's portrayal of Magwitch as almost inhuman invariably draws the reader into the context of imperial colonization, revealing between the lines that the British viewed the Australian colony as an area of inferior power.

However, in Peter Carey's novel, he describes Maggs as well-dressed and a gentleman in the eyes of others. "One privately imagined him a book-maker, another a gentleman farmer and a third, seeing the excellent quality of his waistcoat, imagined him an upper servant wearing his master's cast-off clothing." (Carey, 1999: 27) And here's how Cary describes Maggs' appearance: "His brows pushed down hard upon the eyes, and his cheeks shone as if life had scrubbed at him and rubbed until the very bones beneath his flesh had been burnished in the process. His nose was large, hawkish, and high-bridged. His eyes were dark, inquiring, and yet there was a bruised, even belligerent quality which had kept his fellow passengers at their distance all through that long journey up from Dover." (Carey, 1999: 28) It is difficult to read between the lines and associate Maggs with an ugly criminal, but rather presents him as a successful man with a successful career. Carey gives Maggs ample narrative space in the novel, giving him the opportunity to complain about the "crimes" he has committed, thus dissolving Dickens' vilification of Magwitch. In a letter to Phipps, Maggs said: "Well, Henry Phipps, you will read a different type of story in the glass, by which I mean—mine own." (Carey, 1999: 306) Here Carey gives Maggs the power of speech, so that he can tell his own heart from a marginalized character. In the eyes of Maggs, Phipps has always been a well-educated gentleman with a soft heart since he was a child, and in the letter, he treats Phipps with respect, even fearing that his status as a "convict" will frighten Phipps. "Henry Phipps, you were raised to have a tender heart and to obey the laws. This was always so clear in your loving letters, and it is no stretch to imagine that you were frightened to hear Jack Maggs was finally on his way into your polite and educated life." (Carey, 1999: 307) But in reality, Carey constructs Maggs as a pathetic "convict" who is unable to control his own life, whose life has led him to become a "trained" thief from an early age, and who speaks out against his own misfortunes and tries to explain that his crimes are not of his own volition, but rather that he has become a "scapegoat" for others. "Silas and Ma Britten [Jack wrote] had a very original ambition: to do a series of clever burglaries without never laying fingers on the goods. And once they got Sophina and me properly trained-up to the art, it was, so Silas said, like having ferrets, except that he was excused the bother of carrying the cages." (Carey, 1999: 605) Ma Britten is pronounced similarly to Briton in the novel, alluding to the fact that Ma Britten is the embodiment of the British Empire and the culprit behind Maggs' descent into crime.

Dickens presents Australia as a bleak, barren wasteland of shackled convicts in Great Expectations. Carey's *Jack Maggs*, on the other hand, seeks to subvert the cultural hegemony of the empire. Although the novel does not depict what Australia is like, it tells the reader through the protagonist, Maggs, who has been relegated to the margins of the imperial text, and especially through the twists and turns he undergoes as a minor figure in history, that Australia has not been mentioned in the imperial text, and that it is not the only place in the world that is not mentioned in the imperial text. But through the main character, Maggs, who has been relegated and marginalized in imperial

texts, and especially through the twists and turns he undergoes as a minor figure of history, the novel tells the reader the real history that has been left untold or distorted in imperial texts.

3.2 *True History of the Kelly Gang*—Controversial National Hero

Ned Kelly is a household name in Australia, and many popular legends and songs created anonymously in folklore are more than a few. Yet from the beginning, the debate over the historical truth of the Kelly gang and its identity has never ceased. Different versions have portrayed Ned Kelly as a ruthless killer, a habitual thief, a fighter against oppression, a greenhorn who killed the rich and gave to the poor, a hero of the poor who fought against the government, an arrogant madman, a vulgar cocksucker, a rebel leader who fought for freedom, and so on. People cannot travel through time and space to contact the past, so they can only have the opportunity to understand history through real texts, but in reality, these so-called historical truths are the result of people's conscious choice to keep and erase them, and they are the result of the history that has been interpreted and woven. Through the convergence of many voices and the piecing together of fragments of memories, *True History of the Kelly Gang* restores the truth of a period of history and reconstructs the image of Kelly as a national hero. In Carey's work, the piecing together of memory fragments is realized as a way to return to the historical truth. By appropriating the common form of historical archives and exposing the process of generating the so-called historical truth in his novels, Peter Carey seamlessly integrates history with fictional text, fully exhibiting its textuality.

Carey mimics the coarse discourse of bushmen living in nineteenth-century colonial Australia and reflexively reproduces the fictionality of history through devices such as parody and intertextuality. "My letter to Mary were returned ADDRESSEE UNKNOWN the police done this I know my mail were tampered with. On the same day come a tearful letter from Nott Street she was in torment not having heard from me she were sailing to San Francisco. To Hell with all traps I hate them. Everything I had they took from me." (Carey, 2001: 358) Carey seems to be indicating to the reader that Ned Kelly was forced into rebellion by the countless evil servants of the British Empire. Ned Kelly was a powerless individual, and in particular, his misadventures as a marginal figure in history, reproduced the poverty and hardship, corruption and injustice that were almost ubiquitous in the northeastern outback of Victoria, Australia, in the 1860s and 1870s. Born into a poor Irish immigrant family, Ned Kelly was 12 years old when his father was killed by the police, and from then on, he and his mother, Ellen, took on the burden of supporting a family of six. But in the early colonial period of Australia's natural and man-made disasters, life was very hard, coupled with the overall social injustice, the countryside, and the bully, Kelly's family struggled to death. 15 years old, he was accused of assisting the bush robbers who robbed and went to prison. From then on, Kelly spent most of his teenage years in prison. He shot and wounded police officer John Fitzpatrick when he couldn't stand the insults he was hurling at his mother and sister. Fitzpatrick creates a story out of nothing, fabricates evidence, and goes on a revenge spree against the Kelly family. To save his mother from arrest and imprisonment, Ned Kelly took the risk, rose, led the brothers, and the police, secret agents, spies in the vast jungle in a thrilling fight to the death. They robbed banks many times and gave the money to the poor like him, and thus they got a lot of help and were loved by the jungle people. "I had boasted I were a spider they could not stop me spinning but that were in February and by the end of March I had to admit I could not repeat what I previously done. My Jerilderie Letter were lost forever." (Carey, 2001, 369) In the documented history of Australia, during Ned's desperate criminal career, the Kelly Gang planned and carried out several bank robberies intended to retaliate against the colonial ruling class, the two most sensational of which took place in the small towns of Euroa and Jerilderie. After the Jerilderie robberies, the Kelly Gang also published their own "revolutionary manifesto", the Jerilderie Letter. In this famous historical document, Ned describes the hopelessness of being forced into a life of crime, complains about his fate as a victim of empire, class, and the justice system, and calls for the creation of a new society in which the underclass is treated fairly. Carey's The *True History of the Kelly Gang* is a powerful

work inspired by and imaginatively interpreting the Jerilderie Letter, and Kelly's first-person narrative voice, which is present throughout the novel, creates interesting echoes of the historical documents. By revealing the "true history" of the Kelly Gang's resistance to colonial authority, the novel refutes "nostalgia-driven narratives of sanctified victims that prevent people from engaging with Australia's colonial past." (Huggan, 2002:153)

3.3 *Oscar and Lucinda*—The Decline of Imperial Faith

The development of natural science in the Victorian era brought about dramatic changes in material society. At the same time, the spiritual world of the Victorians also underwent radical changes. The development of social civilization constructed a more diversified knowledge structure for the Victorians. The most prominent change was that the advancement of knowledge prompted people to doubt the authenticity of the Christian story from all angles, and the sanctity of religion was deconstructed. This was accompanied by skepticism about various traditional concepts. An important phenomenon of the Victorian era was the decline of religious faith. Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection subverted the religious idea that God created everything in the Bible. The notion that there is no God in the world and that death is the end of life subverted the Victorian people's perception of the world, and at the same time triggered a serious crisis of religious belief in the British society. *Oscar and Lucinda* does not illustrate the disaster brought by the European colonial invasion from the front, write down the hypocrisy and corruption of the nineteenth-century British upper class, nor mention the degeneration and decline of the British religion, but uses the rhetorical method of irony to make everything clear, aiming at letting the readers have a deeper feeling, and letting the readers feel the past colonial Australian history and the evil deeds committed by imperialism. In this novel, Carey analyzes the situation of Christianity when it was introduced to the Australian continent in the process of modernization, and also highlights the reasons for the failure of Christianity to take root and influence the majority of the population in Australia, namely the problems of the English missionaries and of the English Christian faith itself, i.e., interdenominational conflicts, the emergence of skepticism, and the uncertainty of the faith of the missionaries and ministers themselves.

Gambling, alcoholism, and sex are all religious taboos, and clergymen who believe in the teachings of Christ are even more off-limits. In Carey's writing, Oscar is a gambler, a man who cannot withstand the temptation of sex but happens to be a missionary. Upon arriving in Australia, he is stripped of his public office for gambling all night with Lucinda. This inevitably shakes Oscar's conviction that he is God's chosen. Lucinda helps him in his down and out, and he grows to love this unique woman. And offers to escort the glass church for him. The glass church is a symbol of British religious culture, and Oscar's escorting it across the Australian outback symbolizes the invasion of British Christian culture into Australian aboriginal culture. Oscar's ambition to spread Christianity to the colonies of the British empire, with the will of God, was filled with a growing sense of guilt in the course of this civilizing process. He realized firsthand that this was no great undertaking and that what he was doing was causing great suffering to the natives.

4 The Writing of Cultural Memory

As mentioned in the previous part of this article, *Jack Maggs* is a personal history created by Carey that belongs to Magwitch, and in the form of letters, it repeatedly reminds the contemporary people of the absurdity of the grand history in the context of imperial colonization. He focuses on the constructed nature of Kelly's identity and challenges the reliability and political implications of Kelly's Irish cultural memory. Simultaneously, he questions Australian cultural memory of Ned Kelly's story and its role in Australian identity in *True History of the Kelly Gang*. In the novel *Oscar and Lucinda*, Carey skillfully uses the glass church throughout the novel, which is the token of Oscar and Lucinda's tragic love, and at the same time provides readers with important clues to recall the industrial civilization and Victorian culture in the 19th century.

4.1 *Jack Maggs*—Memories Hidden by Grand History

Maggs's journey to London is in a sense the completion of a questioning of the center of empire. Originally full of hope, Maggs, faced with the reality of the growing decline of the center of the empire, in the center of the empire of the people's rejection, deception and trap, complete despair. His wish to return to London to find his roots also came to naught. Maggs was imprisoned in New South Wales for theft. He suffered all kinds of abuse, but tenaciously through the difficult times. Thoughts and memories of his homeland helped him to survive his first difficult years as an exile. "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." (Carey,1999: 510) This shows that deep down he has always considered himself to be an Englishman and longed for a British cultural identity. Although his homeland does not accept him, Maggs' heart continues to struggle with the desire to embrace British culture. Maggs's letter to Phipps is actually correcting the history that has been distorted by the empire and returning history to its true colors. It's a pity that Phipps doesn't understand Maggs's good intentions. It is in this subtle way of expression that Carey wants to show us a history under deconstruction of the grand historical narrative.

4.2 *True history of the Kelly gang*—Misunderstood and Fabricated Cultural Memory

In *True History of the Kelly Gang*, Kelly struggles to preserve his Irish identity and often misunderstood and fictionalized cultural memory. The true significance of cross-dressing, an ancient Irish custom, was lost on many Irish people during the emigration. When Kelly's father is witnessed cross-dressing, the children in the family feel humiliated because they are all Australian-born and no one knows the significance of the act. Kelly's mother, an Irish immigrant, never disclosed the incident. Later Kelly's brother Dan and his partner Steve Hart embraced the custom again. Hiding out in an Irish home, they stole the hostess's clothes to cover themselves in an attempt to emulate the "sons of the Sieve", which caused great anger and sadness among Irish sympathizers. Mary's revelation calls into question the authenticity of Kelly gang's Irish identity, releasing Kelly's sense of loss and making him realize that his Irish identity is based on distorted cultural memories that become blurred and inauthentic when confronted with the real Irish identity. Thus, this last straw causes Kelly to drift away from his Irish identity. Carey's Kelly is a problematic character, far removed from the easily recognizable Australian figure that Ned Kelly represents in the national psyche, and Carey sees him through an old idea of Ireland. Questioning the validity of flawed and antagonistic cultural memories in the text. Emphasizes the discontinuity between Ireland and Australia and the diminished sense of group identity in Ireland and Australia. The Irish cultural context is an important reference point for understanding Kelly, whose behavior and attitudes are shaped by his cultural memory and environment. The cross-cultural Irish-Australian dialogues in the text, conveyed in part through the compelling narrative voice of Kelly, are an important element in Carey's exploration of identity construction.

4.3 *Oscar and Lucinda*—The Glass Church, a Symbol of Industrial Civilization

The appearance of the glass church made the Australian colonial aborigines unacceptable to the status quo and feel the great cultural clash brought about by the Industrial Revolution. The destruction of the glass church symbolizes the failure of British colonial culture and shatters Oscar's ideals. As a missionary, Oscar will lose himself and lose his direction after seeing the real face of the civilization process. In the end, it can only end in tragedy. The novel depicts busy docks, smoky factories, black coal, stained rust, and kittens with pus in their eyes. This land has been deeply marked by the industrialization of the empire and has been continuously supplying wealth to the empire. In the process of civilization, Lucinda receives a great deal of wealth, but she carries a heavy burden of guilt because she knows that this wealth was purchased with the blood of the blacks. Whether it is Oscar the priest, Lucinda the factory owner, or Jeffries the ambitious, they represent three different types of

imperial colonizers. Although all of them are civilized people, in the process of colonization, they either lost their faith, lost their sense of belonging and happiness, or became barbaric and cruel. They are not the heroes of the empire, nor do they have any admirable halo, but only pain and degradation, which is also a reflection of the real identity of the colonizers in the process of civilization.

5 Conclusion

Peter Carey is a writer with a deep concern for reality, and what can be seen in his works is not only the use of techniques and formal innovations, but also the fact that his writing is closely related to people's survival and the realization of life. Since the twentieth century, social upheaval has been accompanied by drastic changes in the spiritual realm, and reason has failed to bring about the ideal picture of reality it promised, nor has it brought about peace. Western civilization has appeared as advanced, promoting the historical myth of progress, but this theory of progress is marked by a clear dichotomy, which can easily lead to the so-called advanced civilization's enslavement and exploitation of the backward civilization. Moreover, with the clash and fusion of civilizations, people are facing an identity crisis. As the world becomes more and more closely connected and multiculturalism becomes a sweeping trend, identity is an unavoidable issue. This is even more obvious in the case of Australians. Australia's unique geographic location, demographic composition and complex historical and cultural backgrounds have left Australians confused about identity and looking to history for answers. However, traditional history writing, which conveys certainty and excludes the other, is no longer relevant to the needs of people living in a multicultural society. This calls for a shift in the way people look at the world, a rethinking of history, and a way out of the realities of the present. Carey's historical writing is to rethink the state of historical events themselves, and returning to the events themselves from a macroscopic perspective is undoubtedly an attempt to rediscover historical authenticity in an era of fragmentation and skepticism. Whether it is Australian colonial origins, Australian indigenous presence, or Australian relationship with the Allies, there are traces of deliberate forgetting or deliberate retouching by official discourse or ideology. Unlike traditional history writing that reveres the center and mainstream authority, Carey's historical writing does not focus on memorializing history, but rather is grounded in reality, focuses on the present, and demonstrates the fading of the sense of history, turning Australian history into a discursive field of different voices and narratives, thus inviting readers to reconstruct their perceptions of Australia's history amidst textual differences and ruptures.

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