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Senor Pilich

This is the saga of Senor Pilich and how he saved the monastery. Senor Pilich, monastery cat extraordinaire, is struck by the sinister Mr Dreggs. Struck by his boot, that is. 'Mr Dreggs, a thief, was at large in the monastery. He was a confidence man. He was overly interested in valuable and historic things. He looked suspicious, acted suspiciously and, above all evils, he did not like cats. Dreggs was a positive threat to the place. He had to go.' Señor Pilich and his friends foil Dreggs at every turn in a hilarious adventure which causes mayhem throughout the monastery. Meanwhile, monastic ...

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Fabulating Beauty: Perspectives on the Fiction of Peter Carey

By **Andreas Gaile Ed**, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 438 pages, paperback, **US\$119.00**. Reviewed by **Victoria Kuttainen** in the **January 2006** issue.

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As we usher in 2006, the world these days is not so unlike a futuristic Peter Carey story: its borders expand and contract, coincidences abound, vast geographical expanses unravel. The circuits of culture have bizarre dreamscape logics, and time, history, and nation are no longer recognisable in the text-books we once relied upon for guidance and authority. Peter Carey's short-story 'A Windmill in the West' comes to mind: borders are dizzyingly arbitrary, yet nation and empire have direct and pernicious material effects on its main character despite, or perhaps even because of, their randomness. How interesting it is that in this context the first edited collection of critical essays on Carey's work should be produced by a German scholar -- Andreas Gaile. Gaile has done a fabulous job editing this peerless international collection of critical essays on Carey's oeuvre. But what are the logics of the literary commodity market, of global critical reception, and coincidence that have produced this long overdue collection in such circumstances?

The hope would be that this book would address such critical questions of commodification and traveling culture that are crucial issues not only in Carey's work, but also for the conditions of its reception. Karen Lamb's 'Bringing Australia Home: Peter Carey, the Booker, and the Repatriation of Australian Culture' opens the collection by appraising the global commodification of the 'post-Kelly-2-Booker-Carey' phenomenon. (18) Lamb notes 'an uneasy tension between the sophistication apparently conferred by [Carey's] international success and the media's tendency to depict him as an enduring symbol of Australianness'. (19) With a nod to Graham Huggan's analysis of the problematic cultural politics of the Booker prize in his *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2001), Lamb regards the Booker as a problematic cultural affirmation conferred by Britain upon writers in the former colonies. Susan K Martin's piece, 'Dead White Male Heroes' reads the choice of *True History of the Kelly Gang* as the inaugural book for the 'One Book, One Brisbane' program along similar lines, observing that the Lord Mayor's choice of a dispossessed white male 'migrant' popular folk hero as representative of the plight of all migrants and dispossessed in Australia is symptomatic of the elision of all migrant groups and Aboriginals that characterise attitudes of white privilege in contemporary Australia.

Carey's forays into the film world, analysed by Theodore F Sheckels in 'The Difficulties of Translating Peter Carey's Postmodern Fiction into Popular Film' have had as much impact as Carey's double Booker win in allowing Carey entrance into global markets, and it is good to see them considered here. Wim Wenders' production of Carey's screenplay *Until the End of the World* (1992) might have made an interesting counterpoint, however -- since it was composed with the filmmaker, directly for the screen, and because its cult popularity owes little to Carey's literary or Australian reputation.

Next to these opening essays, Gaile's 'Towards and Alphabet of Australian Culture' is a much more conservative approach. Gaile's perception that Carey's writing confers a 'privileged view of mythogenesis in Australia' (34) is nothing less than ironically Careyesque in its largely unconscious statement about the different and sometimes contradictory messages which cultural products can be summoned to speak at the command of different critical ideologies. Nicholas Birns returns Carey to the less placid and more challenging approaches to Australian literature and culture which Karen Lamb's piece kicks off. However, Birns' analysis of the metaphor of architecture in Carey's dystopic short story 'Krista Du', also brings with it an implicit warning about radical politics and their potential to be equally as disturbing and unsettling as their conservative counterparts -- restoring to the Carey reader the backdrop of leftist authoritarian regimes of the 1970s that inform so much of Carey's fiction. Noting that readers from the USA, under the sway of tourist visions of Australia, often misread Carey, Birns also vents frustration about rootless postcolonial or postmodern concepts being taken up and applied to Australia from abroad. Bill Ashcroft's 'Simulation, Resistance, and Transformation' is another crucial counterpoint in this context. Ashcroft regards *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* as the contemporary novel which has best explored and addressed the postcolonial dilemma in Australia.

API Review of Books

Issue 44

Features reviews by Kathleen Broderick, Linn Miller, Christine Choo, Bill Thorpe, David Ritter, Eve Vincent, Stephanie Bishop, Alison Miles, Richard Kay, Amanda Day, Bernard Whimpress, Mads Clausen, Marion May Campbell, Sylvia Alston, Catie Gilchrist, Eva Chapman, Lucy Dougan, Stephen Lawrence and Nathanael O'Reilly. [Click here for more details.](#)



Altitude

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The papers collected here in this special edition of Altitude offer a brief snapshot of popular music research broadly connected with Australia. The essays demonstrate the variety of theoretical and methodological approaches used by researchers in the fields of popular music studies and cultural studies to explore themes of popular music practice, formation and change in an Australian context. [Click here for more details.](#)



Pam MacIntyre's reading of Carey's children's story *The Big Bazoooley* and Cornelia Shulze's look at Peter Carey's short stories are representative of the remarkable span that these critical pieces cover in Carey's oeuvre; this is a broad approach for which Gaile should be praised. Shulze's piece is a particularly welcome revisit of Carey's early work in that genre. Convincing as her valuable transcultural reading is, however, Shulze does not attend as much as she might to the ambivalence of Carey's narrative products, and the fact that Carey the 'ad-man' is never so far away from Carey the moraliser. Carey's stories are labyrinths, not *just* parables of labyrinths that might make his readers better humans for sojourning in them for a while. Bruce Woodcock's rigorous approach to Peter Carey's concerns with 'unsettling the illusions of capitalism' (263) makes for an interesting companion piece to Shulze, especially in its dual approach to capitalism *and* colonialism in Carey's work.

As Anthony J Hassall points out, though *30 Days in Sydney* appears at first as a straight-talking celebrity travel-writing piece, Carey cannot be trusted as cultural tour-guide to Australia, or on any other matter: Carey is at his best in engaging in the beautiful lies of fiction. *My Life as a Fake*, as Robert MacFarlane explains, revisits Carey's longtime fascination with lies, hoaxes, and fakes, but with an uneasiness; using Frederic Jameson's notion of 'nostalgia for the present', MacFarlane shows how this novel also grieves for authenticity no longer locatable in the alienated playing fields of 'turbo-capitalism'. (344) Carolyn Bliss's analysis of Carey's approach to 'cultural masterplots' (276) also focuses on the 'Lies and Silences' in his writing, but does so to illustrate the moral dimension in Carey's quest to find an existential authentic selfhood. Brian Edwards' 'Deceptive Constructions: The Art of Building in *Ilywacker*' takes a similar postmodern, moral approach. Attending to Carey's penchant for parodic chronicles of trickery and deception, Edwards points to Barthes' definition of the pleasure of the text and Carey's penchant for playfulness and caricature, noting that Carey's use of the concepts of construction and bricolage warns readers against interpretations that smack of completion, cohesion, and transcendence. Edwards draws upon Lentricchia's discussion of Derrida in *After the New Criticism* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1980) to redeem a postmodern reading of Carey's vision of history against potential charges of apolitical and acultural existential vacuousness -- pointing to the 'seriousness of play' (164) in this context. Two critical essays on sacredness and Christianity in Carey also pick up on this moral dimension of Peter Carey.

Playful, current, and serious, this volume of twenty diverse critical essays on Carey by new and renowned Carey scholars is a *must* for serious readers who enjoy Peter Carey, and a valuable resource for undergraduates and postgraduates alike. Including a Carey interview, its added feature of the most extensive bibliography to date of Carey's corpus and growing body of general criticism is a boon for researchers and a veritable 'Who's Who' of the Peter Carey Cultural Industry. The diversity of international voices represented in this volume is not represented in that body of criticism though; the large part of Carey criticism in this Bibliography is still Australian in origin, with the USA and England playing integral supporting roles. But like the optimistic, international Peter Carey some critics in this volume describe, this critical volume is also optimistically international. As international scholars of the caliber that have contributed to this volume continue to pick up on Carey, and as Carey's work and reputation continue to grow, this volume will surely play an integral role in introducing new critical readers to the protean approaches to a masterful and playful heavyweight in world letters.

Citation

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Peter Carey is one of Australia's finest creative writers, much admired by both literary critics and a worldwide reading public. While academia has been quick to see his fictions as exemplars of postcolonial and postmodern writing strategies, his general readership has been captivated by his deadpan sense of humour, his quirky characters, the outlandish settings and the grotesqueries of his intricate plots. After three decades of prolific writing and multiple award-winning, Carey stands out in the world of Australian letters as designated heir to Patrick White.

Fabulating Beauty pays tribute to Carey's literary achievement. It brings together the voices of many of the most renowned Carey critics in twenty essays (sixteen commissioned especially for this volume), an interview with the author, as well as the most extensive bibliography of Carey criticism to date. The studies represent a wide range of *current* perspectives on the writer's fictions. Contributors focus on issues as diverse as the writer's biography; his use of architectural metaphors; his interrogation of narrative structures such as myths and cultural master-plots; intertextual strategies; concepts of sacredness and references to the Christian tradition; and his strategies of rewriting history. Amidst predictions of the imminent death of 'postist' theory, the essays all attest to the ongoing relevance of the critical parameters framed by postmodernism and postcolonialism.

Andreas GAILE: The 'contrarian streak': An Interview with Peter Carey

Karen LAMB: Bringing Australia Home: Peter Carey, the Booker, and the Repatriation of Australian Culture

Andreas GAILE: Towards an Alphabet of Australian Culture: Peter Carey's



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Cultural Expressions of Evil and Wickedness: Wrath, Sex, Crime

Terrie Waddell, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003, 226 Pages, Paperback, \$US56.00
Reviewed by *Catie Gilchrist* in the February 2006 issue.

At the Interface/Probing the Boundaries publications are designed to be both exploratory examinations of particular areas and issues, and rigorous inquiries into specific subjects. This innovative volume belongs to the research project Perspectives on Evil and Human Wickedness (www.wickedness.net) and each chapter evolved from papers given at a conference in Prague in 2002. It is a broad and wide-ranging project that is dedicated to the exploration of evil, suffering, pain and the consequences of human actions. Embracing a multi and inter-disciplinary approach, the key themes are both historical and contemporary and it is this that makes Cultural Expressions such an interesting book, and one ... [read more](#).



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