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Cultural History of *True History of the Kelly Gang*: A Subaltern Study

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "Cultural History of *True History of the Kelly Gang*: A Subaltern Study" submitted to the Central Department of The English, Tribhuvan University by Brinda Shrestha has been approved by the undersigned members of the research Committee.

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Abstract

The autobiography *True History of the Kelly Gang* written by Australian writer Peter Carey, projects historical socio-cultural subaltern issues at the core. The novel presents Australian historical cultural transformation from colonial, postcolonial period to contemporary era of globalization. Analyzed from this perspective, the novel communicates the most predominant issues of class, culture, history and the elements of oppressed and marginalized lower class people in the cultural historical context of Australia. The analysis of the text draws on subaltern theory and the concept of cultural history. The study focuses the main characters Ned who is killer, highwayman and criminal. The study argues that Carey has come up with representations of the subaltern and shows the oppressed and marginalized status in Australian society.

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I. Historical Context and Construction of the Dissertation

The Primary goal of this research is to focus on subaltern issues and to seek Carey's attitude in Australian society. Since the publication who is as well-known to Australians. He is fascinating to them, as James is to Americans or Robin Hood is to the English. In 1974 of *The Fat Man in History*, Australian novelist and short story writer Peter Carey has often played with the literal truth. Blurring the line between history and fiction and combining fact with fable. *True History of the Kelly Gang* is no different. It is a fictional first-person account of Ned Kelly, the notorious nineteenth-century bushranger and outlaw who is as well-known to Australians.

In *True History of the Kelly Gang*, Kelly is writing a series of letters to his unborn daughter. In these letters he attempts to explain why he first became an outlaw, because he had no choice and provide her with a true history. He explains he knows what it is to be raised on lies and silences. His own father was an Irish convict shipped along with his mother to Australia during the Great Transportation. Kelly himself was painfully aware of what that means for him and his culture: they are the people with no cultural memory, adrift, rootless and left without any meaningful future.

Kelly's letters are urgent, raw, and largely unpunctuated, but they are vivid and uniquely written. Carey speaks the rough language of Irish Australian and makes easy references to stories and myths that might be lost on a contemporary audience. Carey's decision to write Kelly's story in Kelly's voice gives readers an opportunity to understand the man behind the legend.

True history of the Kelly Gang is an epistolary novel, on which the story is carried forward by letters written by one or more of the characters. Although, strictly speaking, what Ned Kelly writes are not letters but bound parcels, the novel is in

effect one long letter to his unborn daughter. The effect of an epistolary novels is to impart a sense of immediacy and verisimilitude, or the appearance of truth and realism in fiction or drama. It accomplishes this because Kelly's letters are written in the thick of the action, with no time to even punctuate sentences.

Most importantly, what *True History of the Kelly Gang* gains its use of the epistolary form is the uninterrupted and unfiltered voice of Ned Kelly. The text is rendered as he himself spoke in the language and with the word choice of a perceptive and sensitive, if not formally educated, Irish Australian man of the nineteenth century. It is largely unpunctuated. Carey based Kelly's voice in the novel on an existing document the 'Jerilderie Letter,' an 8300 word document by the real historical Ned Kelly, in which he exploits and the reason for his actions.

True History of the Kelly Gang is a kind of folktale, a narrative that develops over the course of many years through repeated retellings, although the story of Ned Kelly is not properly a folktale because folktale usually deal with myths legends, fables and tall-tales. It nevertheless incorporates some elements of the folktale. Kelly's story has been passed along orally as much as in written form, leaving open the probability of cumulative authorship, where each teller contributes something to the story. Also like a folktale it tells the story of larger than life character who accomplishes enormous deeds, though in this case the character was a real person and not fictional.

Britain begins sending its convicted criminal to Australia and surrounding island in 1788 and continue to do so until 1868 when the last prisoner arrived. By that time, over 150000 convicts had been transported. More than a third of them were Irish, like Ned Kelly's parents, and almost all of them came from the lower classes. The convicts were mostly unskilled and uneducated only half could read and write

there were few opportunities open to them. The task of building a new society proved difficult; like any free people they wanted land, opportunities, and rights. The squatters opposed this, and so hostilities developed between the two groups. The squatters hoarded the land as much as possible, claiming more and more from what had been the commons, or public lands for the use of all. They impounded stray farm animals that wandered from the former convict farms. The existing tensions between the two groups this situation pitting the ex-convicts and their descendants, especially the Irish convicts, against the English squatters in the source of nearly all Kelly's problems in *True History of the Kelly Gang*. For instance, R.R McBean's vast landholdings seem to lie between Kelly and wherever he wants to go, surrounding and nearly engulfing Kelly and his family.

Carey begins *True History of the Kelly Gang* with an epigraph an inscription on the title page from American author William Faulkner's novel, *Absalom, Absalom!*: "The past is not dead. It is not even past" (27). With that, Carey appears to be making a case for Ned Kelly's story having some ongoing relevance for modern readers. Although Cary has lived in New York for a number of years, he experienced two formative events, both of which occurred in the 1960s in Australia, that led him to fictionalize the true story of Kelly. Carey has called a powerful foundation myth. First he saw a series of painting by artist Sydney Nolan with Ned Kelly's fifty-six page "Jerilderie Letter," in which the historical Kelly tries to explain his actions. What drove him, and what he wishes for the future even on the eve of his capture and execution. Carey says that Australians still respond to this story so powerfully because Kelly was neither debased nor broken by his experiences. He was in a sense triumphant qualities Australians value even today and which continue to influence the way they think about themselves and their countrymen.

Colonialism is the use of economic, political and social policies to maintain or extend control over jurisdictions and people that lie outside the nation exercising such power. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the era in which *True History of the Kelly Gang* is set, Australia was struggling from its colonial past with England and from its own history as a penal colony, where English and Irish criminals were sent. In *True History of the Kelly Gang*, the tension this effort generates is made evident in the endless conflicts between mostly Irish selection-holder, or homesteader and the English landlords who own the largest tracts of property. More particularly, the conflict is evident in the constant, almost daily disputes that pit the Kelly and the Quinn against the local police force. Ned Kelly is highly alert to perceive English superiority, and he alludes to it often, while in custody at the Benalla Police Station. He observes that superintendent Hare is posh spoken, grimly behind the cedar desk trying to frighten with his blue English eyes. By the end of the novel, Kelly's struggle has enlarged to include a recognizable political dimension. He says this of the relationship between his gang and the poor, Irish.

Who cheers on the outlaw? Certainly not those who hold and maintain power; by definition the outlaws is working against those interests. Across time and cultures, it is the poor with whom he outlaw's adventures resonate. For example, Robin Hood in England, Jesse James in the United States, Poncho Villa and his peasant armies in Mexico, and Phoolan Devi, the "Bandit Queen" in India. All were cheered on by farmers, miners, and others working menial jobs, for whom the outlaw represented an opportunity to retell their own stories. Reshape the myths they believed about themselves, and participate in heroism. Outlaws stand up for the oppressed and fight back against the oppressor. For many Australians in the late 1870s, Ned Kelly was exactly such a figure on whom the aspirations of an entire class could be pinned.

Because Australia was founded as a penal colony and many of its citizens carried the taint of convict blood, Kelly's story is particularly powerful. Peter Carey's Kelly certainly recognizes the importance of stories people tell about themselves and their history. That is the agony of the Great Transportation that our parents would rather forget. This understanding is the real impetus, or inspiration, for Kelly to commit his story to paper for his unborn daughter.

Although Ned Kelly at times seem to enjoy the mythical aura developing around him in *True History of the Kelly Gang*, once his trajectory has been fully established. Ned never fully embraces it, either. Kelly believes he is the victim of fate, of circumstances completely beyond his control: he was born to Irish parents in Australia. He is falsely accused of crimes he did not commit, and he is apprenticed to the bushranger Harry Power. As Kelly repeatedly tells the reader in a number of different ways, all he ever really wanted was a place to settle down and make a quiet life. In fact, it is for love of his home and family and out of desire for a quiet and trouble-free life. Kelly commits his first crime, killing a neighbor's calf so that the family has something to eat.

Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* was published simultaneously by Faber and Faber in the United Kingdom and by Knopf in the United States in January 2001. The novel received almost universally favorable reviews in Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom, from reviews writing for mainstream publications as well as those writing for a more academic audience.

All most all of those reviewers remarked upon what Anthony Quinn, writing in the *New York Times* Book reviews, Carey's "fully imagined act of historical impersonation." Quinn is here referring to Carey's deft channeling of the voice he first encountered in the historical Ned Kelly's "Jeriderie Letter" the bushranger's own

handwritten and widely poetic account of his exploits, which Carey adapts to suit his own purposes in *True History of the Kelly Gang* (8).

While the last section of the novel is certainly driven by plot, most of the first part of the book seems episodic, with events only loosely linked one to another. Mainly critics have felt that this does not matter. As Thomas Jones put it in the *London Review of Books*, "The first two thirds of the novel is driven not by the shape of narrative it is too fragmented and disconnected for that-but by the blood pressure of then prose The language is reach but never cloying; the unpunctuated syntax virtuoso" (25-25)

Some reviewers have registered mild complaints. Besides calling *True History of the Kelley Gang* "an undeniably impressive novel...a stylistic tour de force," Douglas Ivison in the *Journal of Australian Studies* also addresses what he consider flaw: that Carey never addresses the larger social and political implications of Kelley's status as a folk hero ". . . contradiction in Kelly's character...go largely unexamined," and that Kelly, despite the gritty realism evinced in Carey's prose, ". . . remains in the world of romantic myth" (144-145).

Complaints such as those have been few, and *True History of the Kelly gang* has succeeded both critically and commercially it won the Booker Prize and has so far been Carey's best selling book. "Even if Australian critics are ashamed of Ned Kelly," Johan Banville writes in the *New York Review of Books* ". . . they can still take nothing but pride in the Pete Carey" (15-16).

Although all the critics examined the *True History of the Kelly Gang*, none of them examines the issue of the exploration of Subaltern endured by the protagonist. Retelling from the perspective of the marginalized outsiders and outlaws who are engaged in a power struggle against the powerful landlords. The tension this effort

generates is made evident in the endless conflicts between mostly Irish selection-holder, or homesteader and the English landlords who own the largest tracts of property.

The notion of subaltern is based on argument that discursive focuses on be shifted from hegemonic to the marginalized one. The main motivation of this transaction is to centralize subaltern's marginal position in society in terms of social, economical and historical outcome of systematic and structural marginalize. The concerns about the representation of the marginalized group in national historiography prompted a group of Indian historians to form the subaltern studies group. The subaltern studies project initiated by progressive historians aim to revise and rewrite historiography from subaltern perspective. This is highly revisionist project which is stated by Spivak as "The most significant outcome of this revision of shift in perspective is that the agency of change is located in the insurgent or the 'subaltern'" (330). In the realm of literature, Spivak heralded the subaltern discourse with the publication of her landmark essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" and in her reply she said "no" (Spivak 309). She further clarifies that when a subaltern does speak she/he is no longer a subaltern. It can be assumed that Spivak's argument is slightly related to speech rather than power and the ability of a subaltern mediator is a medium to record subaltern narrative. She labeled it as distinctive self-consciousness of locating the "Subaltern" as the "subject" of history and not its object(2). Ranjit Guha has stated as in the first subaltern series "yet we proposed to focus on this consciousness [subaltern] as our central theme because it is not possible to make sense of the experience of insurgency merely as a history of events without a subject" (11). So what is the meaning of this subaltern consciousness and how it is different from other? Partha Chaterjee opined on this:

Subaltern consciousness as self-consciousness of a sort is what inhabits that whole area of independent thought and conjecture and speculation ... on the part of the peasant...what offers the clear proof of a distinctly independent interpretation of [Gandhi's] message (172)

In the other dimension, it can be stated that it is self-consciousness that underwrites all innovation of the will of subaltern. John Beverley in the similar context states that the very idea of "studying the subaltern is catachrestic or self-contradictory" (21) in his book *The Subaltern and the Limits of Academic Knowledge*. Post colonialism as literary historical, cultural and political theory has multiple recourse to study various representation of subalternity. Who can speak for whom, how discourse can be represent and interpret the experiences of subalternity, and who bear the cost? Gyatri Spivak's line of reasoning was developed in *Geographies of Post colonialism* (2008), where in Joanne Sharp proposed that western intellectuals delegate other, non-western forms of knowing of acquiring knowledge of the world to the margins of intellectual discourse, by reformulating said forms of knowledge as myth and folklore. Therefore in order to be heard and known, the oppressed subaltern must adapt western ways of knowing and thought, reasoning and language. Because of such westernization, a subaltern can never express their ways of knowing and instead must conform expression. The subaltern's abandonment of his and her culturally customary ways of thinking and subsequent adoption of western ways of thinking is necessary in many postcolonial situation.

Furthermore, the colonial Historian Fernando Coronil says that the goal of the investigator must be "to listen to the subaltern subjects, and to interpret what I hear", and to engage them, and interact with their voice. We cannot ascend to a position of dominance over the voice, subjugation of its words to the meanings we desire to

attribute to them. That is simply another form of discrimination. The power to narrate somebody's story is a heavy task and we must be cautious and aware of the complications involved (14). According to the received view in western knowledge, Hook argues that true explanation can come only from the expertise of the academics thus, the subaltern man and woman, surrenders his and her knowledge of colonialism for the Western academic. Hook describes the relationship between the academic and the subaltern:

[There is] the academic and the subaltern I can talk about you better you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself a new. I am still [the] colonizer, the speaking subject and you are now at the center of my talk. (85)

As a means of constructing a greater historical picture of society, the subaltern's story is a revealing examination of society; the perspective of the subaltern man and woman, the most powerless people who live within colonial confines. Therefore, the investigator of post-colonialism must not assume a lumbering cultural superiority in the course of studying the voice of the oppressed subaltern. The subaltern is the people who have been silenced in the administration of the colonial states they constitute. They can be heard by means of political actions, effected in protest against the discourse of mainstream developed, there by create their own proper forms of development. However, subaltern have used various theories to explain their voice different ways of readdressing voice and there are marked cultural, historical and geographic variation in the nature of subaltern.

As such, the subaltern are people who have been silenced in the administration

of the colonial states they constitute. They can be heard by means of their political actions, effected in protest against the discourse of mainstream development and create their own proper forms of modernization and development. This investigation shall be further followed and analyzed through the critical review on cultural history of *True History of the Kelly Gang* subaltern discourses as represented by prominent character Ned Kelly. Likewise, issues raised by Subaltern Studies groups and the problems of colonial exclusion and domination shall be studied and critically examined by taking a departure from Spivak's concepts of muted voice of subaltern in Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*. This controversy shall be further studied by applying linguistic tool through the comparison and analysis of the different role relations represented by major characters in novel.

II. Cultural History of *True History of the Kelly Gang*: A Subaltern Study

In *True History of the Kelly Gang*, Ned loses his father and is abandoned by his mother to become a highwayman and killer. Ned's letter of self-explanation to his daughter whom he has never seen. This historical novel explores what Carey has called the pattern of abandonment, orphans in his work. Carey retells the story of the marginalized characters, outsiders and outlaws, which is fact. In reinvented voice as Carey intervenes into existing texts to reimagine them. Ned speaks directly with a excitement that embodies his reckless character and this creates a sense of narrative urgency enhanced through minimal punctuation, as in the very first opening:

I lost my father at 12 yr. of age and know what it is to be raised on lies and silence my dear daughter you are presently too young to understand a word I write but this history is for you and will contain no single lie may I burn in Hell if i speak false (7).

This style is true and original. One of the sources of Carey's inspiration was Kelly's famous Jerilderie Letter that Carey first find unexpectedly in the mid-1960s, in which the historical Ned Kelly wrote his own account of his actions. He was impressed by its howl of pain against justice, but even more enthralled by the style. All the time there is original voice uneducated but intelligent, funny and angry with a line of Irish. Carey keeps specific element of the Jerilderie Letter, adapting section to fit his own accounts of episodes such as the *McCormick's horse and wild wright*. But the actual Jerilderie Letter was addressed to a contemporary newspaper audience, and possibly to the future. Carey changes the intended audience of his invented version. This narrative may be addressed to the daughter he will never meet her and be able to re-read what he has written (202).

Early in the novel, constable O'Neill tells Ned that children should know their

history (11) and then proceeds to give a very base version of the events leading up to Ned's father's transportation. Ned's own account is undoubtedly cultural history. He describes how his father was transported to Australia and become victimized which can be expressed through these lines:

Your grandfather was a quiet and secret man he had been ripped from his home in Tipperary and transported to the prisons of Van Diemen's Land I do not know what was done to him he never spoke of it. when they had finished with their tortures they set him free and he crossed the sea to the colony of Victoria (7).

Carey's second Booker Prize winning novel, *True History of the Kelly Gang* is a real historical phenomenon. The Gang was made up of four young men Kelly, his brother Dan, Joe Byrne and Steve Hart whose fabled exploits begin with the shooting of the trooper Fitzpatrick. The new constable Alex Fitzpatrick turns out to be the brother of John Fitzpatrick, whom Kelly had fought and then befriended in Melbourne. One night, Alex introduces Kelly to Mary Hearn who becomes Kelly's lover and mother to the daughter he addresses in his letters (120). Alex Fitzpatrick betrays Kelly by courting his fourteen-year-old sister, Kate which is mentioned in these lines:

Get my sister back from your effing lap. Fitzpatrick sighed you see what I must tolerate from those whom I protect you must not worry non said Kate my brother will be nicer when he hears we are to be married. O you silly tart I cried he cannot marry you. Fitzpatrick pushed her from his lap I seen his hand go round his revolver mine was already on the colt. What game is this he asked. You're spoken for already you mongrel. That got the ma's attention. He is engaged to one tart he's got another pregnant in Frankston (134).

In Carey's novel, Ned writes his life story in belief that is a man could tell his true history to Australians. He might be believed since Australians they knew full well the terror of the unyielding law the historic memory of UNFAIRNESS were in their blood (299). Ned's story is cultural in the sense that it follows the novel deliberately foster the illusion of historical authenticity in a number of ways. The title with its assertive lack of the definite article. It invokes the test of the authentic eye witness narrative or memoirs. A true history was a reliable chronicle asserting its authenticity against fable and myth. Many accounts were a mixture of facts and fiction and the true history become one element in the development of the Aphra Behn's *The Unfortunate Happy Lady. A True History* (1700). Ned parcels are letters addressed to his daughter, so that his story is told in epistolary fashion.

The history dealt with in this historical novel is not over; it is containing legacy, as the epigraph from William Faulkner Suggest: 'The past is not dead. It is not even past. *True History of the Kelly Gang* shows the realities of colonialism as lived inside of the colony itself. It might be objected at this point that there is little new here; After all. We have known at least since Jean Francois Lyotard's landmark book *The postmodern condition* (1979) about the bankruptcy of metanarrative. Helen Tiffin makes a similar point when she speaks of the necessity of "dismantling [...] European codes" and the "postcolonial subversion and appropriation of the dominant European discourse". But Tiffin goes remarks

Decolonization is process not arrival; it invokes an ongoing Dialect between. Hegemonic of them; between European or British discourse and the Postcolonial dismantling (32).

Carey is fascinated by this process, certainly as seen in cultures throwing off the couple of literal or cultural colonialism. Ned's sense of injustice are the families of

Irish transportees, a vivid feature of the original Jeriderie Letter. Kelly's family are shown as a product of the prejudice and vilification that poor Irish Transportees. Such as, Ned's own father were subjected. In his opening Paragraphs, Ned declares that his account aims to help his daughter finally comprehend the injustice 'we poor Irish suffered in this present age' which he assumes will seem in this ancient time to her (7). The problem generated by English colonization of Ireland continue to resonate. Ned's first view of a police camp he is faced by a huge creature the Englishman who seemed the most powerful man. "I ever saw and might destroy my mother if he so desire"(8). Approach says he as if he was an altar (8).

True History of Kelly Gang emerges out of the fusion of interesting ideologies of postmodernism and post colonialism that properly accommodates the controversies and disputes so as to give an ideal twist to different them and concern. This discourse penetrated into the territory of postcolonial criticism which treats the colonization. The postcolonial is used here as an umbrella term to convert a range of literary critical and theoretical, historical, economical and political ideological experience of European colonialism and its historical legacy, especially in writing from formally colonized countries. Post-coloniality encompasses its meaning the dehumanizing otherness of the colonized world, or the transformation of colonized peoples into things. This brings the meaning of the postcolonial to the threshold of the historical and the cultural where it becomes more than a term. It becomes an opposition form of discourse.

Young provides a compressive historical discussion of the subject of postcolonial discourse and its meanings. Postcolonial discourse is a historical condition "coming after colonialism and imperialism "and a critique which takes the form of "an active concept of intervention within such oppressive circumstances."

(56) “It is also defined as an academic inter-disciplinary inquiry into the nature of cultural context, knowledge and representation in a global model of culture” (Buell 222). It constitutes theory about temporal and historical distinction between an idea of the past and the present; Spivak refers to this historic distinction in time and power as the differential. A re-evaluation informed by a preoccupation with the past consists of a critical questioning of the term and process of interpreting this differential; one must ever be on the alert to ascertain whether history has deceived.

Carey’s outlook towards historical, cultural and environment is dexterously transcribed in the body of the novel *True History of the Kelly Gang*. He narrates through the perspective of criminal, highwayman and a killer. The novel must represent the truth as Ned see it, but his version is immediately problematized. Many departures from historical facts which Carey allows him, but also by the series of narrative frames with which Carey surrounds and incarcerates Ned’s narrative. The opening of the novel, recounts part of the battle at Glenrowan in which all the gang members except Kelly are killed. It is attributed to an “undated, of the Melbourne Public Library (V.L. 10453)” (4). Thomas Curnow who is introduced each part of the thirteen parcels constitute the body of the text. Curnow is a character who violated one masterplot in a failed attempt to inhabit another. A further deferral of authority comes in parcel 8, which is introduced with a note from Curnow claiming that “Pages describing the shooting of Constable Fitzpatrick are much revised by a second hand reliably presumed to be that of Joe Byren” (183).

The effect of all the revision and omission Graham Huggan summarize: "the voice through which [the narrative] claims to speak is never Kelly's own" (149). Carey's purpose in these progressive removals seem to be two fold. First, they make the point that there is no such thing as uninflected historical accuracy, an assertion

which has by now become a commonplace of postcolonial and postmodern criticism. Ned desperately wants to construct his own narrative, especially after the failure of his two attempts to communicate take on events.

Kelly begins his tell with the transportation of his father John Red Kelly from Ireland to Van Dieman's Land, a small island, for crimes about which Kelly never heard his father speak. Constable O'Neill a sinister representative of the local police, tells the story about "A Certain Man" who plotted with other back in Ireland to murder a landowner whose policies they thought unfair. Eventually this "Certain Man" was caught and transported to Van Dieman's Land. Kelly understands this Certain Man to be his father. Later, O'Neill tells Kelly about the night he saw Red Kelly wearing a dress which Kelly does not believe until he accidentally finds the dress, exactly as it was describes by O'Neill, buried in a metal trunk. The framing of the story in account of Ned's darkest days defeat at Glenrowan and execution in Melbourne also showdowns the narrative with a sense of impending doom which no rewriting of events can evade lighten. Unfairness is one of the novel's persistent refrains, as in the passage in which Ned reflects on his mother's imprisonment and it link to other historical injustices:

And here is the thing about them men they was Australians they knew well the terror of the unyielding law the historic memory of UNFAIRNESS were in their blood and a man might be a bank Clerk or an overseer he might never been lagged for nothing but still he knew in his heart what it were to force to were the white hood in prison he knew what it were to be lashed for looking a warder in their eye and [...] the knowledge of unfairness were deep in his bone and marrow. (299)

The Knowledge and experience of injustice are imagined as almost genetically

transmitted through generation of the afflicted. But Ned immediately adds to this lament "I seen proof that if a man could tell his true history to Australians he might be believed" (299). Against all odds and evidence, he retains a faith in the power of discourse and the power of truth to right wrongs and alleviate injustice.

Ned tries to make sense of himself and his life. In the novel "A Certain Man" turns out to be Ned's father and of the tortured horse, a narrative which both glosses and deconstructs Ned's father's practice of something wearing a woman's dress (11-12, 274-78). The chronicle events at home in Ireland involves political activism and betrayal. At the beginning of the story, Ned learns that his father was transported to Van Diemen's Land as part of a plea bargain which saved him from the gallows. His side of the bargain was to betray those that he himself had enlisted in a conspiracy to murder a landlord, slaughter his wife and children and torch their home. This story as a shameful episode, but the same inheres much more in betrayal than in the violence. Loyalty to one's family and mates is the masterplot by which Ned lives his life, and vigilante justice often presents itself to the Ned as the only option for the poor and oppressed.

Mary Hearn, a way of clearing up a mystery which has left unsolved since the novel's first section: the question of why grown men, Ned's father, Steve Hart and Dan sometimes ride around the countryside dressed as women. Their acts turn out to be pale parodies of those of the sons of Sive, a group of Irish rebels who disguise themselves in dresses when "they wish to scare the bejusus" (273) out of their English enemies, yet succeed say Mary. She describes, in wrenching detail, one of their acts, in which they torture to death a horse whose only offence is to be owned by an English lord and to bear a "white blaze upon its forehead [...] exactly in the shape of the map of Ireland" (274). Mary's father was a blacks myth, who was stabling the

horse when this atrocity was committed, and the men who killed the horse were his mates, yet Mary announces proudly that although:

My da were a united man [...] he gives evidence against them all and I will Tell you boys if you wish to ride around in this costume the people will not love you. You must ease their lives not bring them terror
(278).

Mary's father betrayed the conspirator, as Ned did. She is able to see that these acts carry different significations: what was cowardly and self-serving on the part of Ned's father is heroic and morally right on the part of hers. Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* is a truly a cultural history because, at the beginning of the novel in parcel 1: the historical Kelly composed what has come to be called the "Jerilderie Letter" an 8300 word written account of his life, his motivations and his hopes for the future; which he wanted was ignored and was never made available to the public, which infuriated Kelly. *True History of the Kelly Gang* alleges to be Kelly's second effort as an author, a series of letters to his unborn daughter that will contain no single lie may I burn in Hell if I speak false.

In Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* Ned is a cultural hero because Kelly's mythology has developed over the past century and critics debate whether Ned's narrative is Australian culture or not. Australian academic, poet and novelist John Kinsella writes that the novel makes him "uncomfortable" because the "fictionalization of the life of Ned Kelly participates in the creation and continuation of so many national myth." Kinsella seems concerned that books such as Carey's will perpetuate and encourage a type of Australian nationalism that excludes Australian that are not of Anglo-Celtic. In her article "Ned Kelly Died for our Sins," Deborah Bird Rose describes several Kelly narrative that "belong to Aboriginal people in the

victoria River District of the Northern Territory" (3). In one of these narratives, Kelly is the first white visitor to the aboriginal lands (4); in another, "God, Noah and Jesus are all located in the person of Ned Kelly" (7).

In the novel the protagonist Ned is an in depth self portrait of a man driven to crime through injustice and persecution. While he is evidently a racist and sexist as well as homophobic, he is nevertheless a character whom we admire for his stoicism, determination, defiance, capacity for love, and whose violence we understand as emerging from the damage and misunderstanding that result from the society he lives in. Kelly discovers that his father has been spotted wearing a woman's dress. Ned is horrified and digs up this repressed signifier in order to burn it. He encounters other face blackened, dress, wearing men, Dan, through the action. His love interest, the *Ellen Kelly* Mary, mother of his daughter enlightens him about the meaning of the cross-dressing. It is identified as the sign not gender uncertainty but as the in signal of a vicious Irish rebel group. The "sons of Sieve" (292). The only secret history being unearthed here, Graham Huggan on to recent Australian colonial history. The dress worn by Kelly's father is "a sign not of his effeminacy but on the contrary of his membership of a secret society of Irish rebels (147).

It is nice to be able to locate the member in the dress, but surely the cross dressing in the novel is not only a sign of something else particularly in a novel that plays around with dress- ups so much. Kelly is full of homophobic horror at the appearance of the dress, and the dressed bodies (15, 23). Australian legend is set up with the dominant social order not women, as its Carey plays with ironize, question and other. The figure of Ned as cultural hero in all sorts of ways. The letter was addressed to the Kelly's unborn daughter. This is both inclusion and exclusive of the feminine entirely addressed to a woman who as in Gayatri Spivak's famous reading of

Frankenstein as an imperial text never answers back and might therefore be seen as somehow outside of the prescriptive definitions of a mythical masculine national subject (243-61). The cultural theorist Stuart Hall argued for the power of discourse to create and reinforce western dominance. The discourses on how Europe described differences between itself (The West) and others used European cultural categories, language and ideas to represent "The Other." The knowledge produced by such a discourse become praxis, which then becomes reality; by producing a discourse of "difference" Europe was able to maintain its dominance over "The Other," with a binary social relation between the European and The Other, there by creating and establishing the subaltern, made possible by excluding The Other from the production of the discourse.

Ned's girlfriend Mary futures as the vessel for desire and competition between constable Fitzpatrick and Ned, but she is also the authorizing voice in the allaying of Ned's fears about the sexuality of his father, brothers and extension himself in her proper location of meaning of men in dresses. as proper woman in dress. She is able to identify the men-in- dresses, the sense of sieve, as both appropriately masculine. Kelly's release from the fear of this dress enables the forging of different masculine national dress. Representing a break from the pregnant Mary also legitimates Ned in terms of a model of paternal masculinity.

Kelly's rage is aimed at the privileged class whose wealth is gained at the expense of his own people and who effectively drive Ned himself to crime by depriving him of the opportunities to attain even a basic standard of living. At school Ned realizes that scholars were all parodies they know nothing about us [...] each day they learned from Mr. Irving that all micks was notch beneath the cattle (27).

Australian academic David Carter points out that critics "are distinctly uncomfortable

with thinking about literature or criticism as playing a positive role in ... forming a national identity or a national community" (4). His concerns are similar to those of Kinsella. Although Carter admits his discomfort with the idea of literature playing a role in forming national identity, he allows that it may not always be negative and can be positive (4). Graham Huggan points out that the Kelly's legend has become a commodity: "the sheer quantity of Kelly material currently available on the market testifies not just to the durability of the legend but also to its continuing profitability" (2).

Ned Kelly becomes a cultural hero long before his death, as the petition for reprieve attests, but his story has also begun to be appropriated, revised, and mythologizing during his lifetime. The first play about Kelly Gang, entitled *Catching the Kellys*, was performed in Melbourne in 1879 while the Kelly Gang were still at large; a second play ran for twenty-nine nights after Kelly's execution in 1880 (Barkham). Over the next century and a quarter, the Kelly narrative was presented colonies through various forms of popular culture; folksongs, musicals, films, novels, children's books comic strips and paintings. Australia's first ever feature film, *The story of the Kelly gang* released just five years after the Federation of the six English, as an Australian nation, played a significant role in transforming the Kelly story from a colonial into a national narrative. At the time, a critic for *The Bulletin* wrote:

There is deal too much racket about the show sometimes you can't see the picture for the noise of horses, trains, gunshot and wild cries; but all the same, it is the sort of bellowdrama that the lower orders crave for and two-thirds of Australia will want to see it the two-thirds that believe that Ned Kelly was a greater man than George Washington.

(Qtd. In Williams)

In addition, the Australian critics such as Kinsella, Devine and Carter hold regarding the Kelly legend. Ned came from a family of rough Irish squatters, who made their living by stealing livestock and way laying innocent passersby... there wasn't a shred of nobility in his character or deeds. He killed several people, often in cold blood, sometimes for no very good reason" (164). In the aftermath of the shootout on Stringybark Creek, Donald Cameron, a member of parliament, wonders publicly if the police were not to blame. This provides further motivation for Kelly to write the true version of history. Hearn, who was born and raised in Ireland, tells Ned, Dan and Hart the story of the sons of Sieve. Irish rebels who wore women's dresses and smeared their faces with ash to frighten unjust landowners precisely the activity for which Red Kelly was sentenced to Van Dieman's Land. Kelly reflects on the horror of transporting Irish prisoners to Van Dieman's Land. Having written his story just as Hearn asked him to and hoping to influence the disposition of his case. Kelly sends his long narrative to the Melbourne newspaper for publication. He also comes to realization that the sympathy of poor can be bought just as his uncle sold out power and hatches a plan to rob a bank at Euroa, an act that will enhance the Kelly Gang's growing legend and ensure their status as cultural heroes.

In *True History of the Kelly Gang* the protagonist, hero of the novel is a killer, highwayman and a criminal. To give emphasis such a person and to make hero for a criminal is an Empowerment of the subaltern. Ned's reaction against the persecution suffered by his family and community, as in his response to whitty's impounding of selectors livestock (190-1). It is acts of criminal defiance and revenge. His real impulses are to belong and to speak out against injustice. "I wished only to be a citizen I had tried to speak out but the mongrels stole my tongue when I asked for justice they give me none (328). When the Kelly Gang begins to form almost through

a process of osmosis, the pleasure of stealing from the rich is accompanied by a commitment to the formation of a new community. They come not to avoid honest graft the opposite when you stayed with me and Dan you would leave your grog behind and work beside us from dawn to dusk thus in the middle of that wilderness we cleared the flats and planted crops we was bulding a world where we would be left alone (194).

This offers a glimpse of a possible future that could occur given the condition of the time but also acts a premonition of the new nation in the process of being formed. Ned probe that he is not caught up in deterministic notion which shows a false view of the conviction. Ned acts a powerful voice against colonial injustice. Carey creates a complex picture of Ned as both culpable and admirable, which invites a contradictory empathy with this violent criminal. Ned is shown among other things to be doggedly hardworking (48-49) innocently trusting (63) stoical, heroic, admirably principled, violent, driven, angry loving, brooding and straight as a die (144), the circumstance, inequality, harassment, accidents and misunderstanding that lead to Ned's increasing criminalization faced by a policeman with a raised gun during the Stringybark Creek incident. People where oppressed and cruelly treated leading up to Kelly's revenge on Bill Frost, the manipulation of his innocence by Harry Power is balanced by Ned's later realized that rather than follow Power's example, 'I would of proved my manhood better by turning back to Greta' (114). Kelly's career is an outlaw, Ned's final confrontation with the police and his appearance in home-made metal body with the famous bucket shaped helmet. He proclaims himself the monitor after the iron warship he read about in a newspaper (324), with an ironic echo of his achievement in becoming monitor at school. The voice of Ned himself rides and survive these events giving account a strangely

uplifting. As being a criminal he always betrayed by different people such as Fitzpatrick, Curnow local school teacher Thomas Curnow be friended and betrays. Ned and paradoxically becomes both custodian and critic of his legend. Curnow provides Ned and his accomplices in the hotel with a momentary glimpse of their emerging mythic status. Curnow turns Kelly into a commodity and occupies his words so that the voice through which claims to speak is never Kelly's own Through this strategy Ned's voice living to ask with Gayatri Chakraverty Spivak 'Can the Subaltern Speak'?

In postcolonial theory, the term subaltern describes the lower classes and social groups who are rendered without human agency, by his or her social status. (2) Nonetheless, the philosopher and theoretician Gayatri Spivak advised against a too broad application of the term, because:

...Subaltern is not a classy word for oppressed", for [the] other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie.... In post-colonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern a space of difference. Now, who would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not Subaltern May people want to claim subalternity. They are the least interesting and the most dangerous. I mean, the word 'Subaltern' ... They should see what the mechanics of the discrimination are. They are within the hegemonic discourse, waiting a piece of the pie, and not being allowed, so let them speak, used the hegemonic discourses. They should not call themselves subaltern.(2)

In postcolonial theory, the study of the subaltern is vital to the analysis of agency and power relations because Postcolonial thinkers are intent on categorizing social groups,

which have the potential of transcending their subaltern condition, Young credits Gramsci's analysis of class structure in reference to the subordination of dominated groups divide of class consciousness (Young 353). He also notes, subaltern has become a synonym for a marginalized or disempowered minority group. Particularly on the grounds of gender and ethnicity. The meaning of subalternity are determined by a scholar's theory of revolution or social transformation within a particular society and period. The notion of subaltern revolt colonization, transportation, crime and conflict are the major binding of *True History of the Kelly Gang*, Carey has succeeded in intertwining the multilayered issues of cultural, historical, social injustice class in the threads of narrative with heterogeneous themes and of narrative intentions.

Young's reference to the subaltern as the medium of assumption of political agency recalls Spivak's speculations on the retrieval of subaltern agency. It is vital to briefly reconstruct. Spivak raise the important question of whether there can be agency without consciousness. She earlier referred to the portrayal of the subaltern in historiography as "subject-effect" rather than subject (204). According to Spivak, traditional history-writing denies consciousness to the Subaltern, which the subaltern studies historians are intent on restoring as a transitional operation of strategic essentialism. "Is there a causative link between agency and consciousness? Is one the predicate of the other? Spivak explores this through the moment of change crisis from subslternity to that of political signifier in which agency can be situated" (206). Agency is then contingent on locating the signifier the summons subaltern insurgency. How does consciousness arise through the signifier at such a moment. In her reflection Spivak points to an important nuance between the double movement of a theory of consciousness and a theory of change as it relates to the identification of the signifier that precipitates subaltern agency. It can be presumed that to consider the

subaltern means also to consider the subject and consciousness. The subject comes in to play in connection with the subaltern as a desubjectified being in the context of inequality in human relations between the self and the other. In the linguistic term an "Agent function is that of the doer responsible for an action or event taking place"(p.192), who invokes action and stimulates the effect of the performance. The absence of agency is void of neither any action nor the outcomes.

Kelly starts the narrative with an incident when he is still a boy. He is accused, perhaps unfairly' by a travelling salesman , McCormack, of talking a carthorse and using it to help a friend of Ned's called Gould, another hawker who resented the arrival of the McCormacks in his territory but whose cart had become stuck in mud during very wet weather: "The ground was that rotten it would bog a duck in places" (McDermott 2001,1). They returned the horses, but later Mrs. McCormack,

turned on me.... I did not say much to the woman as my Mother was present but that same day me and my uncle was cutting calves Gould wrapped up a note and a pair of the calves testicles and gave them to me to give them to Mrs. Mc Cormack....consequently Mc Cormack said he would sum-mons me.... He said I was a lie & he could welt me or any of my breed I was about 14 years of age but accepted the challenge and dismounting when Mrs Mc Cormack struct my horse in the flank with a bullock's nose and caused him to lose [sic] his equilibrium and fall postrate. (McDermott 2001, 3-6)

The net result of all this was that Ned found himself serving a six-month sentence in prison. He was only fifteen years old. Kelly and power pass through a hellish brushfire as they search for Frost, whom they find with a prostitute. Kelly shoots frost in the stomach with his rifle and leaves him for dead on the steps of the whorehouse.

Later and despite knowledge to the contrary, Power assures Kelly that Frost did indeed die of his gunshot wounds.

True History of Kelly the Gang is a cultural history. Ned's letter of self-explanation to his daughter who he has never seen. This historical novel explores what Carey has called the pattern of abandonment, orphans in his work. Transportation of his father John Red Kelly from Ireland to Van Dieman's Land, for crimes about which Kelly never heard his father. In Carey's novel, Ned is a cultural hero because Kelly's mythology has developed over the past century and critics debate whether Ned's narrative is Australian culture or not. In *True History of the Kelly Gang* the protagonist, hero of the novel is a killer, highwayman and criminal. To give emphasis such a person and to make hero for a criminal is an empowerment of the subaltern. Ned probe that he is not caught up in deterministic notion which show a false view of the conviction. Ned acts a powerful voice against colonial injustice.

III. Conclusion: Carey as a Spokesperson of the Subaltern Voice

After a comprehensive exploration of the issues regarding cultural history of *True History of the Kelly Gang*, this research concludes that marginalized outsider and outlaws who are engaged in power struggle against the powerful landlords. Ned writes a series of letters to his unborn daughter, in which he tries to explain why he foremost become an outlaw, because he had no choice and so provided her with a true history. Kelly's father was transported from Ireland to Australia and dominated by the colonizer. Ned explains he knows what it is to be raised on lies and silences. His own father was an Irish convict shipped along with his mother to Australia during the Great transportation.

Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* has become most one of the important works in Australian literature. Australian was struggling from its colonial past with England and from its own history as a penal colony, where English and Irish criminals were sent. The tension this effort generates is made evident in the endless conflicts between mostly Irish selection-holder, or homesteader and the English landlords who own the largest tracts of property. Ned is betrayed by Alex Fitzpatrick by courting his fourteen years old sister, Kate. Fitzpatrick has two other women, one of whom pregnant in other town. Ned writes his life story in brief that he could tell his true history to Australians. Kelly's story is cultural in the sense that it follows the novel deliberately foster the illusion of historical authenticity in a number of ways. The title with its assertive lack of the definite article.

In *True History of the Kelly Gang*, Carey presents Ned, Kelly Gang as criminal, highwayman and killer. Alex Fitzpatrick and Curnow are presented as clever and seductive guy who betrays Ned. Fitzpatrick is presented as friend of Kelly whom introduces Ned to Mary Hearn, who will give birth to his daughter to whom Kelly's

letters are addressed. Later, Fitzpatrick falls in love with Ned's fourteen-year-old sister Kate, for which Kelly shoots him in the wrist. Fitzpatrick then betrays Kelly. Thomas Curnow a school teacher becomes one of the Kelly's Gang's hostages in Glenrowan. He flatters Kelly and convinces him to turn over the parcels of his personal history on which he is hard at work even as the hostages are being held at Mrs. Jone's pub. Curnow is revealed to loathe Kelly and his gang and to hold Kelly's writing in the lowest contempt. Red Kelly, Kelly's father, an Irishman, arrested and transported to Van Dieman's Land, an island prison for crimes, who Kelly never heard talking. Ellen Kelly, Ned's mother who left her son to be a highwayman criminal and killer who makes different partner such as George King, who is Kelly's age. Kelly's family are shown as a product of the prejudice and vilification that poor Irish Transportee such as, Ned's own father were subjected. As being a criminal he always betrayed by different people such as, Fitzpatrick, Curnow local school teacher. Ned paradoxically becomes both a custodian and critic of his legend. Curnow provides Ned and his accomplices in the hotel with a momentary glimpse of their emerging mythic status.

Subalternity primarily reflects on marginality based on socio-cultural system however, it conjures up different variables i.e., historical, geography, economic conditions, socio-cultural circumstances in a certain packaged form. Subaltern has become a synonym for a marginalized or disempowered minority group. Particularly on the grounds of gender and ethnicity. The notion of subaltern revolt colonization, transportation crime and conflict are the major binding of *True History of the Kelly Gang*. Carey has succeeded in intertwining the multilayered issue of cultural historical social injustice. Carey's novel has repositioned the Kelly narrative firmly at the center of Australian popular cultural and linguistic and imaginative style with which he recreates Ned Kelly's life his context and most of all his voice.

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Cultural History of *True History of the Kelly Gang*: A Subaltern Study

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