

# True History of The Kelly Gang as Post-Modern Historical and Political Novel

**Dr. J Naga Madhuri**

Assistant Professor of English, VRSEC

## ABSTRACT

Peter Carey's files are a missing component, but a strikingly significant one, in the basic writing about the beneficial systems of his celebrity. In True History of the Kelly Gang, Australian novelist Peter Carey presents a postmodern historical novel glancing back at the instance of the popular bushranger Ned Kelly and showing an elective record of his hero's career and disgraceful end, testing the official variant of occasions just as the expert of the law. Carey along these lines gives a voice to a quieted subaltern subject and revamps Australian colonial history such that brings up issues not just as to the issue of what truly occurred yet additionally with reference to the openness of historical truth. The present Research Paper discusses about the narration of Peter Carey's Narrative works with special reference to depiction of History and Politics in her Novels.

**KEYWORDS:** History, Politics, Novels, Australian Literature, Novelist, Narratives etc.

Ned Kelly holds a significant place in the collective Australian consciousness, surpassing other national narratives in its impact on childhood. While historically recognized, Kelly's prominence in popular culture has surged recently, owing much to the success of Peter Carey's novel, True History of the Kelly Gang. This work repositioned Kelly at the core of Australian mainstream culture, creating an environment conducive to reinterpretations of his narrative. Before delving into the influence of Carey's novel, it is crucial to provide a brief history of Ned Kelly and the folklore surrounding him. Peter Carey's True History of the Kelly Gang has rapidly become one of the most significant works in Australian literature not only due to the cultural and historical significance of the narrative but also because of its exploration of broader themes. Carey's literary exploration delves into the complexities of identity, memory, and the consequences of colonization. The novel sheds light on the plight of the Irish-Australian generation, displaced and struggling to establish roots in a new environment.

Moreover, Carey's examination of Ned Kelly's story extends beyond a mere historical retelling. It serves as a platform for questioning the existing power structures and challenging the prevailing narratives. The novel, through its narrative techniques and postmodernist elements, invites readers to reconsider what they know about historical figures like Kelly and prompts a critical reassessment of the colonial past. By intertwining fiction with historical facts, Carey blurs the lines between reality and storytelling, compelling readers to confront the constructed nature of history itself.

Carey's thematic exploration extends to the political landscape of Australia. Through seemingly ordinary scenes and subtle references, he addresses issues such as Aboriginal rights, land

ownership, and the consequences of political decisions on marginalized communities. His novels become a space for contemplating the ethical dimensions of political choices and historical injustices, urging readers to engage in a broader dialogue about the legacy of colonialism.

Furthermore, Carey's narrative techniques serve a key purpose in creating a bridge between the past and the present. By employing meta-fiction and weaving stories within stories, he not only challenges conventional storytelling but also encourages readers to reflect on how the past influences the present. In doing so, Carey's work becomes not just a historical novel but a reflection on the ongoing consequences of history in contemporary society.

Peter Carey approaches historical perspectives and modern scientific advancements uniquely in his novels, transcending traditional historical styles. His works span various themes, from colonialism's impact to present-day issues, often hinting at futurism. Across his novels from 1981 to 2000, Carey explores the Australian literary landscape, which is divided into colonial, nationalist, and modern periods.

Carey's fiction, alongside Sir Patrick White and Reynold Stowe, stands out as modern, delving into the lives of peculiar protagonists. His characters, such as Harry Joy, Herbert Badgery, Oscar, Jack Maggs, and Tristan Smith, challenge Australian identities and colonial legacies. The recurrent theme of odd, insightful criminals and convicts characterizes Carey's major heroes.

Carey delves into the mysteries of Australian identities, colonialism's impact on outcasts, and themes of violence, decay, menace, and hatred. While sometimes praised for his insights, Carey, like the 'Marxist theory,' faces both acclaim and criticism. Each novel adopts a unique linguistic style, contributing to the reworking of the English language's history. Carey's linguistic experimentation, akin to Milton and Shakespeare, allows for diverse interpretations.

True History of the Kelly Gang, Carey's imaginative reconstruction of Ned Kelly's life, draws on historical reports and Kelly's Jerilderie letter. It portrays Kelly as both a heroic opponent of colonial rule and an early precursor to Australian nationalism. The narrative follows the Kelly family's struggle in Australia's hostile bush country, portraying Ned as a trusted companion, loving son, and father who refused to sacrifice his integrity.

Carey's novels often highlight societal issues, including social indecencies, sexual freedom, and financial motives. He presents a nuanced view of women, portraying them in both dark and bright shades, navigating complex circumstances. Carey's novels blend history and colonial past, offering a unique perspective on Australia's present and past.

The True History of the Kelly Gang explores identity crises and memories, delving into the social and political injustices faced by convicts and their descendants. Ned Kelly recounts his family's history, marked by oppression, poverty, and colonialism, leading to the formation of a community of criminals. The narrative reflects on the displaced Irish-Australian generation's struggle to establish a new life while grappling with the shadows of an unspeakable past.

Kelly's tale questions the legal system and societal norms, highlighting how figures like him, initially demonized, are forced into a life of crime by circumstances. By writing his own history, Kelly aims to reshape public perception, emphasizing the humanity behind the outlaw image. Carey's novel becomes a tool for examining and reinterpreting Australia's historical and cultural landscape. Peter Carey's fascination with Ned Kelly's character and the history of ex-convicts in Australia reveals his preoccupation with rewriting the past to enlighten modern readers about the colonizers' distortion of history. He highlights how the Irish suffered humiliation and abuse by the English while

estranged abroad, shedding light on the colonizers' sense of superiority and their use of brutal methods such as exploitation, abuse, and violence. Carey endeavors to reshape the distorted colonial image of Ned Kelly in Australia, presenting the history of the Kelly Gang from the perspective of the Other (Kelly himself).

Australian literature has consistently mirrored its social and political history, evolving from early records and fiction about the countryside and living conditions to experimental writing influenced by changing economic and political climates. Writers like Frank Moorhouse, Michael Wilding, and Peter Carey broke free from traditional constraints, exploring various possibilities of fantasy and displaying a moral concern for social and political attitudes. Carey's novels, including *Illywhacker*, *Oscar and Lucinda*, *Jack Maggs*, and *True History of the Kelly Gang*, employ meta-fiction and postmodernist techniques, allowing him to question old certainties and challenge concepts of truth and authenticity.

Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* serves as a pivotal work in Australian literature, reshaping the narrative around Ned Kelly. The novel becomes a tool for examining and reinterpreting Australia's historical and cultural landscape, addressing political issues and prompting critical discussions. Carey's storytelling techniques allow for a nuanced exploration of contentious topics in Australian politics, from violence and historical injustices to the impact of colonialism. Through seemingly innocuous scenes, Carey delves into broader political significance, offering a lens through which readers can analyze issues such as land nullification and Aboriginal firestick farming.

In conclusion, Peter Carey emerges as a significant Australian novelist, and his *True History of the Kelly Gang* stands as a crucial work that has not only achieved commercial success and critical acclaim but has also brought the Kelly narrative to the forefront of Australian pop culture. The novel's impact underscores the interconnectedness of high-brow literature and mainstream culture, demonstrating that serious novels can wield substantial influence on a nation's cultural fabric. *True History of the Kelly Gang* has repositioned the Kelly narrative in Australian pop culture, paving the way for further reinterpretations and discussions in the future.

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