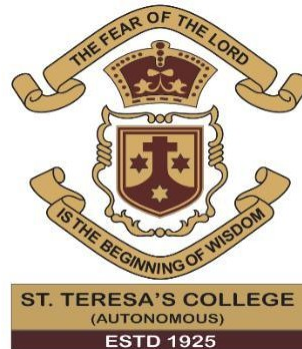


**Decoding the 'True' History: A Cultural Materialist
Reading of *True History of the Kelly Gang***



*Project submitted to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) in partial fulfilment of
the requirement for the degree of BACHELOR OF ARTS in English Language
and Literature*

By

NIRANJANA K J

Register No. AB20ENG021

III B.A. English Literature

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

Ernakulam

Cochin-682 011

Kerala

Supervisor

Ms. ATHIRA BABU

Department of English

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

Ernakulam

Kerala

March 2023

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project entitled “Decoding the ‘True’ History: A Cultural Materialist Reading of *True History of the Kelly Gang*” is the record of bona fide work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Ms. Athira Babu, Assistant Professor, Department of English.

Niranjana K J

Register Number: AB20ENG021

III B.A. English Language and Literature

Ernakulam

St Teresa’s College (Autonomous)

March 2023

Ernakulam

CERTIFICATE

I hereby declare that this project entitled “Decoding the ‘True’
History: A Cultural Materialist Reading of *True History of the Kelly
Gang*” by Niranjana K J is a record of bona fide work carried out by
her under my supervision and guidance.

Ms. Athira Babu

Department of English

Ernakulam

St Teresa’s College (Autonomous)

March 2023

Ernakulam

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Introduction

Based partly on the historical recordings and the remarkable writing found in Ned Kelly's Jerilderie letter, *True History of the Kelly Gang* by Peter Carey is an imaginative reconstruction of Ned Kelly's life story. Edward Kelly was one of Australia's most important and popularised bushranger and outlaw. Considered as Australia's original iron man Edward Kelly or Ned as he was commonly referred to, is noted to be one of the earliest precursors in using bullet proof shield during the late nineteenth century, in the form of his suit of armour that is still preserved in the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne. The man and his gang, even after 143 years since their passing, plays an important role in the distinctive cultural identity of Australia. Peter Carey is a two times booker prize winning Australian novelist who received several recognitions of his work on the outlaws including the Booker prize of 2001 and the same year's Commonwealth Writer's prize.

Cultural Materialism is a theoretical movement that emerged in the early 1980's along with New Historicism. The theory considers literary texts as discourse of ideologies that can be read as a means of power. Being conscious to the subversive potential of a text for subcultural resistance the theory proposes 'dissident reading' that reads the hidden political agenda and power struggles within a literary work.

The project aims to establish the absence of the entity of a single truth in history. The research questions the existence of an objective truth in history and tries to argue that history is basically a story, just a version of a story and which may vary depending on one another's perspective. The project tries to probe its issue using close textual analysis and notes the dominant hegemonic forces thereby identifying the possibilities of rejection or subversion.

Chapter one of the project outlines the theory of Cultural Materialism indicating its influence on Marxism and Michel Foucault's idea on power and knowledge. It also discusses the aversion the theory of Cultural Materialism possess against the ideologies of Humanism. The chapter compares and contrasts the similarity and differences between the theories of Cultural Materialism and New Historicism. The chapter also looks at some of the concepts of its major contributors including Raymond Williams, Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield thereby analysing the characteristics of the theory. The chapter then concludes by highlighting the relevance of Cultural Materialism against its already existing American counterpart, New Historicism.

Chapter two briefly sketches the recorded history of Edward Kelly and his group, the Kelly Gang. It attempts to analyse the significance of the gang in the history and culture of Australia and also looks into the socio-economic and political implications of Australia during the Ned's time. The

chapter compares the historical records of Ned Kelly to the novel, True History of the Kelly Gang. The chapter also compares two other versions of Ned Kelly and his gang, and along the process tries to ascertain the absence of a single history and identifying history as a perspective or a version of a person's story.

Chapter three of the project analysis the narrative techniques used by the author to present his version of the Ned Kelly story. The chapter explains the variety in language used in the novel, looks into the narrative elements used to enhance the text and mentions the superstitious and mythical elements of the novel used to provide insight of the Irish culture of Ned Kelly.

Chapter 1

Cultural Materialism: An Overview

Cultural Materialism is a Marxist inspired theoretical approach to studying cultural texts that first emerged in the 1980s as a movement in British Literary criticism and Renaissance studies. The term Cultural Materialism was coined by the left-wing literary critic Raymond Williams in his work *Marxism and Literature* published in 1977. The theory was later on popularised by the critics Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield in their seminal work, *Political Shakespeare* of 1985.

Cultural materialism attempts to investigate different aspects of the society including art, politics, economy and language from an external point of view and tries to figure out how identity and self are shaped from it. The theory has many of its ideologies influenced from Michel Foucault's notion of power and Marxist theory. Cultural Materialism rejects Humanists' beliefs of transcendent, truth, ahistorical and essential nature. Thus, the theory also stands against Leavis humanistic ideologies. F.R Leavis was an English literary critic of Liberal humanism, a theory that proposes subject as free, unconstrained author of meaning and action, the origin of history. The Leavis' method of literary criticism approaches texts from an objective lens with the goal of literature being a mode to humanize or civilize people. His method states readers to have sensibility while reading the text all the while

remaining objective.

Michel Foucault is a French philosopher and literary critic, whose ideas have had great influence on various literary movements and theorists. According to Foucault power and knowledge are mutually related and cannot be understood separately. He defines 'discourse' as a system of thought that governs the knowledge obtained by a person. Thus, Foucault's idea established a relation between power, knowledge and discourse. Cultural materialism on the other hand believes literary texts as a discourse related to ideologies that can be viewed as a means of power. For them a literary text reflects a power construction shaping the knowledge system thereby impacting a society. Cultural Materialists are post-structuralist in essence, that is, they reject the idea of a literary text having a single purpose or singular existence. Thus, the theorist began their criticism by highlighting the Renaissance of literature as it includes both the dominating and subordinate forces.

Marxism is another philosophy that was inspired in forming of the theory of cultural materialism. It is a social, economical and political philosophy that analyse impact of ruling class that is the Bourgeoisie or capitalist on the working class or the Proletariat, leading to uneven accumulation of wealth and privileges in societies. Cultural materialism's interest in historization of texts, articulating the material ideological forces of

work and their production is taken directly from Marxist literary criticism. Though Culturalism materialism seeks inspiration from Marxist criticism it also challenges the core concepts of broader Marxist theory. Marxism is a very deterministic theory, it reads cultural texts almost entirely based on their socio-economic terms, as products of a dominant cultural ideology that perpetuates and economically subjugates the proletariat. Which in regards of literary criticism leaves very little space for authorial innovation and influence of multiple cultures at work. Thus, cultural materialism can be identified as an adaptation of existing Marxist theory.

New Historicism is a literary theory based on the idea that literature should be studied and interpreted within the context of both the history of the author and the history of the critic. The theory, found by Stephen Greenblatt in the 1980s tries to understand intellectual history through literature and literature through its cultural context. Cultural materialism is a Marxist inclination of New Historicism, characterized by the examination of any historical material within a politicised framework in a radical and subversive manner. Like New Historicism its British counterpart Cultural Materialism also believes in the textuality of history and historicity of texts. Being conscious on the political plans conveyed in texts, cultural materialists are attentive to the ways in which power exerts itself through the implied ideologies set within a text. While the New Historicist generate apolitical readings in which there is no question of agency on the part of the

marginalised, Cultural Materialists are consciously political and aim to transform the political order as they seek to focus on the marginalised and exploited and also look at the possibilities of subversion and resistance in both the text and interpretive act. They are conscious of the subversive potential of a literature for subcultural resistance hence propose "dissident reading" which interrogates the hidden political agenda and power struggles within a text. Though both the theories are interested in studying literature and history side by side, they possess theoretical differences, Cultural materialism follows Marxist theory whereas New Historicism follows post structural theory.

Williams defines Cultural Materialism as a theory of the specificities of material, cultural and literary production within historical materialism. According to him a literary text is a political or historical document that cannot be separated from the context of its production. Williams viewed culture as a productive process and argued that the study of literary text of any age reflects the dominant values of that particular society. Material cultures like novels, paintings and architecture creations are cultural materials that could narrate the political struggles, economic, social and cultural systems. Materials of culture were defined as the tools of hegemonic political structures in society that silenced and discarded historical aspects in other narratives of history in order to validate certain values on cultural imaginary.

For better understanding of the literary theory, it is necessary to study the terms "culture" and "materialism" separately. Culture in this context refers to all aspect of a society that is not a homogeneous system but a composite group. For Williams, culture refers "to not only a body of intellectual and imaginative work, it is also essentially a whole way of life"(Williams,311). He identifies culture as a system dealing with social consciousness, thoughts and actions exhibited by the members of that social group. According to Williams there are two aspects of Culture, one "the known meanings and directions which its members are trained to" (Williams,4) and two "the new observations and meanings which are offered and texted" (Williams,4). Materialism refers to the methods which looks at the possessions which a society values. It is the value system. It signifies the opposite of idealism. Materialism takes account of the values we possess and aspires. It refers to the foundation upon which public institutions, such as that of religious ideas of people have evolved. The primary principle of materialism lies in the notion that social beings determine consciousness and social practice defines consciousness.

As one of the major anthropological perspectives for analysing human societies, Cultural Materialism incorporates its ideas from Cultural evolution, Marxism and Cultural ecology. Materialism claims human behaviour is impacted by the physical environment. Materialists believe human behaviours

as a part of nature and thus tries to understand them through the use of natural science. Though they do not affirm material reality to be more important than mental reality, the theory gives priority to the material world when they explain human societies. The doctrine of materialism developed from the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels presented evolutionary model of societies based on the materialist perspective. They argued that societies go through several stages from tribalism to feudalism to capitalism to communism. From the late 1920s, anthropologist became increasingly dependent on materialist explanations for analysing societal development and inherent problems of capitalist societies. Cultural Materialist as an expansion of Marxism explains cultural similarities and differences as well as models for cultural change within a societal framework consisting of three levels, these three levels of social system constitutes a universal pattern.

Infrastructure, which consists of the material realities such as technological, economic and reproductive molds, influence the other two aspects of culture. It is the basis for all other levels and includes how basic needs are met and how it interacts with local environment. Structure is the sector of culture that consists of organisational aspects of culture including society's social and political economy, and Superstructure consists of the ideology and symbolism aspects of society such as religion. According to Cultural Materialist, Marvin Harris, infrastructure is the most critical aspect of the three levels as it is where the interaction between culture and environment occurs. All the levels are interrelated such that change in the basic plane(infrastructure) can result

in changes on the other levels though it might not be immediate.

Dollimore and Sinfield reads cultural materialism as "a combination of historical context, theoretical method, political commitment and textual analysis"(Dollimore, 1994). Cultural materialism analyses the processes by which hegemonic forces in society appropriate canonical and historically important texts and utilise them in an attempt to validate or inscribe certain values on the cultural imaginary. Jonathan Dollimore rejects the essentialist ideology of man possessing unalterable essence, making it transcend history and society. The conventional Christian, humanist reading found in Renaissance drama follows such a perspective of Liberalism. He refuses to identify the work, King Lear of Shakespeare as an interpretation of 'man' and 'nature', and refers the 'true' reading of the play as power, property and inheritance. Dollimore and Sinfield writes that Cultural Materialist criticism registers its commitment to the transformation of a social order which exploits people on the grounds of race, gender and class, and interpretation of texts are based on this commitment.

Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield who are known to have considerable impact on the development of the movement in their seminal text Political Shakespeare identifies four defining characteristics of Cultural Materialism as a theoretical device. These are historical context, close textual analysis, political commitment and theoretical method. Cultural materialists

draws attention to the processes employed by contemporary power structures such as the church or state to disseminate ideology. To ensure this they explore a text's historical background and political implications and then through close textual analysis notes the dominant hegemonic position and after they identify the possibilities for the rejection or subversion of that position. The emphasis on the historical context helps undermine the timeless significance that is traditionally accorded to a literary text. Aim of Cultural Materialists is to allow literary texts to recover the histories that were misrepresented or repressed. Stress on the theoretical method signifies Cultural Materialism's break with Liberal humanism and absorbing of lessons of structuralism, post structuralism and other approaches. Focus on the political commitment signifies the influence of Marxist and Feminist approaches and perspectives in the theory and its break from the Conservative Christian framework that formerly dominated Shakespeare literature. Textual analysis locates the assessment of traditional approaches, it denotes to the commitment of practicing the theory on canonical texts that remain massive focus of academic attention.

Cultural materialism has found Renaissance studies a receptive to such analysis. Traditional humanist readings often refrain from regarding oppressed and marginalised in textual reading, whereas cultural materialism routinely consider such groups in their engagement with literary texts. Cultural Materialism holds that Infrastructure has influence on Structure,

while Structure exerts little influence upon Infrastructure. Marxist Materialism, on the other hand, maintains that Infrastructure and Structure are influential to each other.

Another distinction between Marxist and Cultural Materialism is Class Theory. Marxian class theory asserts that an individual's position in the class hierarchy is determined by their role in the production process. Marxist Materialism believes that social change remains beneficial within the ruling class or Bourgeoisie. Cultural materialists extend the class based analysis of traditional Marxism by focusing on the marginalised. Materialist feminism emphasises capitalism and patriarchy as the essential components in identifying the reasons to women's oppression. It focusses on the physical aspects that defines oppression. The theory focusses on social changing without seeking to transform capitalist system. They argue that material conditions of all sorts play a vital role in the social production of gender and evaluates the different ways in which women collaborate and participate in these productions. Thus, by drawing attention to the processes employed by contemporary power structures to disseminate ideology, Cultural materialism helps understand the strategies of oppression and work on demolishing them.

Cultural materialism as a theory reopened the interpretation of literature to the social, economic political and historical backdrop that

produced it. Cultural materialists focusses on strategies of social stratification, how a dominant social class seek to legitimize itself for which it constructs its opposition as the marginalised 'other', a practice that led to the issues of gender and race concern and also, a further lead for studies in queer system. Cultural materialists are also of the belief that no hegemonical ideology is absolute and that all ideologies will contradict itself at one point or the other. The theory reads texts for signs of subversion and political disagreement to arrive at provocative interpretations with an underlying motive to serve as an intervention in current political debates. Thus, the relevance of a British counterpart as Cultural materialism.

Chapter 2

Rescripting History to 'True' History of Kelly Gang

The Kelly Gang was an Australian outlaw gang of bushrangers who took part in bank robberies and police shootouts in the late nineteenth century. The gang led by the famous bushranger Edward Kelly, had three other members including his brother Dan Kelly and friends Joe Byrne and Steve Hart. The gang remains majorly known for the killing of three policemen at Stringybark Creek and raiding of banks at Euroa and Jerilderie. They are also remembered for issuing a manifesto that denounced the British Empire, police and Victorian government, calling for the justice of the poor. In 1880 the gang was besieged in Glenrowan, where three of its members were shot down and Ned Kelly, the gang leader, was captured and hanged, putting an end to the gang, even with thirty-two thousand Victorians signing a petition to pardon the man.

Edward (Ned) Kelly born in 1854 was the eldest son of Irish immigrant parents John (Red) Kelly and Ellen Quin. His father, John Kelly was an Irish immigrant convict who was sentenced to seven years transportation to Van Diemen's Land (colonial name of the Australian state, Tasmania) for the theft of two pigs. After the death of his father in 1866 young Ned was forced to take up the responsibility of his family and after a year of John's death the Kelly's shifted to Eleven Mile Creek of Greta District, Northeast Victoria, closer to the Quins, his mother's side of the family.

Ned's criminal history is noted to have begun from a young age of 14 years in 1869, when he was first imprisoned for assaulting a China man. Being the accomplice of the popular Bush ranger, Harry Power, led to his second arrest where he was charged of two highway robberies, though it got later dismissed. In 1871 Ned was again arrested and imprisoned for three years on receiving a stolen horse. It is during that time his mother, Ellen Quin married George King. Ned after his release in 1877 along with his stepfather and friends Joe Byrne and Aaron Sherrit was known to have operated a stealing production.

The Fitzpatrick incident is understood to have led to the formation of the Kelly Gang. In 1878 of April 15th Fitzpatrick, a policeman, came to the Kelly's hut to arrest Dan without a warrant. According to the officer, Ellen and her children were present in the hut and Dan had requested time to finish his meal before leaving to for prison. It was then Ned arrived at the scene and shot the man followed by Ellen, who struck him with a shovel. According to his disposition he was nursed by the Kelly's, and his hand was bandaged by Ellen. Nonetheless the Kelly's were arrested for the assault for attempted murder.

On 9th October 1878, Ellen Quin, Ned's friend Brickley Williamson and brother-in-law William Skillion was found guilty by the Judge, Sir

Redmond Barry, in attempting the murder of Fitzpatrick. Ellen was sentenced to three years of hard labour whereas the latter were sentenced for six years. It is to escape the arrest that Ned Kelly and his cattle rustlers fled into the hills and went into hiding, thereby forming the Kelly Gang.

On 25th October 1878, the gang ambushed the police camp led by Sergeant Kennedy with three constables in Stringybark Creek, Victoria. Ned was noted to have shot dead three policemen at the camp. Three days after the incident the gang were declared outlaws by the government and an award of 800 pounds were offered by the system for the arrest of the gang. On 9th December 1878 the gang staged bank robbery at the town of Euroa and in February another at Jerilderie. Ned had also produced his side of the Fitzpatrick incident in two letters, the Cameron letter which did not get fully published and the Jerilderie letter. By mid 1880s Aaron Sherrit's (a friend of the gang) conduct as a traitor became clear to the gang and it is commonly believed the police framed Sherrit to trap the outlaws. Sherrit on being the police informant of the gang was shot dead by Joe Byrne.

In June of 1880, the gang took hostage around 60 people at an Inn at Glenrowan and wearing the suits of armour, prepared themselves to fight the police as their plan to derail the train with the officials went astray as the result of Thomas Curnrow warning the train crew. The police after hours of ceaseless gunfire shot dead 3 members of the gang and captured Ned Kelly

who was then tried convicted and executed in Melbourne on November 11th, 1880.

Ned Kelly became a folk hero even before his actual capture. Over time, the Kelly legend gained paramount importance in growth of ideas of a distinct Australian identity. Ned Kelly gained massive support from the commoners which is quite evident from the thirty-two thousand petitioner who signed in to reduce his death penalty from death sentence to life imprisonment. According to the newspaper reports, many of his followers were middle-class workers of Larrikins. " Larrikins of the 19th century Australia were referred to discontented working class youth known for their excessive drinking and violent behaviour."("Ned's legacy") Ned's active supporters were members of a particular group of Larrikins called the 'Greta Mob'. The term Larrikins in modern day Australia refers to the daring nature and humour of Anzac soldiers, also known as the Australian and New Zealand army corps. World War I elevated Ned's position in Australian land with phrases such as "as game as Ned Kelly" becoming a common place among soldiers thus, marking Kelly as a hero. Soon the Anzac looked upto Kelly as a role model due to his Larrikin traits of being fearless and daring thereby, expanding the Kelly legend beyond working classes along with the idea of Larrikinism becoming a central identity to Australian cultures. The legend also attributed to in development and spread of Anzac legend of Australian military skill. The legend of Kelly also shares common elements

with outlaw narratives globally. Glorious death in his prime and becoming a martyr for his cause fits the legend along with folk heroes like Indian Phoolan Devi and the fictional Robin Hood.

Victorian colonies of Australia in the 19th century were witness to the huge gap in social and economic status of squatters and selectors. Much of the tensions that arose in Northeast Victoria came from the friction between squatters, the established land users, and the selectors- the new social groups settling in those regions. Squatters were the original settlers of Victoria from the 1830s, these groups settled on their own initiative procuring large tracts of the best lands with fertile soil along riverside for pasturing sheep and cattle. Selectors were social groups that reached Australia much later and who had to apply for selector allotment from the land acts set up by the government during 1860s and 1870s. They paid half of the allotment on selection and rent on the other half. The Selectors were forced to live a hard life as they had to compete for pastoral land occupied by the squatters and deal with discrimination due to religion and country of origin.

John (Red) Kelly was an Irish immigrant convict who was transported to the land of Tascamba for stealing pigs. Nineteenth century Victorian government practiced transportation of convicts into other colonies including Australia. Around one sixth of the Irish population is known to have been transported to Australia on this account. As convicts or poor migrants of the

eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century, many Irish specifically Irish Catholics faced social exclusion and discrimination from the system that saw itself as antipodean version of protestant Anglo Saxon culture. Thus, they faced double discrimination, inferiority to Anglo Saxon population within Britain and convict deportation to Australia where the system treated them as another race or the other excluded from colonial mainstream.

Thus, Kelly being of Irish origin in the lands of Australian colony found himself alienated from his own culture. The convict background of his predecessor made his family along with other Irish immigrants to be constant victim of official interrogation. The Quins and Kelly's were constantly alleged for theft by the police. The Irish foreigners were viewed by the English settlers as "a notch beneath the steer "and they faced consistent police harassment and the danger of ousting from their land. Thus oppression, poverty and colonialism resulted them to remain uneducated and restrained their chances to attain average occupations thereby adding to the improvement of a network of criminals.

The legend of Ned Kelly has been inspiring artists, writers and filmmakers for more than 120 years now. Many versions of Ned Kelly have been published throughout the years spanning from books, films, operas and even ballads.

John Sadlier, the officer in command during the capture of Ned Kelly, in his book, "*Recollections of a Victorian police officer*" depicts his own perspectives as an eyewitness of events and conveys everything what he alleged Ned confirmed after his capture. Sadlier's book concentrates on the murderous side of Ned. He accuses Ned to have invited all the gang member to fire bullets into the bodies of the policemen at Stringybark Creek so as to implicate all of them equally. The author also inculpated Ned to have intended to kill everyone on the train including the aboriginal trackers, policemen, news reporters and other civilians while compelling captured line repairers to derail the tracks. His novel focusses more on the siege at Glenrowan and the capture of the Kelly Gang. This novel of Sadlier tries to picture Ned as a manipulative and brutal conman, from the perspective of an investigating police officer.

Ian Jones novel *Ned Kelly: A short life* provides a definitive biography of the Australian outlaw reassembling every worthwhile fact of Ned Kelly in an extremely entertaining format. Though Jones sympathises with the bushranger who choose to remain a thief and a murderer willing to slaughter more including innocent railway personnel and passengers, he does not sugar coat Kelly crimes. Written in the form of classic Australian biography, Jones work is very readable rather than being academically ponderous it captures the mood of the text very well. Jones leaves it to his readers to ascertain Ned a hero or an Australian culprit.

Peter Carey's novel *True History of the Kelly Gang*, though pictures the life of Ned Kelly based on the evidence of his Jerilderie letters varies from recorded history on various levels. Carey has used his imagination to inculcate more drama and excitement within his text. From exaggeration of certain real instances like Harry Power under whom Ned worked as an accomplice is portrayed to be one of Ellen Quin's suitors, and incorporation of fictional characters like Mary Hearn, the woman who charts the character of Ned's love interest and the mother of his unborn daughter, the author tries to bring his audience to sympathise with the oppressed outlaw and excites them on his personal life. The prime focus of the novel remains the gang leader Edward Kelly and everything that had happened within the gang have been described in relation with Ned. Though there are quite a few changes in the novel, major events of the gang remain unaffected in the text. The novel also arraigns with the recorded history of Ned and his time. Carey describes the Victorian policy of Duffy Land Act introduced for the selectors, that is relevant in the late eighteenth century of Australian colonies, narrates the green sash acknowledgement Ned received for his bravery which Ned was reported to wear on his last shootout at Glenrowan.

Carey's novel, *True History of the Kelly Gang* is focused on Ned Kelly and his perspectives giving very minimal concern for other characters in the text. Though the novel names a multitude of characters from policemen

to neighbours not many characters are given much importance in the text.

John (Red) Kelly, Ned's father is represented as a lazy old man who fears the police force. In parcel one of Carey's narrative Sergeant O'Neil narrates to Ned and his siblings the history of the Kelly family that is the transportation of their father from Ireland. He tells the children that their father was transported on charges of killing his Irish landlord. As per historical records is said to have been transported for stealing pigs. John is pictured to be austere and distant to Ned in Carey's novel but Ned was known to have been called "our sunshine" but the rigid bond expressed in the novel contrasts this mention.

Ellen Quin, Ned's mother is represented as a hot-tempered passive woman whose insensibility in trusting the wrong man brings consequences to Kelly family. Carey's version of Ellen has multiple affairs with men including, Harry Power. In historical existence Ellen was known as a strong, resourceful and dignified woman. She was only involved with three men, two of who she married and remained faithful to.

Ned is identified as thoughtful, sympathetic quiet family man who was drawn into outlawry by circumstances, prejudices and twisted police characters. He is pictured as a loving father and protective partner. Ned is not recorded to have any love interests or have successors. His Jerilderie letter is

noted to have no guilt for his actions but statements of his account on life.

Joe Byrne is portrayed as Neds right hand. He is constantly mentioned of smoking opium in the novel. Historical background of Joe's opium habit is well known. Dan, Neds younger brother depicts his 19-year-old self-fighting Ned for his brotherly concern. Steve Hart is portrayed as man with a way of words.

Mary Hearn is a fictional character Carey introduces to play Ned's love interest and mother of his unborn daughter. Mary is also imagined to have a child with Ned's stepfather George King. She is later portrayed to have escaped to America to safeguard her kids and herself from the oppressive government.

The reason why the Australian legend of Ned Kelly still sustains even after 142 years since the outlaw's death can be credited to the ever-growing versions on the gang that come up in the fields of art and literature. The state library of Victoria's exhibition on Kelly conducted in 2003, labelled Kelly culture: Restructuring Ned Kelly, examined the cultural revolution of the Kelly legend. The library had exhibited various versions of Ned Kelly and the Kelly gang from novels to art pieces. The exhibition's co-curator, Allison Holland stated her perspective on subversion of the legend as-

The thing with Ned Kelly is you have the man and you have the mask. And the mask allows you, it gives you the freedom to re-create.. Almost everybody we meet and talk to has a family story about Ned Kelly. So it's very broad in its appeal and everyone can bring some new angle to it and new personal view. (Morrissey)

Major changes of the novel include the Fitzpatrick incident and the fictitious character of Mary Hearn. Constable Fitzpatrick came in to arrest Dan without a warrant and only with a telegram. Ellen Quin resented an arrest without a warrant. Thus, Ned Kelly trying to save his brother shot Fitzpatrick above his wrist and Ellen struck the man with a shovel. In Carey's version of the story, at the time where there was a warrant against both Ned and Dan, Fitzpatrick visits their hut and on seeing him pulling his sister Kate onto his knees Ned barged into the room and ordered Fitzpatrick to stop. On revealing that the policeman is engaged to one girl and has got another pregnant, Ellen Kelly banged his head and Ned shot his wrist. They dressed his injury and he departed with the intention of keeping the matter private. Carey describes the incident through Ned's voice as

He's engaged to one tart he's got another pregnant in Frankston. My mother never hesitated she raised her shovel and clouted Fitzpatrick across the head his helmet fell he stumbled drawing out his .45. I fired the .31 hitting him in the wrist his revolver clattered to the floor. (Peter Carey,212)

Ned was known to have been associated with the notorious outlaw, Harry Power and was also noted to be his accomplice. Though there is no documentations or evidence of Harry Power's romantic linking with Ellen, in Carey's account of Ned's life he brings in the idea of Power being one of the suitors of Ned's mother Ellen Quin and that it was her who sent the young Ned with the Bush ranger so as to sustain their large family. You can't come home I paid the b----r 15 quid to take you on. You are his apprentice now. (Peter Carey,91). Ned too has not been identified to have any romantic relations. Carey introduces a character, Mary Hearn in the novel to focus on Ned's love life. Imagined as a young Irish immigrant bearing his unborn daughter and also mother to his stepbrother. Carrey also tries to bring complex kin relations into his work. George being closer to Ned in age than his mother and the idea of the young man being Ned's stepfather and his daughter's sibling being Ned's step brother brings in the mystery of complication in the novel.

Carey focuses on the inner layers of Australian hero. In an interview with BBC sounds aired in the first of August 2001, Carey states that Ned's life is a hugely unimagined story but people often think of him as an armoured masculine figure. It is often the armour that is talked about and at many times the man who made it is forgotten. Carey had mentioned in many interviews about the softer side of Ned Kelly, on how much the green sash

meant to the young Irish boy and how, on the last three days of his life Ned wore the same sash under his suit of armour. Language of the Jerilderie letter had been utilised to build Carey's text. The rage, tone and even the vocabulary and the lack of punctuation of the Jerilderie letter has been borrowed to Carey's text. According to Carey one could hope to inhabit the character of Ned Kelly through the voice of the Jerilderie Letter. He had also mentioned the impact the letter had on him and how he had also carried a copy of the letter along with him for years. In an interview on imaging Ned Kelly, Carey states that only bits and bits of information is known about Kelly. There is no idea between what happened between the bits of information we have of Ned. There is a huge pleasure in inventing a whole world that is consistent with what is known, but unlike anything anybody ever imagined about the Kelly story before. Carey calls the novel the most inventive book he has ever written.

Australia still remains divided when it comes to their opinion on Ned Kelly. When one group sees him as a national hero who fought the unjust colonial rule, the other looks down upon the outlaw issuing him as a vicious criminal who brought death to three innocent policemen committed to do their duty. Similarly, the novel has also got its fair share of followers and critics. People have truly enjoyed the novel engaging themselves to the depth of the stories all the way realising it is true purpose. There is also a sect of people who bash the text as for them it is just a made-up story of the ancient

bushranger. New York Times reviews the novel along the lines “True History of The Kelly Gang isn't merely a historical novel; it's a fully imagined act of historical impersonation. Another review from a research scholar reads “Unsophisticated readers are liable to believe that Carey's novel is a real autobiography, printed from a manuscript written by Ned Kelly”. English writer, Robert McCrum had named true history of the Kelly gang as one of the 100 greatest novels written in English. In 2019, the novel was ranked 53rd on The Guardian's list of the 100 best books of the twenty first century. The novel has also won many awards like Colin Roderick Award for the best Australian book in 2000 along with the Booker prize award in 2001.

Thus, the novel True History of the Kelly Gang by Peter Carey differs far from the recorded evidence of Ned Kelly. Carey's novel vouches a different variation to the Ned Kelly story which is dominantly biased to the perspectives of the author portraying Kelly on the bright side. There are major changes in the novel when compared to the real-life documented evidence of Ned's life. Carey brings in imaginary elements in his novel to picture a popular bushranger and outlaw as an ordinary man who was forced to enter a life of crime on being edged by problems of oppression and poverty. The novel tries to focus on the reasons for his actions being the way it was.

Chapter 3

Techniques of Narrating 'True' History: Language and Culture

A narrative is a piece of writing that tells a story or the way in which an author presents information. They are works that provide an account of connected events in a chronological order or an imagined tale with flashbacks or multiple timelines. Literary elements in a narrative include its setting, plot, style, characters, themes and perspectives. A narrative device is a writing technique used to tell a story, it combines elements like styles and perspectives to provide a consistent narrative that is followed throughout the story. Narrative techniques also known as literary devices are methods that provide deeper meaning to the readers of a text by helping them use imagination to visualise situations.

The style a writer use is seen through the diction, or the language used in a text. Literary Techniques relevant to style or the language used to tell a story, includes metaphors, similes, images and more. The devices relevant to plot, that is, the sequence of events which makes up the narrative include flashbacks, foreshadowing and others. Common techniques relevant to narrative perspectives, or on who tells the story, includes first person narrative, third person narrative and third person omniscient. Narrative techniques enhance the meaning of a story. It helps to provide a structure to

the plot. Writers can highlight the meaning of their texts by controlling the order through which they reveal information or styles of their texts, thereby connecting to its readers on different levels.

The novel *True History of the Kelly Gang* is divided into 13 sections or series of parcels containing letters by Kelly addressed to his unborn daughter. Each chapter opens with a short description of events given in the original manuscripts of Kelly's writings. The novel also includes a preface, and a frame narrative at the end which describe the events of Kelly's final shootout at Glenrowan and his eventual death sentence. Carrey incorporates various narrative strategies in his text from epistolary form, episodic form, first person point of view and spectator space.

Epistolary or diary format is a device through which a narrative is created as a series of journal entries or other written documents. It adds realism to a story as it mimics workings of real lives. Epistolary form of the novel, *True History of the Kelly Gang*, wherein the context of the text is Ned Kelly's self-written letters he writes to his unborn daughter, adds authenticity to Ned's history. Thus, Carey uses the technique to bring originality to his story.

Episodic form of a text creates a story that is split into a variety of smaller self-contained adventures or episodes that is well connected to a

larger narrative or unifying theme. Each episode of this form revolves around a conflict at hand while setting up another for the future. Here, the episodic structure of the novel allows Carey to focus on separate events of Ned Kelly's life, that are mostly documented from evidence of his writings and arrange them in a chronological order to replicate Ned's personal history.

First person point of view is a narrative technique relevant to the perspective of a text. In a first-person narrative, the narrator would be a person within the story, describing their own point of view. This technique helps the work attain immediate connection with its readers, and also bring credibility to the plot. *True History of the Kelly Gang* novel is written in the first-person narrative of the male protagonist, Ned Kelly himself until an unidentified third person narrative voice appears to report about the siege at Glenrowan and the followed death of Ned Kelly.

Function of audience is another strategy Peter Carey utilises in his novel. Audience plays a major share in how authors approach their writings. The voice, tone and sentence structure in texts are overlooked to match its selected audience. Carey brings in a fictional audience in his book. Kelly's unborn daughter is identified as the audience for the letters Kelly is pictured to write. It also impacts the tone, focus as well as Kelly's representation of events and people in the novel. This is also the reason why Kelly's writing has less harsh portrayal of events and more optimistic tone as he's writing to the

future reader, his daughter. Although there is much profanity in the novel, it has been censored by replacing the vulgarity with terms such as "effing" or "adjectival" as the writings are aimed for the reading of his young daughter.

“God willing I shall live to see you read these words to witness your astonishment and see your dark eyes widen and your jaw drop when you finally comprehend the injustice we poor Irish suffered in this present age.” (Carey,12) This line indicates the first-person narrative of the novel as it utilises the pronoun ‘I’ to tell the narrators' perspective. Here, the ‘words’ mentioned relates to the letters Kelly is pictured to write and ‘you’ refers to his fictional daughter, the recipient of his letter.

The novel *True History of the Kelly Gang* is based on the grammar, idiom, syntax and expressiveness of Kelly's own account of his actions given in the Jerilderie letter of 1879. Rhetoric language is used in the text to provide strong connection with its audience. Carey uses various figurative language in his work from similes to metaphors. Distinctive vernacular style of language along with slang words and other idioms are used to by the author to express Ned's language.

Along with unstructured sentences, removal of commas and use of run on sentences Carey tries to replicate the style of Kelly's Jerilderie letter.

Though there is limited punctuation in the novel even when dialogues are used, correct spelling is consistent throughout the work. The language used in the text is that of oral storytelling, emphasising Ned's cultural tradition and his alienation from the more educated English elite. For example, Ned states the line 'I were so very guilty I could never of admitted that life without my father had become in more ways Pleasant.' (Carey,29) to express the regret on his father's death. Here the language projects poor sentence structure and grammar as that of an uneducated country lad of late nineteenth century Australia.

Idioms and slang words are common elements in Carey's novel, through the use of which he tries to bring in the Australian colloquial language used by Ned Kelly during his time. A Slang refers to the vocabulary used by people of the same social group who know each other well. Carey uses slang words such as Traps which refers to the police force and Gorg, a synonym for liquor. Other idioms of Australian colloquial language used in the text include Gob and duff. Idioms are expressions or slang used by a particular group of people that may not make literal sense. Carey uses the phrases "shut your gob " and "duff another fellow's heifer " in the first parcel of his novel while describing an instance where Ned steals their neighbour Mr Murray's horse and how his father owns up to the crime and gets jailed for the act, " Thus were Father taken from me handcuffed to the stirrup iron of Doxcy's mare."(Carey,28).

A Metaphor is a literary technique where one thing is compared to another by stating their shared qualities. It helps create vivid imagery that transcends literal meaning. Thus, it helps bring a greater effect of connection and empathy to readers than what can be brought by a literal description. In an instance at the birth of his stepsister, his mother Ellen had with George King, Kelly recalls on the infant with the line, "She were a little foal a calf" (Carey, 32).

A simile is a figure of speech that compares two different things using words 'like' or 'as'. It helps create a concrete image into writings of abstract concepts. During the police interrogation on the theft of Murray's mare, Kelly describes his father's reaction to the same with the line, "But my father would say nothing he were like some creature drugged by spiders." (Carey,28)

Imagery, another feature used in the novel, is a literary device that uses vivid descriptions that appeals to the readers senses and help create an idea in their minds. The images used in the novel relates to the things familiar in the life of a young country boy of that time (spiders and fowls) and helps reinforce the authenticity of Ned's voice. He mentions his father, John "Red " Kelly stating, " I lost my father from a secret he might as well been snatched by a roiling river fallen from a ravine."(Carey, 18). Thus, creating a clear description and vision of events on its audience.

Though one of the Gang's fellow member Joe Byrne is understood to have served as Kelly's amanuensis in writing the Jerilderie letter, Carey's work gives the idea of Kelly being the sole author and scribe of his text. Thus, by doing so he constructs a paratextual material to sustain the exclusion of Byrne and his contributions in the letter. Trying to replicate and enlarge the Jerilderie letter Carey obscures its potential as a collaborative effort of Joe Byrne and Ned Kelly. This resulted as Carey strongly believes he found a single voice in the letter that is of Ned Kelly's and that the voice gave in to the character's DNA that is Ned's. According to Carey one could hope to inhabit the character of Ned Kelly through the voice of the Jerilderie letter.

Poetic language of metaphors has immense potential, and in Carey's novel it helps create a temporary alliance with an emotionally affected audience. Through the metaphorical language that Kelly's voice establishes, Carey intends to bring the tenderness and vulnerability of a personality which a naive narrator could not have expressed directly. The images he constructs in his novel also provides a powerful appeal to the readers.

Irish culture and heritage are a recurring thread in the novel. Characters of Irish mythic tales are mentioned by Ned's mother as the family faces difficulties. The stories of Ireland that he hears from his mother develops his idealisation for his home country and draws him to a place he

had never witnessed.

The story of Deirdre, recorded in the Ulster cycle of Irish mythology is a tale of love, lust and death, dating back to ancient Ireland. Another cultural hero figure of Irish Celtic mythology of Ulster cycle is CúChulainn. The warrior hero believed to be the incarnation of the Irish god Lugh, this man of superhuman strength is well known for his herculean feats and is also referred to as Ireland child of light. These mythical legends represent all of Ireland and its history.

Ireland is intimately linked to Ned Kelly from the stories he had known from his mother. During the times of severe trouble and poverty, Ellen would resort to the stories of Irish myth. “The stories of Conchobor and Dedriu and Mebd the tale of Cuchulainn I still see him stepping into his war chariot.” (Carey,29). By mentioning of Irish tales Ellen, tries to bring an ideality of life for her kids and herself, what they cannot afford in Australia. The stories bring him a sense of home, safety and light against the harsh reality of bitter experiences they faced in Australia.

An Irish American phenomenon of cross dressing or transvestism that operated in Pennsylvania during the end of nineteenth century was noted to have its origin in pre famine Ireland. Presumed to be an anti-British cell that worked against the utilitarian government, this secret society of males called

Molly Maguire was alleged to have its members in blackened face and women's clothing.

To incorporate this traditional idea found in Ireland, Peter Carey imagines the Kelly's as a part of a fictional Irish faction called the "Sons of Sieve". Those are men according to Carey, who blackens their skin and wears uniforms of women's clothing while committing crimes and standing up to their oppressors as a way to undercut their authority. The first chapter of the novel shows a young, disturbed Ned furious and concerned from the mockery of Sergeant O'Neil on his father wearing a dress. As an embarrassed young boy Ned is seen burning the dress. "Your father was seen by Mr McClusky and Mr Eillett and myself he was wearing a dress with roses on its hem can you ever imagine such a thing". (Peter Carey,19) Later on, when he realises more about men in dresses through Mary Hearn, as she retells the gang, an event of her past back in Ireland where a group of men in women's dresses with blackened faces came into her front yard, brutally killed a horse and assaulted her father who rebelled against the act just to show their conflict against the authorities. "Then you should know Joe this costume is worn by Irishmen when they is weak and ignorant". (Peter Carey,255). Though Mary showed her resentment to the imagined faction, it is from her that Ned realises what the blackened and frilly dresses stand for in his family's legacy. For him, as per the context of the novel it becomes the uncompromising army of cross-dressing bandits who remains immortalised for their actions against

oppressors in the lands of Ireland.

The novel also pictures mythical and superstitious elements within its story. A myth is usually a traditional story, one concerning of early history the people or explaining natural or social phenomenon typically involving supernatural beings or events. A superstition on the other hand refers to a widely held belief in supernatural influences either good or bad or the practices based on such events. Both myth and superstition produce psychological effects on people, while the effects include irrational thinking and incoherent decision making in the case of superstitions, myth tries to conform one's habits and understandings of morals and values.

A myth that formed alongside early Irish civilization and remained part of its cultural consciousness is that of the banshees. A banshee, according to Irish legend is a female spirit or supernatural being in Irish and other Celtic folklore whose wailing at night warns the death of the family member who hears the spirit. Irish sufferings are assumed to have been predetermined and the banshee, the death messenger pursues Irish convicts even in Australian colonies. Carey includes an instance in his novel where Ellen Quin encounters with a banshee at night when Ned was away with Harry Power. He then gets to see the women of fairies and describes it to be a 3ft tall ugly old crone in a red dress. Ellen's encounter with the spirit is described through the line, "Who are you? But she knew already it were the banshee she retreated to her

door so her children would be safe behind her."(Carey, 87)

The superstitious element of the novel is displayed by Ellen, Ned's mother when she blames all the ill failings of the family from the death of her two daughters, Annie from childbirth and baby Ellen, (the child she had with Bill Frost) from plague to the curse of a rat charmer named Kevin. She believed that it was because of her fault in repelling away the man from the shebeen that resulted in the short comings of her family. He states "... Mother always believed it were the stinky man's curse that killed our Annie and left us with Flood's child and for this she took all the blame onto herself. (Carey,158)

The novel also employs psychoanalytic theory in its mode of narration to construct a morally ambiguous male protagonist. Plot development of Carey's text follows Freud's Oedipus theory. According to Oedipus theory by Sigmund Freud, an Australian neurologist, a child desires to possess their parent of opposite sex and eliminate the parent of the same sex. In the case of boys, Freud describes they intend to marry their mother or have sexual possession of the women by killing their father. A boy thus, competes with his father to satisfy his sexual desires towards the mother. Freud states that it is in the anxiety of losing his penis over wanting the mother, competing against the dominant father that the child diverts his desire outside of his family. This state where the boy is forced to choose between his penis and

desire for mother is what Freud calls castration complex.

In the context of the novel *True History of the Kelly Gang*, Ned is represented to be responsible for his father's death. It is described as his fault of butchering a squatter's heifer that leads to his father's arrest and followed imprisonment. Being ex-convict, the imprisonment strained him, and John passed immediately after his release. When his father was jailed Ned confesses himself feeling guilty but also quite happy in helping his mother with the farm chores. Indicating content in the elimination of his father. He also finds his mother not wanting her husband at home. Ellen Quin is described to resent Mr Shelton's proposal of realising her husband from jail in gratitude of Ned saving his child from drowning.

Ned's wish to replace his father is exhibited by him occupying his father's chair. He punishes the men who leaves Ellen. After the death of his father, he is disappointed to see his mother around her suitors, Bill Frost and also to see him in his dad's chair.

The mother-son bond is greatly stressed in the novel. The beginning of Ned's memory as given in the book starts with the humiliation and oppression his mother, Ellen Quin faces from the police as she tries to deliver some cake to her jailed brother Jimmy Quin. She required her husband to take revenge for her dignity but then John is said to act like a coward at the

instance. Ellen then declares his cowardice saying, "You are a coward she cried."(Carey,14) this event showed John's power be taken away and soon he was dead after his incapability was proclaimed. This incident had traumatic effect on Ned. In castration of the father (father losing penis) the son who identified himself with the father feared that he would be declared incapable by his mother. Thus, although he had the chance to live by escaping to America with Mary Hearn and lead the life of a man with his own family, Ned chooses to lose his life rather than letting his mother down or be proved to be a coward like his father. The psychoanalytic narrative of the plot combined with epistolary writing helps Carey bring the reader be close to the narrator who speaks in an intimate vernacular way, driving more sympathy to the novel.

Conclusion

The story of Ned Kelly as given in the novel *True History of the Kelly Gang* is the furthest thing from the recorded evidence of Kelly life. The novel does not offer a real historical account on the Bush ranger but fictional account of his story aligning to the perspective of the Australian novelist Peter Carey. To claim the novel to be wholly devoid of historical facts would also be untrue as the novel makes references to various incidents of the recorded history in its course of telling Kelly's story. Like, the death of John Kelly when Ned was a young boy, is one to quote from many other evidential recordings. It differs from the available factual knowledge through the dramatization Carey has made in his work on the fictitious character of Mary Hearn and establishing the bushranger as a father.

According to Cultural Materialists, a literary text is a means of power. Thus, a historical recording can be read as the means of power of the hegemonical structures of that time period. In the late nineteenth century of the Victorian colony of Australia, it is quite evident that the British Empire was the dominating power structure. Therefore, it is assured that the present recorded history of the outlaw who fought against the oppressive rule of the authoritarian government is highly biased in projecting the brutality caused by the man while hiding the cause for such a rebel, hiding the atrocities

caused by the empire in the darkness and picturing the government and its allies including the police force and judiciary system in a better light.

Through such a realisation one can conclude that any existing history is biased on the perspectives of the more impactful or powerful authority during the time of recording.

By setting the foundational facts to frame the narrative and then weaving in strands of an alternate truth and set of events, Carey gives an alternative interpretation of Ned's history. With the use of this strategy, the figure and the myth of Ned Kelly can reframe the preconceived conceptions made about him and also provide his own interpretation of history. Similarly, all variations of the Ned Kelly story that has been produced in the fields of art and literature, are all based on the perspectives of its respective curators. This system of redefining actions according to one's preferences gives in the idea of the absence of a single abstract history and opens doors to perception to acknowledge history as the versions to a story.

Thus, this idea indicates that Peter Carey's novel *True History of the Kelly Gang*, though widely considered to be ironic to its title as the story varies from the historical records, is indeed a true history just like that of other variations on Ned's stories as that of John Sadlier's novel "*Recollections of a Victorian police officer*". All the works describes True history from their own perspective and history thereby remain versions to a story.

True History of the Kelly Gang is a novel of great research potential as the novel encompasses a sundry of varied elements, from space narrative to relationships stressed in the novel. The novel provides great scope in analysing Psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud in the relationship between Ned and Ellen Kelly. Their relationship is greatly stressed in the novel, and it acts as a silent feature in defining the Character and actions of its protagonist. The novel also paves opportunity in studying the relevance of space theory in the novel, where one can claim Ned's fate to have been influenced by the circumstances he was put through and physical environment he was born into.

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