III

Writing in the Postcolonial/Postmodern Space

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

Postcolonialism and postmodernism both work subversively, using and misusing components of the systems and ideas they want to challenge, and undermining them from within. Though Carey repudiates any categorization into a specific literary mould, in the process of nation-building he invariably pursues some of the issues and concerns fundamental to postcolonial writings. According to Krassnitzer, Carey "uses the techniques of imperialist cultures only to subvert and undermine the same, working in a typically post-colonial fashion". Carey's novels operate on multiple levels and "lend themselves to innumerable readings on various levels and within different reading
Both postcolonialism and postmodernism engage in “the de-centering and subverting process” and “a kind of game which challenges fixation of any kind.” Opposing and challenging the given monolithic constructs, both postcolonialism and postmodernism, suggest “multiplicities and multiple possibilities” thus provoking and permitting the reader to participate in providing meaning to the text.

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

Postmodernism prefers fissures, which may be of elements like gender, class, race, etc. It endorses expressions like “decentering”, “discontinuity”, “disruption” or “distortion”. Thus it approves of notions of heterogeneity,
multiplicity and pluralism. Postmodernist literature experiments with blending literary genres, cultural and stylistic levels, the serious and the playful, so that they resist classification according to the traditional literary rubrics. It also takes upon itself the task of subverting the foundations of our conventional modes of thought and experience, with its constant questioning of the given structures and concepts.

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

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

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

by this I mean those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages ... In most of the critical work on postmodernism, it is narrative – be it in literature, history, or theory
that has usually been the major focus of attention. Historiographic metafiction incorporates all three of these domains: that is, its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and concepts of the past.¹²

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

Postmodern fiction, thus in accordance with the strategy of historiographic metafiction, plays upon the truths and lies of historical records, endeavouring to perform a rethink and consequently attempting a reworking of its predecessors. It problematizes narrative representation and aims at multiple meanings and multiple realities. While writing or re-writing histories, there is no attempt to record or reproduce factual details. Instead, in keeping with its attempt to debunk objectivity and verisimilitude, postmodernism prefers to imagine and invent histories, blurring the distinction between fact and fiction due to a clever amalgamation of the two. Attempting to drive home the point that absolutist history is an impossibility, in its deconstruction of history it draws attention to the fact that subjectivity is imminent in the process of recording history, thus making the whole idea of having a neat construction of history or neat historical records a virtual impossibility.
Carey makes use of the postmodern mode to further his postcolonial concerns. In an interview Carey states that "his fiction involves a form of political questioning: Do people want to, or have to, live the way they do now? What will happen to us if we keep on living like we do now?"\textsuperscript{13} His fiction is known to explore experiences bordering normality and is inhabited by hybrid characters "living in in-between spaces or on the margins"\textsuperscript{14}. He often stretches or challenges our views of the world and of what is normal. Taking to metafictional strategies immensely, Carey's fiction is a hybrid "crossing and confusing genres, juggling in the borderlands between the popular and the serious, the high and the low"\textsuperscript{15}. Carey deftly substantiates the views of Homi K. Bhabha who says:

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

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

Carey creates new myths for his country. One of these is of the battler, who struggles against all odds to survive, most of the time ending up a loser. A battler is one who tackles all adversities head-on, significant of the first Australians who had to battle the odds of climate and other harsh conditions. He weaves a world of lies around himself that makes it easier for him to confront the harsh truths around him. Yet invariably this web of lies entangles him, leaving him entirely at their mercy. Another myth created is that of the spieler or trickster, who can sweet-talk his way out of any situation.
In *Bliss*, Harry exemplifies the Australian character. He takes life easy till his first heart attack. But later the reader is witness to his constant struggle to prevent being captured by the ‘Those in Charge’ (*B89*). He feels that he is in Hell and thus all his actions veer towards salvation from being damned in hell. His drastic act of giving up his life of luxury and comfort for the vagaries of the Bog Onion Road Commune in the hope of salvation also point to the battler instinct of the Australians. Herbert Badgery in *Illywhacker* is a wanderer on a quest for stability. His whole life is a constant struggle against all the odds he faced, from a term in gaol to being caged by his grandson and exhibited in the Best Pet Shop in the World. A self-confessed liar, Badgery is forever entrapped in his lies. Oscar and Lucinda’s respective tales are no different in *Oscar and Lucinda*. They are both misfits who have to endure all forms of chastisement as they fail to conform to the desired norms of society. Their lives are a constant struggle to assert themselves and attain their wishes. In *The Tax Inspector*, Benny, Maria, as well as the others are shown struggling to come to terms with the realities of life in modern day Australia. Where Benny loses his mental balance and adopts bizarre means to regulate his life and his failure at his job, Maria is always endeavoring to bring tax defaulters to justice. Tristan is also another of Carey’s battlers in *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith*. A deformed mutant, he lives his life, despite all the odds he faces. In this he has the assistance of people like Wally who love him a lot. Jack Maggs in *Jack Maggs*, a denizen from the prison island of Australia, also fights against all ordeals that he encounters in his chequered life. Having had to face the worst in his
lifetime, the reader is made privy to the fact that he still retains his affectionate nature, as is evident in his behaviour towards his adoptive son Phipps.

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

*Illywhacker, Oscar and Lucinda, The Tax Inspector, The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* and *Jack Maggs* all attempt a reworking of the histories that they portray. *Illywhacker* and *Oscar and Lucinda* try to put right the history of the country. The aborigines who remain an active absence in *Illywhacker* are given a voice in *Oscar and Lucinda*. Herbert in *Illywhacker* is constantly reminded by Leah that the ownership of the land by the settlers who came to Australia itself is a big lie. This is the first lie that has spawned so many more nullifying the existence of the aborigines. In *Oscar and Lucinda*, Carey presents the pioneering zeal of the Englishman who mapped the country and claimed it as his own. Oscar is a witness to the decimation of the original inhabitants of the
land. In *Jack Maggs* the reader is provided with a narration that reverses the
upto-now held notion of the early Australian convict settlers as violent and
dreadful. Maggs is shown humanely and in possession of tremendous affection
despite all that he has endured in his life.

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

In *Bliss*, stories are given significance. This could be the ‘completely original
story’ (*B76*) of Little Titch that Harry narrates to the policemen, or the role he
later plays as the storyteller at Bog Onion Road. Thus the reader is presented
with stories within stories. One story is of ‘The Man with the White Suit’
(*B248*) i.e., how David met his end ‘with the sun coming out as he falls, and
they say *Pero era solo una mariposa* (but it was only a butterfly) *que se volaba*
(flying away’) (*B248*).

*Illywhacker* has insertions of letters that Phoebe writes to Annette (*I154*),
(*I189*), a portion of the letter from Sid Goldstein to his daughter Leah (*I286*) or
even Leah’s letters to Badgery when he is in jail. There is also an insertion of a
legal document that Herbert Badgery signs on the insistence of Phoebe (I192). Badgery also quotes from the poems of Phoebe (I205).

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

Insertions of songs are found in *The Tax Inspector*. These could be Cathy’s songs like the one she sings for Maria (*T*137), or the Midnight Oil tape from which Mort sang out loud (*T*110). *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* is replete with maps drawn to scale, references and footnotes on every page as well as a glossary of Efican English and Voorstand English for the benefit of the reader. There are also insertions of Efican folk songs (*ULoTS*4), (*ULoTS*229) in the novel. Carey also includes an excerpt from ‘*Bruder Duck’s Travels*, Badberg Edition’ (*ULoTS*3).

In *Jack Maggs* also Carey includes an excerpt from *Du magnetisme animal* (1820) by Armand Marie Jacques de Chastenet, Marquis de Puységur, before he begins the narration. The novel has narrations within the main narrative.
Maggs narrates his own tale in the form of letters \((JM81-85), (JM101-117), (JM167-171), (JM226-329)\), etc. written in invisible ink to his adoptive son Phipps.
i) Narratology

M. H. Abrams\textsuperscript{17} elaborates that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Revealing his identity at the beginning of the novel, the narrator leaves the reader in no doubt about the position he is speaking from. Occasionally the
narrator also seeks to pass implicit judgement on events or conditions in the narrative. He also comments on the received ideas of history. In *Oscar and Lucinda*, chapter 103, deals with the treatment received by the Aborigines from the settlers who traveled into Aborigine land on a pioneering expedition. The narration here is almost taken away from the narrator by a voice that the reader is informed is that of Kumbaingiri Billy, an Aborigine. This account is taken to be the truth by the narrator and is contrasted with the account given in historical records maintained by the settlers.

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

Herbert Badgery in *Illywhacker*, as a first person narrator, also betrays a detailed knowledge of the characters in the narration than is realistic. He admits this fallacy when he says that 'as I tell you these things I cannot
possibly know' (I165). He orders the events in a manner that is not chronological, shifting to different strands of the story as suits his narration most effectively. He is also the protagonist of the novel, one around whom all the characters revolve. He introduces himself to the reader at the beginning of the novel as ‘a terrible liar’ and emphatically stats that ‘I have always been a liar. I say that early to set things straight. Caveat emptor. My age is the one fact you can rely on, and not because I say so, but because it has been publicly authenticated’ (I11).

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

In The Tax Inspector, the narrator takes us over four important days in the Catchprice family. Threatened by tax ruin, the reader is made privy to the internal goings-on in the family. Secrets like the child-abuse prevalent tumble out in the course of the narration. The transformation that Benny, the youngest Catchprice, undergoes is emphasized, as is his new ethic of being in control.
Maria Takis, the tax inspector, is portrayed as the trigger to all the pent-up emotions and feelings lying dormant in the Catchprice clan.

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

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

Fictionality, in Carey's novels, is primarily a product of the speaker's intention. When deciding to share his discourse with an audience, the author determines its status as fictional. The audience recognizes fictionality as a conventional mode and understands that the ensuing story is not to be interpreted as true or false. 21
Culler too lays emphasis on the role of the reader when he states that interpretations of a text are achieved as per “the ways we [the readers] succeed in making various codes come together and cohere.”

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

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

The chronology in the novels is often jumbled with a constant shift in focus from one character or situation to another. This allows the narrative to allude to its own artificiality where there is a deliberate placing of events in places where they will receive maximum elucidatory power. Larsson feels that “chronology in Carey’s novels is carefully manipulated inorder to highlight Kermodean ‘moments of significance’ and form a foundation for a coming revelation.”
Morson in *Narrative and Freedom* indicates the device of foreshadowing that "involves backward causation, which means that the future must already be there, must somehow exist substantially enough to send signs backward". All fictions have an ending and this ending is signalled at different points in the narrative. Foreshadowing is a strategy that is used by writers to signal these endings. Thus the reader is expected to wait till the end of the narration to have a complete and fully intelligible understanding of the narration. Foreshadowing can be identified only after the incident hinted at, occurs. Larsson states:

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

Herbert Badgery in *Illywhacker* claims he has 'a salesman's sense of history...the intervals on my whirling clock are dictated by the time it takes to make a deal, and that is the basic unit of my time' (1343). All of Herbert's actions are calculated ones. His lies lend credence to all his actions. Constantly getting into deals as a salesman would, Herbert manages to even negotiate his own independence. In the last pages of the novel we see the salesman's sense of history being proved when he is set up as an exhibit by his grandson Hissao. The Pet Emporium is an extension of the lies that were engendered by Badgery.
and that have now gained gigantic proportions. Badgery now waits for the end of the lie, i.e., the destruction of the Pet Emporium, to begin. When it finally begins, Badgery explains to the reader that with the sound of the 'crashing glass' (I600), the end begins. The end will reveal that Hissao and the Pet emporium are all lies and thus they will be done away with. They are only a mirage.

In *Oscar and Lucinda*, Oscar’s death is foreshadowed twice. The first time is when he sets out to transport the glass church to Belligen. It occurs in one of his opium induced dreams. Oscar fears the water. Since they have to cross various rivers which would otherwise be problematic for Oscar, Jeffries keeps him constantly sedated with opium, so that most of the time he is drugged and not in his senses. This is also to humiliate him. It is at that point that Oscar dreams that he is ‘somehow inside his father’s aquarium’ (*O&L*464). The second instance is when he is seduced by the narrator’s great-grandmother. The reader is informed that after she seduces him and attends to him, Oscar looked ‘like a tropical fish in his father’s aquarium’ (*O&L*499). Oscar meets his end when he returns to the glass church, despite his phobia about water, to pray after he has been seduced by Miriam. He also marries her. When one of the rafts on which the church stood snaps and the church sinks, Oscar is trapped inside it helplessly. The crumbling glass church is described as ‘aquarium glass’ and Oscar has ‘a vision of his father’s wise and smiling face, peering in at him’ (*O&L*4510).
When Jack Catchprice in *The Tax Inspector* tells Maria that ‘the angels are not winning’ (*T*202), he is foreshadowing the end of Benny Catchprice. Benny has been trying to transform himself into an angel and even has an angel’s wing tattooed on his back. Jack’s comment thus suggests that Benny will not be victorious in his undertaking as is evident when Maria manages to subdue him and save her baby. It is only after Benny is dead that Maria notices Benny’s tattoo and thinks it to be a serpent. ‘Then she saw it was not a serpent but an angel, or half an angel – a single wing tattooed on his smooth, boy’s skin – it was long and delicate and it ran from his shoulder to his buttock – an angel wing’ (*T*279). Jack’s statement also indicates that idealism will not win and that Maria’s battle against corruption is a losing one. The end of the novel sees Maria inadvertently giving in to her disillusionment. She is further implicated because she has linked herself to Jack, and in doing so, has already compromised herself.

In *Jack Maggs*, Oates’ sister-in-law, Lizzie’s death presents the element of foreshadowing. Having conceived Oates’ illegitimate child, Lizzie takes the abortive pills that Oates has procured for her through Maggs to abort her unborn child. She does not realize that her sister, Oates’ wife, has put the same pills she brought into her tea and that she has thus taken a fatal double dose of the abortive pills. When Maggs and Oates are together burning and destroying all the material Oates has collected on Maggs, Lizzie contemplates:
It was then she understood that her life had always been travelling towards this point. There was always to be this storm. The poor woman was always going to fall. This moment had lain there waiting since the day when Tobias had first come to court her sister at her father’s house in Amersham. (JM333-34)

Similarly when ‘the black ash’ (JM334) from the burning of Oates’ material falls on her, it is indicative of what the end of her and her unborn child will be. She ultimately dies from a mishandled abortion, an overdose of abortive pills. When Oates visits the mortuary he sees one of the dead bodies covered with a white muslin cloth ‘the same material as Lizzie’s night gown …. The muslin felt exactly as it did when it clothed his sister-in-law’s young body’ (JM145). When Lizzie dies, all her clothes are burnt in the fireplace by Oates.

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

God save him, this was how Jack Maggs would end. He did not know how he knew this, or why this appalling spectre forced itself into his mind …. This horrifying vision: Jack Maggs trapped inside
his burning house, a whirl of fire blazing all about him ... He had glimpsed the ending of his book (*JM*146-47).

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

In those flames he saw, as he would throughout his life ... the wraith of their dead child, ... Lizzie herself ... folding into the horrible figure of decay.

... He poked at the black linen and found in it one abhorrent face ...

It was Jack Maggs, the murderer, who now grew in the flames. Jack Maggs on fire. Jack Maggs flowering, threatening, poisoning ...

It was now, on the seventh of May, in the darkest night of his life, that Jack Maggs began to take the form the world would later know. (*JM*354-55)

Maggs never meets the death that Oates accords him. Neither does he ever read Oates’ book as he dies three years before it is published. Oates’ end of Maggs is more a resolution of his own story, i.e., his life has been ruined, burnt along with Lizzie’s clothing.
A prolepsis is defined by Gerard Genette as "any narrative manoeuvre that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later"\textsuperscript{28}. Prolepsis attempts to present a future event as if it had already occurred: it helps the narrator to manipulate and control the course of the narration as desired. Carey in his novels makes extensive use of prolepses to chart the course of his novels and the readers' expectations.

In \textit{Bliss} Carey exhibits the "Marquez-like manner of anticipating future action through changes of tense and the use of the future in the past"\textsuperscript{29}. The first sentence of the novel reads 'Harry Joy was to die three times, but it was his first death which was to have the greatest effect on him, and it is this first death which we shall now witness' (B11). Similarly David's introduction that the narrator recounts refers to him as 'Harry's son, who ... contemplated arrest and murder by knife; he stood before these visions with his hands clutched, his body rigid, while the lightning danced around the nearby hills' (B33). Another instance is when the reader is informed that 'when he was about to die in a foreign country, years later ...' (B29). Both these instances serve to inform the reader of the fate of Harry and David.

In \textit{Illywhacker} and \textit{The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith} the story is narrated in "one enormous flashback"\textsuperscript{30}. Thus in \textit{Illywhacker}, Herbert Badgery introduces himself as being 'something of a celebrity' (I11), who is kept on display in a
cage by his grandson Hissao. Even though he reveals himself to be a hundred and thirty-nine years old, he states that 'it’s only the curiosity that keeps me alive: to see what my dirty old body will do next' (I11). Thus the reader is warned of an eventful life that Badgery has lived and which tale he is going to narrate. As Herbert reaches the end of his narration he conditions the reader to expect The Badgery clan to have ‘more interesting times ahead’ (J600). In The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith, Tristan’s narration begins after he has lived for around thirty years of his life. He also tells us the story of his life till then. While talking of his birth, Tristan affirms that ‘the birth was fast and easy. The life was to be another matter’ (ULoTS11). As Tristan nears the end of his narration, he also brings to the readers’ notice that ‘at that time, although I did not know it, my unusual life was really just beginning’ (ULoTS414).

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

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

This reveals that somehow the Christmas pudding and the church play a major role in the existence of the narrator. Another instance is when Lucinda’s mother is upset with her for destroying an expensive doll. The reader is told
that 'the air was filled with a violence whose roots she would only glimpse years later when she lost her fortune to my great-grandmother and was made poor overnight' (O&L81). Thus the reader is subtly informed that the love story of Oscar and Lucinda will not be successful, as Oscar will marry someone else.

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

it was not the last time Maria would judge herself to be too tense, too critical with Jack Catchprice, to feel herself too full of prejudices and preconceptions that would not let her accept what was pleasant and generous in his character. (T1194).

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

*Jack Maggs* also has an important prolepsis. The reader is told that when at Wallingford with Maggs, Oates ‘wrote the famous line with which, thirty years later, *The Death of Maggs* would finally begin’ (JM252). Thus the reader can be sure that even though Maggs attempted to destroy all evidence of his story with Oates, Oates was still victorious over him as he managed to publish a
book on Maggs’ life. Another instance is when Maggs promises Ma Britten that he will come to see her, the narrator utters that ‘there is no doubt that Jack Maggs planned to keep his promise, but the morrow held events he could not foresee. Three weeks would pass before he would call at Cecil Street again’ (JM8). Thus the reader is alerted that Maggs’ quest will not be a smooth and successful one.
ii) Intertextuality

According to Abrams\textsuperscript{31}, the term *Intertextuality*, popularized particularly by Julia Kristeva:

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

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

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

The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full-stop, beyond its eternal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network ...
The book is not simply the object that one holds in one’s hands ... Its unity is variable and relative. 33

Roland Barthes, in this relation states:

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

Writers such as Carey, who are products of post-colonial cultures, are acutely aware of their past with its binary oppositions of colonizer and colonized, oppressor and oppressed, etc. In Carey’s fiction intertextuality operates within the mode of parody, a technique generally employed by postmodern writers. It installs and subverts. Thus the reader has a greater responsibility of being knowledgeable of the past so as to read texts within texts. The relationship between the reader and the text assumes primary importance. The retold stories are presented from a newer perspective leading to questions on the veracity of past narrations.
Bliss is the tale of Australian entrepreneurship gone sour due to American hegemony and materialism. The title Carey furnishes for the novel is in itself an ironical one. Harry’s life till he escapes to the rainforest is purported to be a blissful one, according to the title. However a reading of the novel does away with all such illusions. Harry’s life till his first death, seemed a happy one to him. When the novel begins he has just undergone this experience, and the novel deals extensively with Harry’s struggle against all the ‘Actors’ in Hell.

Carey makes use of several Australian aboriginal cultural myths like the oral Hopi myth. Harry arrives at Bog Onion Road after his flight from the city. After around six months of hard living at Bog Onion Road, Harry is ready to build a place for himself. On the morning of the day on which he was to chop down the five tallow trees he had marked for the building of his house, Harry sneaks out earlier to the site inorder to perform the ritual of the oral Hopi myth. This ritual involved placing a few stones at the base of the tree to be cut and explaining or rather seeking permission from the tree to be used. It also added a promise to be made by the tree cutter to grow another tree in its place. Harry initially, ‘shy in the presence of the tree … did not use the full words’ (B286). But with encouragement from Daze ‘he used the proper words, the formal words, as they are known’ (B287). Thus, placing the stones at the base of the tree Harry, with ‘face burned bright red, eyes bright’ (B287) recited to the tree:
You have grown large and powerful. I have to cut you. I know you have knowledge in you from what happens around you. I am sorry, but I need your strength and power. I will give you these stones, but I must cut you down. These stones and my thoughts will make sure another tree will take your place. (B287)

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

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

*Illywhacker* draws on the Australian story-telling or the spieling ability. The novel has many stories culminating together unified by one figure, that of Herbert Badgery. Seeking to describe Australian history Carey quotes Mark Twain in one of the epigrams of the novel that describes Australian history as
almost always picturesque; ... the chief novelty the country has to offer ... does not read like history, but like the most beautiful lies; and all of a fresh new sort, no mouldy old stale ones. It is full of surprises and adventures, the incongruities, and contradictions, and incredibilities; but they are all true, they all happened.

The immigrant experience is also explored in Illywhacker. Herbert refers to ‘his head full of stories about John Chinaman: opium, slavery, how they ate the hands of Christian babies’ (I209). Carey alludes to events like the massacre of Chinese miners at Lambing Flat by English miners through the character of Goon Tse Ying. Goon dares to adopt the orphaned Herbert as his ‘little Englishman’ (I211) despite opposition from his community. He wants to teach Herbert the ‘magician’s gift’ (I216) ‘to show you the terror of we Chinese at Lambing Flat. Because it is only possible to disappear by feeling the terror ... I am giving you this gift as revenge’ (I216). He re-enacts the massacre at Lambing Flat for Herbert and makes Herbert learn the terror of the Chinese miners.

Illywhacker also draws on numerous historical and literary myths. Herbert makes his living by selling T Models. He was an accomplished salesman who ‘sold T Models with such ease’ (I60). Yet he isn’t happy doing it because he tells the reader:
I loathed Fords on principle, that I was eaten up with selling them, that I did it from laziness because the Ford had the name, because it was American and people were more easily persuaded to buy a foreign product then a local one (161).

The Summit car was known as Australia’s very own indigenous car. In *Illywhacker*, Badgery sets out to promote the car as Australia’s own, yet he has to back off and admit that it is not good enough. Even though he is aware that the T Model is a better car, his feelings of nationalism make him favour the more indigenous car. All he can say is that the T Model is preferred by all because they had an agency in Geelong while the Australian-made cars like the Summit did not. At his first meeting with Jack McGrath, Herbert manages to convince Jack McGrath about the feasibility of setting up ‘a factory that was going to build Australian-designed aircraft’ (134). Herbert thus constantly appears preoccupied with Australian ownership and dreams of an independent Australian industry.

*Oscar and Lucinda* presents the history of imperialism and the civilizing ideal of the British in Australia. The pioneering abilities of the British are revealed to be false. Tales narrated by the Aborigines foreground their plight too. In chapter 103 Kumbaingiri Billy gives the reader his own people’s version of what happened when the white man came to his land with glass. This narration is a different point of view from the versions recorded in history. Another
instance when the narrator of *Oscar and Lucinda* comments on received versions of history is when he refers to another episode of elimination of the blacks that the white man conducted:

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

(*O&L2*)

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

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

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

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

Intertextuality is at full play in Carey’s *Jack Maggs* which largely echoes Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations*. The author of *Great Expectations*, Charles Dickens becomes a persona in *Jack Maggs* as Tobias Oates who writes the flawed biography of Maggs. While Magwitch in *Great Expectations* is portrayed as an essentially evil persona, his prototype Maggs in *Jack Maggs* is largely humanized. The play of texts within texts is essential for subverting imperial discourse.
Carey has infused all his novels with the Australian idiom. One finds words like 'illywhacker', 'chook', etc. used extensively.
iii) Magic Realism

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

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

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

[he likes to] turn the world around to odd angles, to transform reality to make it clearer, like looking at the world from between your legs (everything becomes dislocated and the relations of things to each other become more apparent).
The amalgamation of unrealistic elements with realistic presentations is so complete that the reader is reminded of the fictionality of the narration. As Krassnitzer states:

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

Harry Joy in Bliss ‘was to die three times, but it was his first death which was to have the greatest effect on him’ (B11). This clinical death lasted nine minutes which Harry watched ‘in a calm, curious, very detached way’ (B11). He observes himself dying and he rises ‘higher and higher’ (B11) discovering on the way that ‘there were many different worlds, layer upon layer, as thin as filo pastry’ (B12) and recognizing ‘the worlds of pleasure and worlds of pain, bliss and punishment, Heaven and Hell’ (B12). In Harry’s childhood that was ‘suckled on stories’ (B18):

The sky was full of Gods and Indians and people smiled at him, touched him, stroked him, and brought him extraordinary gifts from the world outside where there were, he knew, exotic bazaars filled with people in gowns, strange fruits piled high, the air redolent with spices, … and, far away, New York, its glass towers trembling in an
ecstasy of magic which was to become, his father said, one day, after
the next flood, a splendid book read by all mankind with wonder.

(B19)

Vance also narrates to Harry ‘the story of the Vision Splendid’ (B20) during
the deluge that came about when all prayed for rain. He tells Harry of his

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

(B21)

Harry, after his first death, anticipates living in Hell. While in the hospital
before undergoing surgery, Harry is terrified of dying and of the prospect of
going to Hell. In fact he is so convinced of the possibility of a living Hell that
he explores options he could possibly take to circumvent it to the point of
‘making a list of religions’ (B44) to check a God who would offer salvation
from Hell.

While at the Milanos, a circus elephant trained to sit on red boxes, sits on
Harry’s red Fiat making Harry ‘the first person whose car has really been sat
on by an elephant. What a story’ (B71). When Harry attempts to explain this to
the police who detain him, they refuse to believe his 'funny stories' \((B75)\) and demand 'something original' \((B75)\).

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

At the beginning of the novel, Herbert Badgery, the narrator, introduces himself as being 'a hundred and thirty-nine years old and something of a celebrity' \((I11)\). He informs us that

> independent experts have poked me and prodded me and scraped around my foul-smelling mouth ...measured my ankles and looked at my legs ... photographed me ... I think I'm growing tits. They stuck their calipers into me and measured them \((I11)\).

Again, towards the end of the novel, Badgery claims that he is 'growing tits' \((I587)\). At the end of the novel, Badgery consoles Hissao by 'put[ting] him to
my breast ... with my swollen blue-veined breast I give my offspring succour —
the milk of dragons from my witch’s tit’ (I600).

When at the McGrath’s, Badgery refers to his ability ‘like Goon Tse Ying,
capable of becoming invisible, sliding under doors, lifting rugs from floors on
windless nights...’ (I57). At the beginning of Book 2 he again mentions ‘the
ability to become invisible’ (I209) that Goon Tse Ying refers to as ‘a
magician’s gift... [that] is both good and evil’ (I216). Goon teaches this art to
Badgery only to show him ‘the terror of the Chinese at Lambing Flat [and]
because it is only possible to disappear by feeling the terror’ (I216). Thus
Badgery tells the reader that ‘I disappeared and the world disappeared from
me. I did not escape from fear, but went to the place where fear lives ... I was
nowhere’ (I220). Goon also teaches him that ‘if you make yourself feel the
terror when there is no terror to feel, you are making a dragon ... if you make
dragons in you head you are not strong enough and you will have great
misfortune’ (I221). When Badgery makes a dragon to gain the attention of
Leah,

the dragon came and it was bigger than the dragon I knew before ...

thirty-four years of locked-up terror came spurting at me and I knew
I would drown in it. I tried to talk, but the dragon had me and
dragged me away ... (I233).
This disappearing trick is also attempted by Badgery’s children, Charles and Sonia. Badgery reveals that it is only Sonia who probably ‘knew this was not a trick’ (1291). Sonia holds on to a picture of the Assumption of the Virgin on which ‘the Virgin rose above a great cloud of smoke while down below the adoring crowd raised their heads to what they could not see’ (1337) and claims that ‘she herself intended to do likewise and that her father Herbert Badgery could do it any time he liked’ (1337). Where Charles gave up the disappearing trick when he found out he was unsuccessful at it, Sonia persisted. She ‘wished to dress like the Virgin Mary’ (1360), arranging herself exactly like the Virgin in the picture of the Assumption of the Virgin. When at Clunes, near Ballarat, Sonia attempts the disappearing trick when alone with Charles, and disappears never to return. Badgery informs us that ‘Clunes, in case you do not know it, is bored full of mine shafts’ (1361).

At Phoebe’s attempt to abort Charles by consuming poison, the reader is made privy to the fact that Phoebe’s attempt was unsuccessful only because Charles ‘was stubbornly clinging on, holding out against the raging seas that threatened to sweep him from his foetus world’ (1181). Charles’ stubborn quality is attributed to this event by his wife and Badgery too accepts the fact that ‘it was Charles who fought and won the battle’ (1181).

Badgery tells the reader about the ghost of his father-in-law, Jack, that he saw very often during Phoebe’s first pregnancy. This ghost:
was not a single solid shape, but rather a confluence of lights nestling in a lighter glow ... It sat at the kitchen table with the snake. The snake slithered like a necklace around the ghost, entered into it and streamed out of it. You could see the snake’s innards pulsing: liquids, solids, legs of frogs and other swarming substances with tails like tadpoles. The ghost was Jack. (I194)

This ghost caused the death of a rooster who died of fright and ‘smelt of snake’ (I194). The night when Charles was born, Badgery observes the ghost do ‘a jig, a little dance, hop-ho, a shearer’s prance, around the house and out across the mud of Dudley’s Flat’ (I195) never to be seen by Badgery again. But Badgery states that ‘as Charles grew and came slowly into focus I saw exactly what had happened: Charles was Jack with bandy legs on’ (I196).

Badgery gets hold of a bleeding finger of Goon in a scuffle while he is stealing Goon’s *The Book of Dragons*. When he is arrested Sergeant Moth takes the finger and later gives it to Badgery in a Vegemite jar with formaldehyde as ‘a souvenir’ (I412). Moth is disgusted with the finger in the bottle, and Badgery when he has ownership of the bottle avoids it and hides it from his view. When he sees it after some time, he notices ‘the liquid in the bottle turned gin-clear ... [and] what looked like a wart behind the knuckle’ (I414). Later whenever he happened to see it he ‘could not help noticing that the wart was growing
bigger’ (I414). This takes over his thoughts and he keeps having glances at it. He noticed that:

the finger changed. It changed all the time. It changed like a face in a dream [till one day] I woke early and found it filled with bright blue creatures that darted in and out of delicate filigree forests, like tropical fish feeding amongst the coral (I415).

Years later it is revealed to the reader that Emma, Badgery’s daughter-in-law and Charles’ wife, is in possession of an old Vegemite Jar. This jar contained ‘a tiny foetus … no more than an inch long’ (I432). She told Hissao that it was ‘his half-brother and which … was half goanna and half human’ (I432). Where earlier Hissao had looked at the formless and unpleasant contents of the bottle as a ritual, on this occasion when he looked closely he found that:

it had fingers (they were perfectly formed) and a face in which you could make out features which had that mixture of soft-mouthed vulnerability and blandness that is the hallmark of the unborn. Where you might expect toes there were long claws, thin, elegant, shining black like ebony; there was also a tail which was long, striped, with very obvious glistening scales (I564).
Emma holds onto it very dearly, protecting it from being destroyed by Charles. On Charles’ death, Badgery gains possession of it again. For him, the jar contained ‘a dragon, a solid being, two inches tall … a nasty piece of work’ (I579) that killed his son. Yet when finally Leah sees the jar, it was back in Emma’s possession ‘its lid now rustfree … it contained filigree, like coral, and bright blue fish were flitting in and out of it’ (I586). The dragon had thus been let loose by Badgery and Emma.

Hissao, is given a Japanese name because he is ‘snub-nosed and almond-eyed’ (I432) and has the features of a Japanese. Badgery attributes Hissao’s features to the fact that his birth coincided with ‘the Japanese bombing Darwin and Emma [not being] a stupid woman’ (I432).

It was Hissao who came up with the idea of the pet shop. He got the idea when he perceived ‘the family he had worked so dangerously to support for what they were — an ugly menagerie as evil as anything you might ever see, fleetingly, before your eyes in a bottle’ (I594). His hatred of them all made him plan revenge against his family. Thus in ‘The Best Pet Shop in the World’ (I598), owned by the Mitsubishi Company, Hissao has:

put so many of his fellow countrymen and women on display. Yet he has not only fed them and paid them well, he has chosen them, the types, with great affection … The very success of the exhibit is in
their ability to move and talk naturally within the confines of space

(O&L7). The narrator of *Oscar and Lucinda* attributes his existence to ‘a Christmas pudding’ (O&L7). Theophilus Hopkins, Oscar’s father refers to it as the ‘flesh of which idols eat’ (O&L9). The narrator himself states that ‘you would not think it was not such an abnormality were it not for the fact that it was cooked in the cottage of my great-great-grandfather …’ (O&L7). The occasion leads to an altercation with his father, which initiates the doubts that Oscar begins to have about all his father says. Angry with his father over the denial of the pudding, Oscar ‘talked to God’ (O&L19) ‘if it is your desire that your flock eat pudding in celebration of Thy birth as man, then show Thy humble supplicant a sign …. if it be thy will that Thy people eat pudding, smite him [i.e., his father]’ (O&L20). When he sees his father’s wound in the thigh, Oscar realises that ‘his father had been smitten’ (O&L20). Silently he goes about with his tasks thereon ‘frightened of what he had begun’ (O&L21).

Oscar is enamoured of his friend Tommy Croucher’s story of angels. What confirms his belief in the reality of the presence of an angel is the sight of ‘what the angel had left behind … three small stones which made the points of a triangle … they stood for 'Father', 'Son', and 'Holy Ghost' … the sign was the mathematical symbol for 'therefore it follows’ (O&L20). He thus comes to place great emphasis on the ‘sign’ (O&L20). Doubting his father’s beliefs,
Oscar endeavours to find the path that God had preordained for him. Thus he ‘made the 'witches' markin’s' … a structure for divining the true will of God’ (O&L32). Modelled roughly on the game of hopscotch, it remains the sole guiding force for Oscar’s decision to go against his father and join the Anglicans.

Oscar, possessing traits overtly feminine, can never live his life free from taunts. Right from his childhood, he is at the mercy of the world where he is constantly berated for his effeminate nature. He was ‘made to eat dirt … sing songs he was not allowed to sing … put coarse mud on his skin because they could not bear it so soft and white’ (O&L41). Later at Oriel he is called as ‘Odd Bod’ (O&L105), and made to endure all kinds of privations like having ‘water poured into his bed … his room had been made a venue for a rat hunt …’ (O&L105). Always possessing a great fear of the sea, he undertakes a voyage to Australia to perform missionary duties. He boards the Leviathan in a cage. As a clergyman, he is defrocked over baseless allegations which he never clarifies because of his delusion that it was a punishment for wrongs he had probably committed. Even the loss of Lucinda’s love and his marriage to Miriam is perceived by Oscar as an obligation due to his wrongful seduction of the innocent Miriam, whereas the truth was the opposite, it was Miriam who had seduced Oscar.
Glass assumes gargantuan proportions in the novel. Lucinda, enamoured with the Prince Rupert drops wants to own a glassworks. She admires the Crystal Palace and ‘her head was burning with dreams of glass, shapes she saw in the very edges of her vision, structures whose function she had not even begun to guess. She would build a little pyramid of glass’ (O&L287). Desiring passionately to ‘build something Extraordinary and Fine from glass and cast iron ... Glass laced with steel, spun like a spider-web’ (O&L365-67) she holds on to her dream. This desire is given shape by Oscar’s suggestion of a glass church that could be packed in crates and thus enable them to ‘transport an entire cathedral and assemble it across the mountains’ (O&L390). This highly impractical scheme, where the glass church would have to travel in uncharted territory to reach its destination, is agreed upon by both Oscar and Lucinda as a wager to finally declare their love for each other.

Hassal\textsuperscript{38} says of The Tax Inspector:

surrounded as it is by the halo of Carey’s surreal imagination, the mimetic detail is also scrupulously precise, as Sue Gough observes: “[Carey] knows, like God, the size of the bubbles in Dom Perignon, the order numbers for spare motor parts, the smell of gelignite, the quality of the pain of a birth contraction, how many patterns a good drummer can keep going.” This gritty, police-court realism, and the
relatively secure and authorized status of the narration, make its content all the more starkly challenging.

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

On the Monday following the Sunday on which he was fired, the reader meets Benny who has undergone a ‘personal transformation’ (T/18). A careless worker at the workshop, Benny decides to transform himself into a smart and smooth salesman who would take care of their inheritance, Catchprice Motors.

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

Frieda Catchprice’s, the eighty year old matriarch of the Catchprice clan, roams around with gelignite in her bag that she carries along with her all the time. A lady who has always been the driving force behind her husband’s initiatives, she has sacrificed her desire for a flower farm for a motor business. Realising the folly of her actions later in life she is always threatening to blow
up the business with the gelignite she has been carrying around in her bag right from her unmarried days when she began to bottle up her resentment against her parents. When she finally does use it, the gelignite is there for so many years in her bag that, according to her own admission ‘you can see it’s old by how it sweats. When it’s like this you can let it off just by throwing it’ (T195).

When Benny tells Vish that he had ‘changed’ (T18), he was referring to the changes that he underwent due to the ‘Self-Actualization' cassettes’ (T21). These cassettes guided the individual through a series of visualizing exercises meant to better self-esteem and self-confidence. According to the instructions, thus, Benny was required to be ‘descending the imaginary coloured stairways to the mental image on the imaginary Sony Trinitron which showed the object of his desire’ (T21). Maria also uses these exercises to help her make it through her rough patch during the later days of her pregnancy.

Woodcock asserts that “The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith is undoubtedly the strangest of Carey’s novels. It marks a return to the overt alternative world-building … with their fantastic and fable-like scenarios”41. In this novel Carey has created two fictitious countries replete with their own calendar, myths, etc. The readers addressed are the population of a fictional country. Efica is ‘a country so unimportant … a name so unmemorable … remains, nonetheless, the home of nearly three million of the earth’s people’ (ULoTS). Voorstand is the superior country, more powerful where the citizens ‘stand with your hand
over your heart when the Great Song is played, you daily watch new images of your armies in the vids and zines’ (*ULoTS*5).

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

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

> When she [Felicity] came down the brick ramp in Gazette Street, things started happening faster than she had expected. Oxytocin entered her bloodstream like a ten-ton truck and all the pretty soft striped muscles of her womb turned hostile, contracting on me like they planned to crush my bones. I was caught in a rip. I was dumped. I was shoved into the birth canal, head first, my arm still pinned
behind my ear. My ear got folded like an envelope. My head was held so hard it felt, I swear it, like the end of life and not its glorious beginning (*ULoTS7*).

When Felicity laid her eyes on Tristan for the first time she ‘put her hand across her mouth’ (*ULoTS17*) and wondered ‘I am the mother’ (*ULoTS17*). He was:

a gruesome little thing ... so truly horrible to look at that the audience can see the witches must struggle to control their feelings of revulsion. He is small, not small like a baby, smaller, more like one of those wrinkled furless dogs they show on television talk shows. His hair is fair, straight, queerly thick. His eyes are pale, a quartz-bright white. They bulge intensely in his face. He has a baby’s nose – but in the lower part of his severely triangular face there is, it seems, not sufficient skin. His face pulls at itself. He has no lips, but a gap in the skin that sometimes shows his toothless gums (*ULoTS31-32*).

Despite all his physical deformities, in Tristan resides a brain that works as any normal human one would. He has his dreams, his wishes, his affections, desires, passions, etc. which are all swept away and denied to him by his deformity.
This novel can be approached as "a myth-making fantasy"\textsuperscript{42}. The Sirkus culture that Carey invents replete with all its extravagance is the stuff of fantasy with its skyscrapers and domes, etc. The story narrated displays "fabulatory extravagance"\textsuperscript{43}. With giant vid screens erected, the Sirkus was:

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

\textit{(ULoTS164)}.

There is also the 'Water Sirkus' \textit{(ULoTS335)} where the 'walls of the tent are made from water' \textit{(ULoTS335)}. At the Water Sirkus

> the BUSINESS-GJENT was sitting on a chair. As he opened his zine, SPOOK-GANGER DROOL materialized behind him, softly, subtly, like smoke. So deftly did he materialize that I was sure he was a hologram image, but then the ghoulish drool snickered and produced a very solid rope. \textit{(ULoTS338-39)}

With very unlikely events like keeping the Gjent submerged in water without air for minutes, having fountains of water rising from toilets, etc. form the opening part. The show too is a 'breathless, relentless entertainment'
The final act was a performance 'beneath the water .... [where] the performers said their lines underwater' (ULoTS342). Tristan comments that he 'had witnessed one of those technical feats, the invention of which had probably resulted in the form of entertainment we had just witnessed' (ULoTS342).

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

in the flames he saw, as he would throughout his life, the figures and faces of his fancy dancing before him. He saw the wraith of their dead child folding and unfolding in the skirts of fire. He saw Lizzie herself, her face smiling and folding into the horrible figure of decay (JM354).

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

poked at the blackened linen and found in it one abhorrent face, that of the man who had led him to Mrs Britten's door, who had
placed those dung-coloured pills where they would poison that precious life.

It was Jack Maggs, the murderer, who now grew in the flames. Jack Maggs on fire. Jack Maggs flowering, threatening, poisoning. Tobias saw him hop like a devil. Saw him limp, as if his fiery limbs still carried the weight of convict iron. He saw his head transmogrify until it was bald, tattooed with deep wrinkles that broke apart and floated glowing out into the room (JM355).

The jar of formaldehyde with its unusual contents reappears in Jack Maggs. Oates, due to his 'obsession with the Criminal Mind' (JM49) had:

recently paid ... for the hand of a thief. With the exception of the tell-tale little finger, which was malformed, the fingers of the hand were long, thin, very delicate; sadly in opposition to the skirt of skin which trailed back from the harshly butchered wrist. This hand floated in a large wide-throated jar of formaldehyde identified by a brown discoloured label, on which was inscribed a legend in Arabic the meaning of which was not, as yet, available (JM49).

Being 'much of the scientist' (JM49), Oates hides many such secrets in the hope of uncovering their mysterious services for the furthering of his literary career.
Mercy Larkin, a maid, dreams of marrying her employer Percy Buckle. Taken in by him when her mother had sold her out for prostitution, she is his 'Good Companion' (JM326). Satisfying all his sexual needs she dreams of gaining a position as the mistress of his household. It is only when he dismisses her for kissing Maggs that Mercy sees through all his affection for her. She makes good her life with Maggs in Australia, as a wife to him and a mother to his children.
Notes


3 Krassnitzer, 5.

4 Krassnitzer, 5.

5 Krassnitzer, 5.


7 Nina, 95.

8 Krassnitzer, 13.

9 Krassnitzer, 18.

10 Krassnitzer, 19.


12 Hutcheon, 5.

13 Woodcock, 1.

14 Woodcock, 1.

15 Woodcock, 12.

16 Woodcock, 12.


19 Larsson, 12.

20 Larsson, 28.

21 Larsson, 14.


24 Larsson, 18.
25 Larsson, 22.


27 Larsson, 39.


29 Woodcock, 41.

30 Richard Todd as quoted in Larsson, 54.

31 Abrams, 317.

32 Abrams, 317.


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

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

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

37 Krassnitzer, 39.

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

39 Hassal, 147.

40 Hassal, 147.

41 Woodcock, 108.

42 Woodcock, 113.

43 Woodcock, 113.