

A Study of Different Aspects of Hutcheonian Parody in Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs*

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Abstract

The purpose of the present article is to investigate Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1997) within a theoretical context set by Linda Hutcheon's definition of parody. In Hutcheon's view, parody is a repetition with critical distance. Hutcheonian parody allows the adapted work to challenge and ironically transform the form and the content of the hypotext in order not to ridicule but to create. The central questions of this research are: How does *Jack Maggs* employ Hutcheonian parody within the broader postmodern narrative discourse to view its source text with a critical distance? And, how does Hutcheonian parody engage *Jack Maggs* in contemporary social debates? In order to answer these questions, the research applies various aspects of Hutcheonian parody to Carey's novel. The present paper demonstrates that Carey's *Jack Maggs* recontextualizes Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1860) in a new Australian setting. It also argues that the novel, which has mostly received positive responses and reactions from both literary critics and general readers, illustrates Carey's parodic attempt to revisit one of the most renowned novels of the Victorian era. The present research contends that *Jack Maggs* is a critique of nineteenth-century realism and, more broadly speaking, of master narratives.

Keywords

Hypotext; Hypertext; Intertextuality; Parody; Adaptation; Recontextualization.

1. Introduction

Frank J. D'Angelo states that "parody is a practice that can be traced back to the Greeks and Romans, but like adaptation, appropriation, pastiche, and simulation, it is especially associated with postmodernism" ("The Rhetoric of Intertextuality" 38). The present paper is set to address and examine those aspects of *Jack Maggs* which place the novel into the broader context of postmodernist thought. The research now turns to the study of the dialogic relation – to use Bakhtin's term – between this Australian parody of *Great*

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Expectations and different forces that form the postmodern narrative discourse. The analysis will indeed be frequently informed by theories and thoughts of Linda Hutcheon on parody within the broader discursive framework of postmodernism. The present article seeks to investigate Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* within a framework set by Linda Hutcheon's definition of parody. While parody is a very old tool employed for various purposes at different times, it gained a remarkable position within the postmodern narrative discourse.

The major goal of this article is to explore how Carey's parodic version of a Victorian novel conforms to and, at the same time, confronts the discursive practices of the postmodern narrative discourse. The overarching research questions driving this goal are: How does *Jack Maggs* employ Hutcheonian parody within the broader postmodern narrative discourse to view its source text with a critical distance? And, how does Hutcheonian parody engage *Jack Maggs* in contemporary social debates?

To answer the above-mentioned questions, the study will highlight the divergent and convergent elements between postmodernist parodies, as manifested in *Jack Maggs*, and both realistic and modernistic thoughts. Hutcheon's notions of the politics of parody will be employed in this article. Moreover, her ideas about the historical aspect of postmodernism will be compared with those of Fredric Jameson in order to study the representation of history in *Jack Maggs*. Postmodern anxiety over grand narratives and historiographic metafiction will also be used to answer our research questions.

The next section, *Jack Maggs* and the Realist Novel, will address the transformation / deconstruction of such crucial notions as morality, ethics and essence from realist to postmodernist fiction. It will reveal how *Jack Maggs* reflects this transformation in its parodic way. Then, the study will turn to postmodernism's anxiety over master narratives in the section called Anxiety of Master-narratives in *Jack Maggs*. As defined by Jean-François Lyotard, it reflects the distrust of postmodernism over grand narratives – favored by modernism – that used to dismiss any narrative that fell outside their space. It will study how Carey's parody of *Great Expectations* regards such master narratives and what it implies in postmodern narrative discourse. Next, in *Jack Maggs* and Hutcheon's Politics of Parody section, the discussion will study the novel as a parodic discourse which enters in a dialogic interaction with the social context of its time. Then, the section called *Jack Maggs* and Historiographic Metafiction will see how this parodic novel seeks to present an entirely new and different version of history from the one narrated in Dickens' novel and what this difference implies in the broader postmodern narrative discourse. Finally, the current article will present some conclusions drawn from the preceding discussions.

2. Literature Review

Although *Jack Maggs* signifies an important phase in Carey's career as a novelist, very few critical studies have endeavored to analyze the parodic function of the novel. Among the few noteworthy examples, M. Pilar Baines Alarcos's article "Motherhood and Abjection in Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs*" is a highly cited research. In her study of the concepts of motherhood and abjection in Carey's *Jack Maggs*, Alarcos (2010) argues that the novel illustrates a "murderous" (42) portrait of mothers. She concludes that Carey's postcolonial critique of Mother Britain is the major reason behind his unusual depiction of motherhood in the novel.

Additionally, Mary Ellen Snodgrass has carried out a comprehensive study of Peter Carey's life and works in *Peter Carey: A Literary Companion* (2010). On *Jack Maggs*, Snodgrass informs her readers that Carey composed the novel "for a broad audience of Australians and British" (23). In "Discovering New Pasts: Victorian Legacies in the Postcolonial Worlds of *Jack Maggs* and *Mister Pip*" (2009), Beverly Taylor has investigated Victorian legacies in by New Zealander Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip* (2006) and Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs*. Taylor concluded that both works evoked Dickens's work to "address contemporary concerns" and "invite readers to examine how we reinvest meaning in Victorian classics" (95).

3. Methodology

This article presents a narratological study of *Jack Maggs* as an adaptation of Dicken's *Great Expectations*. Within this narratological framework, the research explores the intertextual relation between what French literary theorist Gérard Genette calls a hypotext, an earlier work that serves as the source for a subsequent literary work, and what Genette describes as a hypertext, a work that makes covert and overt references to a preceding text. Various aspects of Hutcheonian parody will be employed to shed new light on the intertextual relationship between the two texts.

Much in line with this framework, the study depicts moving from textual to intertextual and then contextual analysis, a move supported by parody as defined by Hutcheon. To answer research questions, the study will highlight the divergent and convergent elements between postmodernist parodies, as manifested in *Jack Maggs*, and both realistic and modernistic thoughts. Hutcheon's notions of the politics of parody will be employed in this research to illustrate how Carey's parodic adaptation of *Great Expectations* unsettles the hierarchies in its hypotext.

4. *Jack Maggs* and the Realistic Novel

The genre of novel has witnessed numerous formal experimentations which are founded upon discussions of the subversive inclination of postmodern narrative discourse. Most of these experimentations target the realist novel, which is believed by most postmodern thinkers as the embodiment of traditional modes of thought, rationalistic epistemologies, and a coherent approach toward such concepts as essence and individuality. The realistic novel, which is marked by linear plots, impartiality and authority of its omniscient and ubiquitous narrators, and characters set against a panoramic social background, seeks to generalize a specific worldview and turn it into a universal truth. As a result, what realism suggests in literary criticism is any set of conventions and signs in the narrative that has gained stability over the course of time and therefore has been accepted as *the* normal way of thinking and accordingly *the* standard way of writing. Postmodernism dismisses these constructed narrative codes which dominated western literature for centuries.

On the thematic level, literary postmodernism poses serious questions about the content of realistic novels. Joanna Klara Teske (2013) observed that “realism seems occupied with moral conflicts (sometimes dilemmas), which are resolved with reference to a socially accepted hierarchy of values and rules of moral conduct” (98). The key components of the poetics of postmodernism, however, aim at disclosing “the man-made, conventional and arbitrary character of both our selves and our social environment” (99) in a novel. The moral standpoint also undergoes serious changes because “moral actions and moral judgment acquire a new status of artistic/aesthetic act in that all reality is now re-interpreted in terms of the text, narrative, fiction: in a make-believe world, morality is also make-believe” (99). Thus, while the moral standpoints of realism and modernism relied on objectivism and skepticism respectively, postmodernism credited constructivism and relativism.

Peter Carey’s *Jack Maggs* serves to illustrate the move from realism to postmodernism in a parodic context. However, Carey starts his narrative in way that reminds his readers of the traditions of Victorian melodrama:

It was a Saturday night when the man with the red waistcoat arrived in London. It was, to be precise, six of the clock on the fifteenth of April in the year of 1837 that those hooded eyes looked out the window of the Dover coach and beheld, in the bright aura of gas light, a golden bull and an overgrown mouth opening to devour him – the sign of his inn, the Golden Ox. (1)

The meticulous references to the time of the narrative are typical of the Victorian realist novels. The space is similarly Victorian as the narrative starts in London, the metropolitan centre of the British Empire in the nineteenth century. Carey’s

descriptions of place are also similarly accurate: "There was now a tobacconist in Great Queen Street, a laundry, and a narrow little workroom where glass eyes were made for dolls and injured gentlemen" (6). For Jack Maggs, as a foreigner, London creates mixed feelings, which Carey recounts in such descriptions of the city: "This light had shone all the way from the Elephant and Castle: gas light, blazing and streaming like great torches" (2). Bruce Woodcock (2003) draws an analogy between such descriptions and those made by Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* (1899), arguing that "*Jack Maggs* juxtaposes the hidden and the visible to reveal a terrible social violence beneath the surface of the imperial ideal. London's glowing streets with their 'bright aura' mask a savage barbarity, captured emblematically in the inn sign of the 'overgrown mouth' ready to devour the golden bull. This is a story of dispossession, appropriation and retaliation" (120). As the story of the main character is the story of appropriation and retaliation, the whole endeavor of Peter Carey is also marked by appropriation and retaliation against the tradition of novel writing in the Victorian period. The Australian novelist is retaliating against realism as exemplified in the works of such writers as Charles Dickens.

Carey's hypertext replaces the implied author of the hypotext with overbearing authority with an implied author who undermines his privileged position *and* a fictional author called Tobias, who is ready to manipulate reality for the sake of his career. Carey tells his readers that Tobias was not even able to know the truth about himself: "He never really knew the truth about himself, not even when the fame he craved was finally, briefly, granted him and he travelled from city to city like a one-man carnival act, feeding off the applause of his readers. Even when it was thrown in his face, so to speak, he did not see it" (29). Given the fact that Tobias is modeled on one of the most famous realist novelists Charles Dickens, it is quite ironic that he is a failure when it comes to discovering the truth.

Carey's use of the word 'carnival' is significant for our present discussion. According to the Russian critic, Mikhail Bakhtin, carnival is a time when social rules, official hierarchies and formal power relations are reversed by the popular or folk culture. The concept of carnivalesque signifies the subversion of the official culture and whatever it stands for. The idea of carnivalesque is pertinent to the reversal of realistic notions in postmodern fiction as, for Bakhtin, it signifies a force that "illustrates the way the principles of inversion and permutation work underneath the surface of carnival and festive misrule" (Laroque 83). *Jack Maggs* as a parodic postmodern novel subverts the principles of the realistic fiction in many ways. The primary subversion is indeed the selection of the title character

as the protagonist. The felon Jack is a character who reminds Carey's readers of a trail of anti-heroes common in postmodern novels.

More to the point, the novel's representation of law and justice is also an important element of its carnivalesque atmosphere. Take, for instance, this part of the novel: "To discuss Jack Maggs with a man of law seemed, to Mercy, a very dangerous thing. To her, a lawyer was of the same species as a judge, and the judge the same genus as a policeman, and a policeman the same thing exactly as Harold Hoban, the hangman at Newgate Prison" (79). Elsewhere in the novel, Carey targets the traditional moral standpoint of the Victorian novels as he describes, in a bleak but moving way, the conversation between a judge and Jack Maggs:

"Do you know you can be hanged, Jack Maggs?"

"I do not care."

"You do not care?"

"It is over in a minute."

"You have sworn on the Bible, Jack Maggs. Do you not care what might happen to you when you stand before your God? Eternity is not over in a minute." (165-6)

In these examples Carey presents his audience with a sharp ironic account of law enforcement and all its related elements. For him, lawyers, judges, policemen, and hangmen are all the same aspects of a crumbling justice system. Within this corrupt system, it is no surprise that the most qualified candidate for the protagonist of Carey's novel is the criminal of the source text. Moreover, Carey's reversal of the social status of Dickens' characters has challenged the whole idea of Victorian morality which permeated the novels in the 19th century. Michael Timko argued that "the major thrust of the Victorians was directly concerned with a morality based on social and humanistic grounds rather than unconscious or inward ones" (619). Jack's morality, however, is less concerned with the social and humanistic obligations and is more engaged with the individualistic and innate aspect and ethics and morality. Tobias Oates, on the other hand, represents the morality that we frequently see in Dickens and his contemporaries. For instance, Carey writes that "'It is pretty clear by now,' said Oates, 'that no mesmeric act on earth will have anyone perform an act against their moral temper'" (24). A few sentences later, Tobias emphasizes that "'Even the lowest type of renegade,' said Tobias Oates, 'has an inner need to give up the truth. Look at those gallows confessions they are still selling on Holborn. It is what our fathers called 'conscience.' We all have it. For the criminal, it is like a passion to throw himself off a high place'" (24). Tobias' description of morality and conscience clearly reminds the readers of realistic novels, which Carey mocks mainly through the character of Jack.

5. Anxiety of Master-narratives in *Jack Maggs*

This section of the present article will focus on Carey's application of Hutcheon's parodic thought to attack what Lyotard describes as grand narratives. Following the definition of grand narratives, this part will show how *Jack Maggs* in its parodic way illustrates the distrust of postmodernist thought toward all totalizing narratives. Because of its parodic nature, *Jack Maggs* is predisposed to reflect on one of the grand narratives of Western literature. The 'master narrative' (alternatively described as 'grand narrative' or 'metanarrative'), was Jean-François Lyotard's term for the totalizing discourses that sought to legitimize modernism's philosophy of history.

In works such as *The Postmodern Condition* (1979), Lyotard emphasizes "the plurality and heterogeneity of the 'little narratives' of social exchange and daily life as a way of combating all totalizing Grand Narrative" (Lindsay 41). Also, it was Lyotard who voiced the anxiety of postmodernism over these narratives because he characterized postmodernism as a disbelief toward every grand narrative. Niels Brügger states that:

[t]he modern is characterized by science (which is concerned with truth) and by the institutions controlling social bonds (which are concerned with justice) that are beginning to legitimate their activities with reference to a grand narrative: "The dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth" (xxiii). Hitherto, these narratives of legitimation supporting both science and social bonds functioned satisfactorily, but for Lyotard they have become untrustworthy; indeed, the postmodern context is this untrustworthiness. (78)

One of the paradoxes in Lyotard's ideas – which in on a larger scale a paradox in postmodernism – is that his own attack on master narratives forms another narrative that is grand and coherent. For Hutcheon, however, this was not a paradox. She maintained that "the masterful denials of mastery, the cohesive attacks on cohesion, the essentializing challenges to essences characterize postmodern theory" (*Poetics* 20). Hutcheon continues Lyotard's theorizing of the failure of master narratives. In fact, all her endeavors are characterized by her lack of faith for grand narratives.

The whole process of writing *Jack Maggs* is fueled by Carey's incredulity toward one of the master narratives of the literary canon which has legitimized the dismissal of Australia as the other. In one of the final conversations of the novel, which is illuminated by postmodern irony, Jack denies being an Australian and reminds Mercy that he is an Englishman:

Jack. "My son is an Englishman."
 Mercy. "I meant your real children."
 Jack. "I am not of that race."

Mercy. "What race?"

Jack. "The Australian race," he said. "The race of Australians."

Mercy. "But what of your babes?"

Jack. "Damn you, don't look at me like that. I am an Englishman." (185)

The narrative form of *Jack Maggs* is yet another blow to the grand narratives of the literary canon. The novel consists of different types and forms of communication including unreliable reports and letters.

Moreover, at times the novel presents various and sometimes contradictory versions of the same event, which adds to its ambiguity and, more importantly, undermines the authenticity of the fixed and determinate narrative of *Great Expectations*. In Dickens' novel, for the narrator Pip, it is even impossible to think that other characters don't trust him and his account of event. This is, for instance, how he gets offended when he doubts Joe and Biddy might be distrustful of him:

Anyhow, I sat with my elbow on my knee and my face upon my hand, looking into the fire, as those two talked about my going away, and about what they should do without me, and all that. And whenever I caught one of them looking at me, though never so pleasantly (and they often looked at me – particularly Biddy), I felt offended: as if they were expressing some mistrust of me. Though Heaven knows they never did by word or sign. (141)

Pip allows no room for other characters to express any sort of hesitation about him. They have to trust him and the version of events as narrated by him. In other words, neither the novel's characters nor the readers have any access to an alternative point of view.

Within a Bakhtinian polyphonic context, this means that the voice of narrator has suppressed all other voices in the novel and deprived them of even thinking differently. In fact, the first person narration is the heart of Dickens' novel. Pip exemplifies a very reliable narrator who chronicles his development throughout the narrative. Take, for instance, the certainty of Pip about Estella's love for him:

It was impossible for me to avoid seeing that she cared to attract me; that she made herself winning; and would have won me even if the task had needed pains. Yet this made me none the happier, for, even if she had not taken that tone of our being disposed of by others, I should have felt that she held my heart in her hand because she willfully chose to do it, and not because it would have wrung any tenderness in her, to crush it and throw it away. (266)

The narrator has full and authoritative control not only over his own feelings but he is also endowed with unfettered and unlimited access to the emotions to other characters. The first-person point of view in the entire novel deprives the work from narrative diversity.

In *Jack Maggs*, however, it is quite the opposite. Woodcock points to the diversity of narrative types in *Jack Maggs*, arguing that it is Carey's tactic to create an interplay of themes in his fluid story:

While using the historical and convict genres, Carey inflects them with postcolonial counter-discourse strategies and metafictionality. By doing so, the novel shows how the economic exploitation of class and colonialism are integrally linked to cultural domination, which effaces and appropriates identities, selves and histories. Carey uses his characteristic narrative tactics of short chapters, readily shifting tenses and interleaving threads, to create a vibrant interplay of themes and ideas as the postcolonial issues and fictional artifice feed into each other, while the layers of the story unfold with an appropriately mesmerising fluidity. (Woodcock 121)

While Woodcock draws our attention to the mixture of several narrative types in *Jack Maggs* to highlight its postcolonial aspect, it seems the idea of incorporating these types in the narrative of *Jack Maggs* is Carey's strategy to stand against the grand narratives that dominated Western literature for centuries. The diversity of these tactics – convict narrative, short chapters, metafictionality – is unique even in Carey's own oeuvre.

6. Jack Maggs and Hutcheon's Politics of Parody

Our analysis of the work will stress – through the interpretation of *Jack Maggs* – that Hutcheonian politics of parody works to show that the postmodern narrative discourse is not merely limited to offering a "value-free, decorative, de-historicized quotation of past forms" (*Politics* 94). Postmodernism has often reacted to any set of values associated with a Western tradition of thought called the Enlightenment. In particular, postmodernism stood against the long-held assumption that human reason, empowered by scientific objectivity, can create objective accounts of the world. Within this system of thought, it was believed that reason could enable humans of transcendence, i.e. of moving beyond the limitations of body, space, and time and contemplating the universal issues about man.

Fredric Jameson (1984) argued that "the evaluation of the social moment in which we live today is the object of an essentially political affirmation or repudiation" (53). Jameson also added that "Lyotard's aesthetic positions, however, cannot be adequately evaluated in aesthetic terms, since what informs them is an essentially social and political conception of a new social system beyond classical capitalism" (60). As a direct and relentless response, postmodern narrative discourse "recognizes itself as historically situated, as motivated by values and, thus, political interests, and as a human practice without transcendent justification" (Nicholson 64-5). All these suggest that

postmodernism is a discourse in contact with an infinite number of other discourses.

The subversive inclination of postmodernism has enabled it to confront and deconstruct the texts in terms of racial, ethnic, or gender repression. Madhu Dubey (2002) argues that “postmodernism is occasionally used as a periodizing label to refer to a crisis of representation confronting late twentieth-century novelists who, for a variety of political-economic, technological, and cultural shifts, can no longer assume the mantle of speaking for the race or affirm straightforwardly political aims for literature” (158). Dubey adds that “the term postmodernism names a set of signifying practices (intertextual parody, self-reflexivity) that are not restricted to any particular historical period” (158).

The postmodern parody is a signifying practice or a tool that is used to reinforce the subversive aspect of postmodern narrative discourse. As *Jack Maggs* is both a parodic response to the colonial discourse of England and the authoritative discourse of nineteenth-century novels, it certainly works within the framework of the Hutcheonian politics of parody. In the novel, Carey uses parody as a means to sound various implicit attacks against both targets. These attacks include his description of London upon the return of Tobias and Jack. They re-enter London after many years “as dark cumulus clouds spilled through the dirty air, stacking themselves high above St Paul’s” (173). Carey, then, draws an analogy between the London that they left at the beginning of the novel as the one they return to by the end of the story:

The London they left behind had been a sunny place where daffodils grew in the window boxes. The London they returned to seemed hellish—broken cotton bales, cracking whips, an omnibus alight on St Martin’s Lane—all the streets awash with a weary sulphurous kind of evening light that seeped into his very thoughts, and finally surrounded the image of the family he had come so close to abandoning. (173)

Keyvan Allahyari (2017) argues that Carey’s use of the word ‘hellish’ here is possibly “a reference to the history of atrocities occurred against the aboriginal people of the area in the 1830s around the time in which the novel is set” (326). Other researchers have disagreed with Allahyari, arguing that Carey is not concerned with the status of the Australian natives. Victoria Reeve, for instance, has discussed that Carey’s use of the term ‘Australian race’ is a reference “to Englishmen gone ‘native,’ rather than native Australians, and ‘native’ in the sense of having given up their native land, England, for a substitute, the colony” (1). Whether Carey had native Australians in mind or he was concerned about those with English ancestry when writing his parody, what is clear is that he makes a comparison between Australia and England. As the title of Anthony J.

Hassall's 1997 article sums it up, Carey's narrative is "A Tale of Two Countries" (128).

It is noteworthy to mention that Carey's description of London is very much similar to British authors' descriptions of Australia in the 19th century. In other words, Carey's parody hits back at the dominant discourse of the Victorian England, for which England was the centre of peace and prosperity while countries such as Australia were sources of trouble and filthiness. The transformation of Jack's feeling about London originates from the way Carey's views about Australia undergo tremendous changes. As Hassall states, "*Jack Maggs* suggests that Carey's vision of early Australia has undergone a profound metamorphosis, from despair to something like hope" (129).

The Hutcheonian parody has enabled Carey to challenge the whole concept of authorship as well. In an interview, Carey said Dickens' *Great Expectations* invites its readers to "take the British point of view. And with that view, you love Pip, he's your person, and so suddenly Magwitch is this dark terrible Other" (2). Thus, Carey's parodic mission is to disturb this power relation and ruin the veneer of order and tranquility that permeates Dickens' narrative and puts it in the service of the dominant British ideology. Laura E. Savu (2005) contends that "Carey's revisionist undertaking in *Jack Maggs* exposes the political and cultural stakes of an ideology of authorship that operated selectively, in complicity with the imperial ideology of his time" (129). Carey's parody is a reflection upon the process of writing, which includes the ethical issues. While many researchers have attested to the representation of Dickens' moral responsibilities in his novels, they argue that "Dickens's interrogation of Englishness was undermined by his middle-class position" (Savu 134), which prevented him to show care for Britain's colonies including Australia.

7. Jack Maggs and Historiographic Metafiction

This part of the article will focus on the historiographic metafiction, a type of postmodern novel that through its self-reflexivity raises doubts about the reliability and objectivity of the truth of the historical narratives. It will argue how the Hutcheonian parody in *Jack Maggs* helps the novel to be skeptical of what its source text has presented as a given truth. Historiographic metafiction is a term that Linda Hutcheon employs to define the postmodern novel. Hutcheon explains that the primary concern of this type of postmodern fiction is its concern with "whose truth gets told" (*Poetics*, 123) in historical and fictional narratives. This implies that ideological discourses are always involved in the representation of reality. Thus, postmodern works raise doubts about the versions of history that we have received and "remind us that history itself is an unreliable narrative construction" (Thaden, 754).

In Hutcheonian terms, historiographic metafiction foregrounds the discursively constructed nature of reality “by stressing the contexts in which the fiction is being produced—by both writer and reader” (*Poetics* 40). Critics before Hutcheon also drew attention to this function of parody. G. D. Kiremidjian (1969) stated that a “parody forces us to be aware of form as an artifice or as an artificial discipline which is brought into relation with a radically different phenomenon, that of natural experience itself” (233). Kiremidjian did not mention the term ‘historiographic metafiction’ directly, but what he had in mind about the impact of parody on the fusion of form and content closely resembles the definition of what was later described as historiographic metafiction.

Certain features of the novel are privileged in historiographic metafiction. These features include narrative discontinuity, intertextual parody, and textual self-reflexivity. Among these features, intertextual parody is notable in *Jack Maggs*. Margaret Rose has defined parody as a “metafictional, intertextual and comic form” (283). More to the point, Hutcheon discussed that postmodern parody “is an integrated structural modeling process of revising, replaying, inventing, and ‘transcontextualizing’ previous works of art” (*Theory of Parody*, 11). In his parodic revisiting of Dickens’ text, Carey has made a network of relations between the story and many of his contemporary discourses, most remarkably the social and cultural ones. In doing so, he foregrounds the subjective and constructed nature of reality in Dickens’ version of the events.

Ansgar Nünning opines that “historiographic metafiction often challenges hegemonic cultural discourses by recontextualizing them and offering alternative versions, thus foregrounding epistemological and ethical questions involved in writing history” (359). This has also been discussed by Hutcheon when she argues that in historiographic metafiction that which is “fictively personal” becomes the “historically and thus politically public” (160-161). Hutcheon, referring to Belsey and Patricia Waugh, states that “the literary history of the novel has been inseparable from that of realism,” and that novelistic realism has been inseparably associated with “the ideology of liberal humanism” (180). In a process of defamiliarization, postmodern novels draw attention to the fact that they are textual constructs in order to prevent the formation of any interpretation that might assume their fictive world as a representation or reflection of a given reality. Carey’s metafiction style is precisely a similar attempt to highlight the fact that history both in his and Dickens’ versions is a sheer construct, only a reflection of reality.

It is illuminating to mention that postmodern theorists held different and at times opposing views about the relationship between history and narrative. A comparison between the ideas of Fredric Jameson and Linda Hutcheon

illuminates the stances of these two camps. Hutcheon argues that “historiographic metafiction blends the self-reflexivity of metafiction with an ironized sense of history; this mix foregrounds the distinction “between brute events of the past and the historical facts we construct out of them” (*Politics* 57). In other words, postmodern fiction seeks to draw our attention to the problematic status of historical representation. John N. Duvall (1999) maintained that “for Jameson, postmodern narrative is ahistorical (and hence politically dangerous), playing only with pastiche images and aesthetic forms that produce a degraded historicism; for Hutcheon, postmodern fiction remains historical, precisely because it problematizes history through parody, and thus retains its potential for cultural critique” (372). However, Duvall added, “for Hutcheon, postmodernism remains historical and political precisely through its parodic historical reference; through such parodic reference” (Duvall, 378).

Carey’s novel contains these parodic historical references, but these links to Dickens’ works do not undermine the autonomy of *Jack Maggs*. Woodcock discusses that “there is less to be gained from reading *Jack Maggs* in any detail against Dickens’s novel than there is from considering its intrinsic issues, strategies and merits. Once we accept the starting point for this fictional reinvention, *Jack Maggs* and Tobias Oates function as convincing characters with their own imaginative sovereignty” (124). This puts Carey’s *Jack Maggs* in a unique position, which allows it to, firstly, question the historical authenticity of Dickens’ account in *Great Expectations* and, secondly, create its own autonomous and independent version of historical narrative.

The ending of the novel once again shows the artificiality of any historical accounts, even the one presented by Carey himself. Although some critics contend Carey’s choice for the ending of his novel fails to provide a reasonable fate for Jack, it creates a significant effect of what Woodcock describes as fictional distancing: “after the brutal events in London, the new lives of Mercy and Maggs in Australia read like a fairy tale, deliberately unreal, while Oates is left cleaning up after Lizzie’s death, burning the bloodstained sheets and seeing in their flames the ghosts that will continue to haunt him and which he will weave into his own *Jack Maggs*” (137).

This suggests that the story and history of *Jack Maggs* are both fictional accounts. The ending also stresses the self-reflexivity of the novel as it reinforces the fact that the lives of *Jack Maggs*, Tobias, and Philip or Abel Magwitch, and Pip are all constructed versions of history which can never be released from the subjectivity and interests of the author. The ending of the novel seems to be a deliberate attempt by Peter Carey to ensure that his readers will challenge the authenticity of his own account of events. This reminds us of what Hutcheon

writes about the seemingly paradoxical attack of postmodernism on grand narratives. Peter Carey's novel exemplifies the cohesive attack on cohesion that Hutcheon had in mind when she talked about the postmodern theory.

8. Conclusion

The present article investigated the way Carey has parodied the realistic mode of fiction which permeated the nineteenth-century novels, particularly the works of Charles Dickens. The article argued that a socially accepted hierarchy of values, which often take the form of moral conducts, is used in realistic novels in order to resolve conflicts or put an end to dilemmas. This mechanism is clearly used in Dickens' *Great Expectations* where the final reconciliation between Pip and Estella settles all conflicts and moral dilemmas of the novel. The novel ends with determinacy as Pip is confident there won't be another parting between them. This firmness in making conclusions is for Carey's novel the point of departure from the often-called verisimilitude of the realistic fiction. Not only does Jack Maggs lack all the confidence of Pip in a determinate future, but he raises doubts about the reliability of the reality that is presented in the narrative. In fact, Carey's use of Dickens' protagonist as the criminal for his parodic novel indicates his lack of trust to the version of reality jotted down by the British novelist.

It was also argued that Carey's distrust in Dickens' realism stems from the anxiety of postmodernism over grand narratives or master narratives. This anxiety, which was first voiced by the French Jean-François Lyotard, was later echoed by Linda Hutcheon. According to these thinkers, postmodernism is opposed to any type of cohesion and essence. Thus, postmodern counter-narratives seek to subvert any hierarchy that prioritizes such notions. Carey's novel, characterized by postmodern parody, engages actively in subverting the hierarchies of its source text at various levels including the reliable narrator, colonialism and the authority of the novelist.

Jack Maggs is without any doubt an example of Hutcheonian parody as it deals with various contemporary social and cultural events and incidents. The novel shows that the postmodern narrative discourse does not exclude social debates for the sake of remaining in a partial and safe zone. Instead, Carey's novel delves into such sensitive issues as abortion or the fate of prisoners. Finally, the study concluded that Carey's *Jack Maggs* is an instance of what Hutcheon describes as historiographic metafiction. Defined as a type of fiction that is intensely self-reflexive but at the same time alludes to historical characters and

narratives, historiographic metafiction aims to target seemingly unchangeable accounts of history.

In Carey's novel, the addition of the character of Tobias Oates as a deceitful and untruthful realistic novelist is the primary element of metafiction. At the same time, the novel presents a different version of the relationship between England and Australia during the 19th century from the one reflected in *Great Expectations*. The combination of these two elements contribute to the parodic project of Carey in which he reminds his readers that no accounts of history can be totally regarded as objective, especially those which one may find in the hierarchical canon of literature.



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