Peter Carey's Archive and the Australian Literary Field

KEYVAN ALLAHYARI
University of Melbourne

Peter Carey's archives are a missing element, albeit a remarkably important one, in the critical literature about the productive mechanisms of his celebrity. This paper explores the archiving of Carey's materials in the State Library of Victoria, a process commenced by the Library's purchase of the documents relating to Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* (2000). This collection, catalogued as 'The Papers and Drafts of Peter Carey' marks the convergence of canonicity, the literary market, and the materiality of the cultural artefact. This archive adds a new facet to Carey's image as an Australian author in the public domain, creating a sense of continuity of his relevance to the canon of Australian literature. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's sociological paradigm, I demonstrate how the constitution of the archive is the result of the collective recognition of the economic and cultural capital of Carey's manuscripts and paraphernalia. Through a case study of an agent in constructing the archive, I investigate the stakes invested in the ongoing dominant position of Carey in the Australian literary field into the twenty-first century. This section also examines the ways that agents augment their volume of literary and economic capital through engaging with, what I call, Carey's archival capital.

I

In August 1998, *Connections*, the journal of the University of Queensland Library, announced the acquisition of Carey's collection, including manuscripts of Carey's major books as well as several short stories, articles, notes, reviews and related correspondence (*Connections* 6). The report is accompanied by a photo that captures Carey opening a folder with his left hand while placing his right hand on the documents in the presence of the librarians Ros Follet and Jamie Schmidt, Professor Alan Lawson (literary scholar), Laurie Muller (UQP's General Manager), and Craig Munro (Carey's editor and UQP's Publishing Manager). The gesture is one of signing an important financial transaction which created the largest collection of Carey's materials at the time. It also captures an archival moment in Carey's career that brings together representatives of academia, the library, and the publishing industry. In December 2000, Laurie Muller notified the State Library of Victoria that Carey was offering his documents for sale; since the Fryer Library was unable to fund the purchase of the new materials 'the *True History* archive was being offered to the open market' (Murphy 113). The State Library began purchasing Carey's papers soon after this. It is noteworthy that Carey's celebrity enabled him to secure a financial transaction with the State Library even before his novel brought him his second Booker Prize. This did not stop the entrance of Carey's archive into the 'open market,' as he managed to sell another significant collection of manuscripts to the New York archive magnate, Glen Horowtiz. This collection was subsequently gifted by the donor Joshua Steinberg to the New York Public Library in 2003.

Through these multidisciplinary exchanges, Carey's documents are granted institutionally guaranteed recognition and economic value. Once produced, this currency can be transmitted to other cultural institutions, and in the process augment in monetary and

cultural worth across national and international systems of cultural production. Bourdieu argued that the processes involved in the production and consumption of cultural products constitute what he called a field, a sphere of human activity, which has its own actors, institutions and laws of functioning. This social arena is the locus of struggles aiming to transform and maintain their stakes in the field which are 'for the most part the product of the competition between players' (*An Invitation* 98). Bourdieu maintains that sociological analysis should be applied to phenomena not based on their properties, but *in relation to* the field of cultural objects and activities within which they are situated. The literary field comprises a myriad social spaces or positions occupied by agents among which a designated species of capital is negotiated and transacted. Carey's literary archive can provide a point of entry into understanding his position in the literary field in relation to the cultural economy of his fame, and the assumed value for Australian literary and historical heritage.

II

Carey's miscellaneous documents and manuscripts had been held in various collections in Australia long before the establishment of his archives at the Fryer Library and the State Library of Victoria. The University of Melbourne, for example, holds the Meanjin Archive comprising a large assortment of files belonging to *Meanjin*'s editor, C.B. Christesen, including a letter by young Carey confirming probably the earliest royalty that he received for his short stories, the sum of 40 dollars. The University of Melbourne also owns a copy of the manuscript of Carey's unpublished novel 'Wog.' The Special Collections at the University of Melbourne Library purchased this document from a bookseller in 2005 and catalogued it the following year. The UQP Collection, Laurie Hergenhan Collection, Craig Munroe, Margot Hutcheson Collections, all housed at the Fryer Library Manuscript Collections, are other examples of institutional archives containing materials related to Carey. Archiving Carey in the form of discrete collections started in 1984 in the National Library of Australia in Canberra. This initial instalment of papers was acquired from Carey in 1984, under the Taxation Incentives for the Arts Scheme. As explained above, the Fryer Library at the University of Queensland became the second institution to acquire a significant collection of documents and paraphernalia belonging to the author.

Carey's entrance into the open archival market came at a time when he was experiencing his greatest publishing success with *True History*. The novel's popularity marked a new record in UQP's history, with $350,000 profit in 2001 alone (Steger 14). Partly due to the local resonance of the Kelly mythology, the novel reached a readership 'far beyond the usual literary audience and became a popular culture phenomenon' (O'Reilly 490). Initially titled 'The Secret History of the Kelly Gang,' the novel is set in northeast Victoria, in so-called Kelly Country. Written in the form of archival documents retrieved from a fictional 'Melbourne Public Library,' the narrative casts the historical bushranger, Ned Kelly, as the author of his own history. Carey borrowed the idea from the Jerilderie Letter. This historical document was dictated by Kelly in 1879 to a banker on one of his raids in the Victorian town of Jerilderie in the hope of making his grievances against the Victorian police force heard, giving Carey's novel the cachet of Kelly's long-repressed 'autobiography' (Gaile 38). The narrator describes his life from his childhood in Beveridge, Victoria, until sentenced to death by Sir Redmond Barry, the founder of the Melbourne Public Library (later the State Library of Victoria) in 1880.

Archives had already featured in Carey's fiction before *True History*. Towards the end of Carey's previous novel, *Jack Maggs* (1997), the narrative pictures the novel written by the

English writer, Tobias Oates, next to the letters written by the eponymous Australian convict-author. This entrance into the archive is an uncanny prelude to the opening of *True History* and the establishment of Carey's 'Drafts and Papers' in the State Library, where the archive as a point of envied destiny for literary product becomes a place of origin, of sheer existence. Unlike *Jack Maggs*, it is not so much a revision of the archive in the form of cultural transmissions; rather it is cloning an Australian variation of it. Felix Moore, the semi-autobiographical protagonist of Carey's *Amnesia* (2014), explores archives in the State Library, bearing another reference to Carey's own public persona, as this is where his archive is housed.

Awareness, both thematic and institutional, of an archival future for *True History* was confirmed by the nationalistic tone that marked its prolific marketing, especially in Australia, where reviewers read the book as all things Australian, including the voice, the narrative, and the author. The reviewer for the *Guardian* hailed Carey for being 'uniquely well matched' with his tale and his narrator, thereby sharing the ethos of Australian authors such as Marcus Clark and Henry Handel Richardson, celebrated for embodying the spirit of Australian cultural resistance in colonial times (Edric 8). Other commentators made enthusiastic announcements about Carey's bond with his country of origin. Lee Tulloch called Carey 'the most important Australian voice in world literature' (64). In another interview, John Bemrose talked about Carey as a cultural 'desperado,' and that meeting him in his apartment in New York was a 'quintessentially Australian' moment (51). Bemrose cites Carey on the people who disagree with his representation of the folk-hero:

> I would think that the people who call him simply a horse thief and a murderer are in an absolute minority,' he says. 'By and large, they're the genteel types who care what the British think about them—the same people who won't have Waltzing Matilda as their national song. (51)

In Carey's words the nation is conveniently purified of its heterogeneity: those who won't have Waltzing Matilda as their national song are not Australian enough. Carey's readers are assigned a foundation story, a hero, a national song, and a clear instruction about who to defy and who to embrace. In effect, Carey of *True History* is invented as the author capable of speaking to this manifestation of the Australian psyche. This revival of Carey's ambassadorial role for Australia in world literature taps into what Graham Huggan describes as Kelly's 'continuing profitability as a commodity circulating within an increasingly globalised memory industry' (132). Carey is dealt with as a 'typical' Australian character: egalitarian, democratic and non-elitist. Ironically, these journalistic portraits mould a peculiarly elitist reference point for what constitutes Australian literature in relation to *True History*. The stratified nature of this literary taste is maintained through consumption—in this case journalistic—practices.

The journalistic publicity of *True History* was confirmed by its success in literary prizes. Published by Faber and Faber in the United Kingdom in 2001, the novel gained Carey his second Booker Prize in the same year. It also won the Victorian and Queensland Premier's Literary Awards, the *Courier-Mail* Book of the Year Award, as well as the Commonwealth Writer's Prize. Published with at least 16 different cover photos, discounting the editions in translation, *True History* became a success story in book design as well. Motivated by the success of *True History*, Carol Davidson at UQP employed Jenny Grigg with 'a brief to liven up its image and introduce Carey to a younger

readership.' Accordingly, she redesigned the cover image of the eight novels that Carey had previously published. Consequently, in 2002, she was named young designer of the year, winner for the best designed cover of the year, and co-winner for the best designed literary fiction book for the 50th Australian Publishers Association Book Design Awards (Wyndham 19). As Anna Auguscik writes in her recent book *Prizing Debate*, literary prizes, and in particular the Booker Prize, help consolidate the longevity of media attention of novels, resulting in boosting a larger scale post-Booker 'connectivity'—be it on the basis of topicality, seasonal appeal or other events (311). *True History* had these contextual advantages on its side, reflected by a promotional narrative with an unmistakable rhetoric of belonging to Australia.

In November 2000, around the time that Carey released his novel, he spoke in favour of purchasing Kelly's iron shoulder-plate as the last piece of the outlaw's historical armour. In a conversation on ABC radio with Jon Faine as part of a promotional spiel for his novel, he argued for the necessity of bringing together the remnants pertaining to Ned Kelly in a public collection. This interview could not have been more timely as the Australian police ruled that this last talisman ought to stay in Australia. The Kelly Saga was at the height of its official publicity, prompting a few agents and institutions to compete over buying the armour, including the State Library of Victoria, a private owner, the Police Museum, and the Museum of Victoria. Carey became yet another successful participant in this revitalised competition over the cultural and economic capital associated with Ned Kelly. In 2000, the State Library negotiated the terms of possession and exhibition of Ned Kelly's last piece of armour with Old Melbourne Gaol and a private owner. The rhetoric of keeping the relic of the hero in the nation and offering it to the open market goes hand in hand with the dynamic of keeping Carey's archives in Australia, instead of offering them to the open market. This coincides with increasing competition among libraries around the world to house collections related to a famous living author (Hodson 157). The competition to be associated with the author or the text of the novel by a larger number of cultural custodians adds to the 'literary value' of the novel. Once they have a hold on these materials, these cultural institutions struggle to increase the cultural capital associated with the cultural artefact.

The investment of more agents into archival material produces a specific form of archival capital for the materials and by extension the associated author and the text. In *The Rules of Arts*, Bourdieu terms this *illusio*, the sense of investment that 'pulls the agents out of their indifference and inclines and predisposes them to put into operation the distinctions which are pertinent from the viewpoint of the logic of the field' (228). The added 'literary value' is socialised and agreed upon through a series of contracts which carry cultural, economic and legal weight, entered into by a multiplicity of agents including the author himself, the editor, the publisher, the State Library of Victoria, journalists, individual collectors, and academics. This literary currency remains pertinent only as long as the logic of the field—nationalistic literary economy—is functioning, and is always in flux as the result of the participation of the agents who engage in the production of value. The cultural politics that shape Carey's archive contribute to enhancing the positions of agents who participate in the making of it. Bourdieu writes:

> The producer of the value of the work of art is not the artist but the field of production as a universe of belief which produces the value of the work of art as a fetish by producing the belief in the creative power of the artist. Given that the work of art does not exist as a symbolic object endowed with value unless it is

> known and recognized—that is to say, socially instituted as a work of art by spectators endowed with the aesthetic disposition and competence necessary to know it and recognize it as such. (*Rules* 229)

The State Library opened a new exhibit displaying Carey's writing materials for *True History* alongside Ned Kelly's iconic armour in 2001. The Library purchased and archived Carey's drafts and documents shortly after a private owner donated the manuscripts of the Jerilderie Letter to the State Library. This inspired the Library to run the exhibition called 'Kelly Culture: Reconstructing Ned Kelly' from 25 February to 28 May 2003, which brought together the Jerilderie letter and Carey's writing materials for drafting *True History*, alongside an interview with the author. As Rowan Wilken (2013) observes, the acquisition of these items coincided with a series of contingent developments such as the $200 million redevelopment of the State Library, including the refurbishment of its domed reading room, the creation of major gallery spaces, and preparations for the launch of a Ned Kelly retrospective (101).

The State Library of Victoria also acquired the first digital component of Carey's archives, including a Mac Classic laptop. This device was the first born-digital artefact ever acquired by the Library to be added to the Australian Manuscripts Collection. Afterwards, the *State Library of Victoria News* noted that this computer was purchased primarily because it was the most convenient way of accessing and documenting Carey's emails to and from Gary Fisketjon, his editor at Knopf (2002). Although these emails do not feature in the Library's catalogue, the significance of this purchase as the signifier of a shift in preserving cultural material still holds: the Library coordinated Born Digital 2016, the inaugural digital preservation week in Australia and New Zealand (8–12 August), in which Carey's laptop was featured as a 'dream collection,' departing from the era of paper manuscripts only (Molloy n. p.).

In 2008, the library updated its Carey collection by purchasing further typescripts, notes, and a White G4 Mac iBook from the author. This device stored all the drafts of *My Life as a Fake* (2003) and *Wrong About Japan* (2004), multiple drafts of *Theft: A Love Story* (2006), *Four Easy Pieces* (2002), the libretto of the opera *Bliss* (premiered in 2010), and *His Illegal Self* (2008). This laptop is displayed in a glass container alongside some translated versions of *True History* next to the armour of Ned Kelly on the fourth floor of the State Library and the Jerilderie letter. The acquisition and the exhibition of these materials marked a response to the need to address the digital side of the creative process of Carey's writing if the Library is to keep the archive updated. In 2013, the Library acquired the seventh collection of Carey's manuscripts and electronic files relating to *Parrot and Olivier in America* (2009), and *Chemistry of Tears* (2012). Nonetheless, the Library restricts access to the electronic files, and some other papers. These documents have been received in a variety of ways, including by direct purchase from the author, through auctions, from booksellers and as gifts from donors. The State Library controls access to the material; however, Carey himself manages the copyright over his archives.

The cultural momentum that results in housing Carey's documents occurs as the result of a shared belief, or *illusio*, in the rightful place of Carey's work in making a belated canon of Australian literature. The canon assumes a community of believers, and inventing a canon always is, as Harold Bloom puts it, an 'ideological act in itself' (22). This spontaneity of behaviour of social agents in reproducing literary stratification recalls Bourdieu's concept of *doxa*. As he writes in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, the objectivity

which the agents generate is the result of the 'misrecognition of the limits of the cognition that they make possible, thereby founding immediate adherence, in the doxic mode, to the world of tradition experienced as a "natural world" and taken for granted' (164). The archiving of Carey's materials amounts to a doxic moment in his career, where his status as an Australian writer is defended by agents, in and beyond the Australian literary field, invested in upholding a sense of literary tradition, regarding what should constitute, and continue as, national literature.

III

Carey's archive at the State Library contains evidence of how the archiving of Carey imposes its own distinct logic, that of a patriotic belonging to Australia and its literature. The small folder, MS 13420 Peter Carey Papers re: *True History of the Kelly Gang*, comprises letters and documents which relate to attempts by Stephen Tapsell, a bookseller from Beechworth, Victoria, to sell the fourth draft of Peter Carey's *True History*. It also includes a catalogue produced by the same person to promote the launch of Carey's novel and photos taken by the photographer Norman McBeath which portray Carey signing his books. Titled, 'A Special Catalogue to Mark the Launch of Peter Carey's Novel, *True History of the Kelly Gang*,' this folder is prefaced by an article comprising two columns. In the first column, Tapsell, owner of Tapsell Books, promotes his literary property as follows:

> *A Carey Collection*. A collection of signed Carey first editions, anthologies and ephemera. Most of the novels came from the author's library. Unless stated otherwise, all are Australian firsts in fine condition and are signed by the author. The collection comprises . . . several interesting handwritten faxes and postcards from Carey, a small collection of Australian newspaper reviews and interviews and two photographs of Carey taken during his March 1997 trip to Beechworth to research *True History of the Kelly Gang*. $8,000.00.

The indicated $8,000.00 for this collection was the original price that Tapsell had in mind in 2001 when *True History*'s sale proved promising. Tapsell's correspondence with Carey shows that he was completely convinced of the collection's worth, and therefore determined to promote his Beechworth literary sensation as national treasure. He was interviewed in different newspapers at the time, including the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Age*, and the *Canberra Times*. Through a campaign to increase the visibility of this collection, Tapsell becomes a minor agent, claiming to possess manuscripts and documents that allegedly contain materials of literary, historical and cultural significance. For this, he evokes two forms of cultural capital, namely the figure of the author, and the cultural heritage of Australia. Tapsell annotates the second column with the same persuasion of the value of his possession. This time he gives more emphasis to the cultural value of the bestseller:

> *(True History of the Kelly Gang). The Secret History of the Kelly Gang. 4th Draft of the Work in Progress (January–February 1999).* This is the bound typescript of the 4th draft which the author lugged around North-East Victoria, in Australia, during his second research trip to Australia, during a trip to Kelly country in May, 1999. He annotated it and used it as a sort of scrapbook and record of his trip. Everything—from Stringybark Creek vegetation (!) to photographs—has been pasted in. The typescript is incomplete (it's the novel as it existed in early 1999, ending at page 270 of the final work, just before the

> Stringybark Creek killings); it's unedited and differs substantially in form and style from the final work. . . . That novel very quickly has become Carey's most commercially successful work to date, having already sold 50,000 copies in Australia alone. . . . The personal record and early draft, showing the gradual development of an idea, is a unique and extremely collectable item by an important and exciting Australian author. $50,000.00.

Despite having the media on his side—one reviewer for the *Canberra Times* described it as one of the 'rare book gems'—Tapsell did not manage to sell this item at the 13th Canberra Rare Book Fair in June 2001 (Moran 2). Tapsell's other attempts to convince the open market proved futile as well, evidenced by the sheer presence of these documents in the Carey archives in the State Library. Instead, he offered them for sale to the State Library of Victoria in 2004. These notes reflect Tapsell's struggles to enter the game of the field based on the logic of proximity to the author, and an exclusive knowledge of how the novel was developed.

In another set of documents in the same folder, Tapsell corresponds with Carey enclosing a letter addressed to Tony Whiting, Chief Executive Officer of the *Border Mail* newspaper. A part of the letter to Carey reads: 'Hostilities have flared up again with the good old Border Mail. Hope you don't mind us using your photo—I thought the bemused and knowing look on your face gave added input to the otherwise visually drab letter.' In his note to this newspaper, Tapsell objects to the fact that their report about the draft 'does not centre on us.' Possessing the manuscript and being acquainted with the writer strengthens the position of the local bookseller to further pursue his interest in what was then generally considered a literary work of national importance by various individuals and institutions. The letter includes a photo of a smiling Carey, implying Tapsell's closeness to the author and therefore sanctioning his stand against the *Border Mail*'s 'hostilities.' Tapsell affiliates himself with Carey and the bushranger Ned Kelly as a kind of writing against what he regards the oppression of the literary system. The bookseller holds that he is disinterested in his disapproval of the *Border Mail*'s decision to rule out the saleability of 'his' news, implicitly claiming that it is Australian literary culture and its renowned author that everyone should support. Thus, individual struggles over the value of materials of the archive-in-the-making results in an increase in the assumed value of the literary work and its creator. To use Bourdieusian terminology, *consecrating* the writer is materialised through consecrating objects that transmit cultural currency through 'innumerable acts of credit which are exchanged among all the agents engaged in the artistic field' (*Rules* 230). It is through engaging with a larger number of agents and institutions that Tapsell becomes another distributor of Carey's archival capital, and by extension, of the literary value associated with his fictional and authorial personae.

The invention of Carey's archive at the State Library vis-à-vis the production of *True History* occurs at a disjunction between political and symbolic structures of the centre and post-colony through integration of state institutions, national culture, and folklore mythology, clearly of post-white settlement origin. Akin to what Ankhi Mukherjee calls the 'invention of alternative canons,' this archive creates a diversion from high canonical literature and, paradoxically, a congratulatory emulation of it (9). The archive, therefore, can provide a window into demystifying the canon as solitary and secular aestheticism; it finds ways to explain how it assumes the superiority of a class of authors whose work is worthy of archiving. In effect, it reveals a logic of practice for the field in which a collective perception of literary value is created in correspondence to the objective reality of the

field, that is, an archive in a grand architectural display with roots in colonial Australia, in the heart of Melbourne.

Carey's archive contributes to understanding the evolving mechanisms that reinforce his celebrity into the twenty-first century.

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