

# Who Cares Who's Speaking? Cultural Voice in Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*<sup>1</sup>

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Let me give you a very rough idea of the territory it is not an easy bit of land to learn so 1st I will give you a simple picture you must imagine a great wedge of pie with a high ridge around its outer crust they call that ridge the Great Dividing Range.

At the apex of the wedge is the river town of Wangaratta and you might imagine the Ovens River running along the eastern side of the wedge. It would be simplest to say the Broken River makes the western side of the wedge that's a lie but never mind. The King River is more obliging cutting right down the centre of the wedge to join the Ovens River exactly at Wangaratta. Next you must imagine the pie slopes up from Wangaratta where the land is very flat. It were near here in Oxley that Annie were married but the boy and the grisly man spent the afternoon travelling to higher elevations along the centre of the wedge. By late afternoon having left the limits of selection they poked up a long winding ridge and by early evening they was definitely entering big country. At last they picked a path down a densely wooded gully to a mountain stream. (Carey 71)

Narrated in the first person, Peter Carey's novel about the life of Australian bushranger Ned Kelly is a virtuosic performance. Based on the idiom, syntax, grammar and expressiveness of Kelly's own account of his actions in the Jerilderie Letter of 1879, *True History of the Kelly Gang* successfully conveys identifiable traits of Kelly's 'voice' (Eggert 121). It also incorporates other aspects derived both from Carey's personal experience and from the editorial process, is toned down to some extent by virtue of the latter, and introduces expressions Kelly himself would not have used.<sup>2</sup> Identifying these elements, along with the specific attributes of Kelly's own speech, enjoins a diversity of cultural and social groupings that intersect and, in some instances, compete with or contradict one another. Nonetheless, Carey's use of what he identifies as Kelly's 'original voice—uneducated but intelligent, funny and then angry [...] with a line of Irish invective' (Carey quoted in McCrumm) supplies qualitative features we might associate with the bushranger's voice, making a convincing performance consistent with the idiosyncratic syntax and grammar of the Jerilderie Letter:

there was a warrant for me and the Police searched the place and watched night and day for two or three weeks and when they could not snare me they got a warrant against my brother Dan And on the 15 of April Fitzpatrick came to the Eleven Mile Creek to arrest him [...] he asked Dan to come to Greta with him as he had a warrant for him for stealing Whitty's horses Dan said all right they both went inside Dan was having something to eat his mother asked Fitzpatrick what he wanted Dan for. the trooper said he had a warrant for him Dan then asked him to produce it he said it was only a telegram sent from Chiltren [...] Dans mother said Dan need not go without a warrant unless he liked and that the trooper had no business on her premises without some Authority besides his own word The trooper pulled out his revolver and said he would blow her brains out if she interfered. (Kelly)

Fellow bushranger Joe Byrne is understood to have served as Kelly's amanuensis and his role might be located in what would seem to be a scribal slip from first to third person. Although it is possible to read this portion of the Jerilderie Letter as consistent with formalities of the time and therefore not disruptive of person, the identification of 'his mother' and 'Dans mother' as opposed to 'my mother' can be read as a scribal intrusion, given that elsewhere Kelly identifies his relations possessively—referring, for example, to 'my mother's house' in his opening address (Kelly).

This intrusion of another's perspective is possibly parodied in the novel's third-person digression, evident in the epigraph above. Yet, unlike the Letter, *True History* gives us Kelly as author and scribe and in doing so constructs its own paratextual material to sustain the exclusion of Byrne.<sup>3</sup> Carey may

be replicating and enlarging the Jerilderie Letter, but he obscures its potential as the collaborative effort of Byrne and Kelly, reducing Byrne's contribution to emendations concerning events that Kelly himself could not have fully described (Clancy 175). It is only here, through the narrative shift from first to third person that any acknowledgement of Byrne's contribution as scribe might be found. The ambiguity itself may well be a mimetic gesture, therefore, but its effect is troubling insofar as it strengthens Kelly's authority by seeming to perform an aspect of character rather than an instance of collaboration.

Shifts in speakers might be signalled by textual markers or by adopting different expressive qualities and speech patterns, which may or may not include a change in grammatical person. In this instance, however, the speech style of the speaker/s of the first- and third-person sections remains the same. The shift in person is apparent, but I want to argue, not necessarily a shift in the identity of the speaker because, although the grammatical voice shifts, its qualitative features are largely unaltered. The shift nonetheless introduces a significant change in that the narrative, though it continues the story in all respects, refers to Kelly as 'the boy' and adopts a generalised approach to the description of key figures like the bushranger Harry Power, whom Kelly knew well enough but which the narrative depersonalises as 'the grisly man'. This has the effect of distancing the speaker from the objects and events being related: the narrator and the boy would appear to be distinct persons, and Harry Power a virtual stranger. Because the subject positions of the first- and third-person narratives appear distinct, shifting from the first-person narrator to 'the boy' (for the most part), two different speakers seem to emerge—speakers sharing the same cultural values and influences insofar as they are consistent in their sympathies/antipathies toward certain individuals and in their ideological, moral, political, and emotional values. Put simply, we have Kelly speaking of himself, then someone speaking about him as a child.

More broadly, these shifts have importance for our understanding of how voice works in the novel form, specifically in determining who is speaking. As Carey's description of Kelly's voice reveals, voice, as it is generally understood, refers to those qualitative elements that attach to our perceptions of it and which are relevant precisely because they are describable. These features are more commonly associated with voice because they describe how it sounds, being bound up in our aural, emotional and intellectual experience of voice. Kelly's voice is for Carey the means by which the reader can 'imagine the emotional life' of the bushranger (Carey quoted in McCrumm); it serves as an entry point into this character's subjectivity through the organisation of his thoughts and the manner of their expression. Paradoxically, as far as literary theory is concerned, the subjective qualities produced through voice mean that stylisations of speech may be indicative of character point of view, rather than what is understood to be narrative voice, because they might function in narrative as inflections of speech that do not correspond to the established voice of the grammatically instanced speaker—offering a focalised perspective instead.

The shift in *True History* presents problems in these terms, however: the point of view instanced here is clearly that belonging to the speaker, though the voice is Kelly's, for the narrator's point of view determines the generality of the descriptive terms where once these were specific and personal. Had the novel been narrated wholly in third person, an unproblematic reading of Kelly's point of view, suggested by the use of his voice, would be possible. But the shift undermines this—Kelly's point of view gives way to another, instanced in the shift that takes place in narrative voice. Carey, in other words, inverts the convention. This is not an instance of free indirect style or discourse, where grammatical mood is at odds with the speaker's position and tenses align with the implicated subject position of another. The same features of voice that might identify character point of view must, in absence of any disparity of mood or tone, function in respect to narrative voice to convey something of its speaker's subjectivity, and this seems apparent here: the speaker shares Kelly's subjective emotional and intellectual perspective, but no longer occupies the subject position.

This sharing of perspective is generally constructed by conflating the enunciative and subject positions—merging the speaker with the subject of the utterance by suggesting that the narrator is looking over the shoulder of the character whose subject position is either explicitly given, as here, or implied, as in free indirect discourse. Yet vocal quality, as it is patterned in speech, conveys something more like a response to events rather than a literal (visual) perspective: one sees from a subject position and of course, one speaks from a speaking position, and the two will not always coincide. Seeing is receptive rather than responsive and this means that feeling, thinking or otherwise responding internally cannot be conveyed by visual references but (when not explicitly described) must necessarily

be evinced in the tone, pattern and content of the speech in which it is implicated. If such speech is not given as part of the subject's enunciative act, then it retains its interiority as thought or else represents the interiorising of another's enunciation—converting someone's speech, if you are the narrator, to your narrating thoughts. The latter is instanced in focalisation, as it is typically understood. But the concept too neatly merges the literal meaning of 'a point of view' with the metaphorical, and this is important because the metaphorical aspect of a point of view pertains to qualitative features of voice, which are instanced as language, syntax, idiom, tone, etc—all of which determine how voice metaphorically sounds.

The relevance of these qualitative features is implicated in the critical discourse on Carey's novel that lauds the performance of the bushranger's voice (see O'Reilly 493), but the importance of individuated speech patterns has also been raised by literary theorists troubled by the demarcations of character and narrator along the lines of grammatically determined speaking positions. Richard Aczel, for example, calls for an 'opening up' of 'the concept of voice' by restoring 'the realm of "how"—tone, idiom, diction, speech style—to a central position among the configuration of essential first questions of narrative voice' (Aczel, 'Hearing Voices' 469). Aczel clearly means to include those qualitative features encompassed by Carey's description. This essay argues the relevance of such features of voice, which I group under the term cultural voice, in not only identifying a speaker, but in locating that speaker in relation to a subject position; it further elaborates the function of cultural voice in both clarifying and disrupting assumptions about the identified speaker in relation to narrative voice through strategies such as polyphonic speech and shifts in grammatical person. This of course does not mean that only those texts employing the first-person might elaborate the coherence of a speaking entity—a speaker's subject position may be implicated at various instances across a third-person narrative and, at the very least, will function in descriptive passages where the points of view of the novel's characters are not apparent. It is by this means that the subjectivity of the speaker infiltrates the narrative—as with Jane Austen's narrators who implicate themselves in relation to various points of view.

Tone, accent, idiom, and style all invoke the sense of a personality, even though these qualities might be shared amongst groups of persons. These are features relating to voice as it is heard; and they amount to a metaphorised and conceptual conflation of both the sound and the hearer's response to that sound, with that response also affected by what the voice says. These elements coalesce to form aural-meanings that seemingly provide an historical overview of the speaker's emotions, intentions, and past influences—enabling the broad identification of its cultural-geographic attributes. Insofar as it contains the traces of its history, voice situates its speaker in space and time beyond the present moment of the utterance. This added spatiotemporality is important in terms of the meaning as it is imputed and because it offers an alternative to the immediacy of the utterance which insists on the presence of a speaker. The qualitative aspects of voice, what I call hereafter 'cultural voice', enable the absence of a speaker whose presence is marked as something once instanced but no longer insisted upon. These qualities, together with grammatical indicators that present the writing as unmediated when narrated in the first-person, enable the identification of Kelly as the speaker and narrator, suggesting that the question of who is speaking is both a question of the speaker's (grammatical) position in relation to the enunciative act and the speaker's position in relation to the material contained within it. This has consequences for our understanding of the narrative act and for the conferral of personhood upon the narrator through the blending of grammatical person and personality. In determining a narrator's identity, two very different approaches to voice are needed—and these do not necessarily lead us back to the same speaker: duality is inherent in the act of writing and speaking because these two positions of relation stand for different measures which may or may not coincide. These measures take stock of different values: on the one hand, they are concerned with locating a speaker in terms of the narrative function; on the other, they are concerned with identifying the speaker with a person by relating speech to identifiable aspects of a speaker's subject position.

*True History's* shift in person performs this difference: the narrator, identified as Kelly in the first-person section extending for more than seventy pages, becomes, momentarily, an unidentified speaker; but the quality of that speech is identifiable with the subject position of the earlier speaker and the boy Kelly, who is predominantly the subject of the third-person digression. Whether Carey meant to have Kelly as iconic figure write the life of Kelly the man, the shift here gestures toward this.<sup>4</sup> By attempting to position the text as archival material on a par with the Jerilderie Letter, it might be said that the novel offers little scope for 'unpick[ing] the myth' (Gelder and Salzman 83), for the use of Ned Kelly's voice would seem to give him a chance, at last, to be heard and (sympathetically) judged, counteracting his failed attempts to publish the Jerilderie Letter and other accounts during his lifetime. Further, as

historical subject, Kelly's account in the novel is underwritten with his story's tragic outcomes in a manner not possible in the Jerilderie Letter. The novel distinguishes itself in this respect through a narrative strategy that enables Kelly to fulfil the mythic proportions he is to attain in Australian lore—an attitude prefigured by, and perhaps narcissistically entailed in, the self-aggrandising tone of the Letter and its self-justificatory stance. Certainly the narrator adopts an attitude to the events of his life that positions him as the author of, not just his own actions, but events overall, whilst simultaneously presenting his younger and less immediate self (or selves) as the victim of injustices wrought by others.

Carey's voicing of the bushranger therefore complicates distinctions between voice and point of view by revealing qualitative features of voice to be important to the question of who is speaking the narrative. The Jerilderie Letter offers some insight into the problematic function of narrative voice, for taken on the whole, the Letter offers two speakers—one subsumed by the other, but breaking forth at times, undermining any presumption of narrative voice deriving from a single speaker. Admittedly, Kelly is purposefully positioned as the only speaker of the Letter, and if his authority is to be maintained, then the scribal intrusion must be read as error and its impact downplayed. The novel would appear to take this stance by diminishing Byrne's scribal role while signalling its presence. Kelly's authorship, in contrast, is emphasised. And a sympathetic instancing of Kelly's authority would seem to take place when the narrator Kelly remarks of his younger self: 'Now it is many years later I feel great pity for the boy who so readily believed this barefaced lie I stand above him and gaze down like the dead look down from Heaven' (Carey 135). Kelly paradoxically usurps the role of omniscient narrator, undermining the implied helplessness of the man to alter who or what he has become, whilst instancing contradictory elements to his character—a feature more apparent in the Letter through a less benign mixture of humour and bloodthirsty reckoning. This aggrandised perspective is sustained elsewhere, as noted by Laurie Clancy in terms of Kelly's self-conscious dramatisation of events—although Kelly, in a manner more consistent with the tone of the Letter, asserts his potency descriptively instead of performing it through narrative voice. This reveals Kelly's omniscient perspective to be a feature of character and not simply a narrative strategy employed for the telling of the tale. In Clancy's words:

Increasingly throughout the novel he sees himself to some extent as a performer or even as a playwright. Of the troopers Hare and Nicolson he says that though they 'thought themselves famous as the capturers of Harry Power they never imagined they would be captives in a drama devised by me'. And again, 'We could look down from the Warby Ranges and see the plumes of dust rising off the plains and know the police was actor in a drama writ by me'. (Clancy 55)

In being indicative of character, Kelly's omniscience and his asserted omnipotence reveal themselves here to be qualitative features of the character's voice. This quality, when it is taken up grammatically elsewhere therefore functions as both a determining feature of narrative voice and an indication of character point of view. The resulting ambiguity brought about by the shift in mode from first to third person is thus resolved by reading narrative voice, as it is grammatically instanced, as performative of character: Ned Kelly is still speaking even though he has adopted a mode of speech that contradicts this grammatically by positioning himself outside his pre-defined subject position. In doing so, these digressions self-consciously perform objectivity; and this is consistent with the persuasive object of the narrative, evident in the lines that open Kelly's narrative: 'I lost my own father at 12 yr. of age and know what it is to be raised on lies and silences 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' (Carey 5). The paternal tone of the narrator is significant here. With speech established at the outset as hyperbole, it becomes possible to read the novel's assertions as reflecting the urgency, intensity, and desperation of a man whose softened perspective is implied in the task at hand (recounting and explaining his actions to his daughter).

This softening strategy, plus the toning down of Kelly's voice as it appears in the Letter, means that identification becomes possible in a broader range of readers—sophisticated and unsophisticated alike. Paul Eggert, noting Carey's explanation that he was comfortable with Ned Kelly's patterns of speech, having once known people who spoke as the bushranger did, observes in turn that the idiom he encountered in his own boyhood in Sydney is also potentially infused in Kelly's voice as it is contained in the novel (Eggert 133). In saying as much, Eggert is possibly responding to a deep-seated anxiety about the occlusion of his own working-class background by an educated accent. Whatever the reason, Eggert's recollection of his own childhood experiences validates Carey's assertion that he knew people

who spoke like this once; and Carey's assertion links, via Eggert's validation, the rural and urban working-class Australia of the 1950s and 60s to the rural underclass of the 1870s from which Kelly comes, while his successful integration of the Jerilderie Letter reinforces the connection and effectively states (as implicated in Eggert's own identification): *people spoke like this in Kelly's time, they spoke this way in my childhood, and they probably speak this way still, somewhere out there, remote from the world I now inhabit.*

Aczel argues that voice's problematic staging of presence, as he summarizes Derrida, is also written into concepts like dialogism and heteroglossia (Aczel, 'Commentary' 705), and this might be said to account for the generic aspect of personal expression locatable in idiosyncratic patterns of speech like that conveyed in *True History* and the Jerilderie Letter. The performative nature of the narrative voice in light of the shift in person, together with its effectiveness as a voice representative of a certain social class, therefore complicates its status as the voice of a specific individual. What is achieved is a broader identification than Kelly's own voice might permit—one that goes beyond the rural underclass of the late nineteenth century and extends to working class Australia, past and present, as it turns out. And whereas the Jerilderie Letter, with its condensed narrative, swerving from violent threats to lengthy explanation and vindicating excuses, is less likely to encourage identification in the reader, the composite nature of Kelly's voice (softened as it is by the inclusion of other tones) enables this in the novel. This is where it becomes possible to comprehend how the performative nature of voice in speech entails its nonpresence, for the generalised sense of a social group is clearly constructed as a presence that occludes its own absence by performing the cultural attributes of a mutable and heterogeneous cultural group.

Nonetheless, the term cultural voice, though convenient, does not specify these broad demarcations. Cultural voice, as I mean the term, derives from distinctions drawn by Derrida in his analysis of Rousseau's search for 'natural voice' in a section of *Of Grammatology* entitled 'Nature, Culture, Writing'. Derrida does not employ the term cultural voice specifically, but instances it in negative terms when he identifies Rousseau's conception of natural voice as voice in an originary pre-cultural sense. Both natural voice and cultural voice are metaphors employed to delineate certain qualities of voice as it is 'conveyed' in speech. Natural voice, for Rousseau, is presence: it has no meaning and no other entailments; and it is originary insofar as it does nothing more than announce this primordial truth. Derrida's explication in *Of Grammatology* and elsewhere reveals that natural voice is perceived as extricable from those features I gather under the term cultural voice—the latter being the accretion of culturally derived distortions that overwrite natural voice. It is presumed, on this basis, that those qualitative features irrelevant to the indicative function are distinguishable from natural voice as presence; and this presumption would appear to be reproduced in narratological distinctions of voice where the speaker is identified as the person who is grammatically instanced and logically entailed in the performance of the enunciative act.

The reasoning that presumes the existence of voice in a natural state—free of cultural attributes like language—necessarily takes all other features in terms of vocal and semantic quality as supplementary to voice itself. As supplementarities they obscure the original pre-cultural voice, and yet, as Derrida reveals, this primordial voice exists in speech as nothing more than the trace of its presence—it is not a presence but an absence. The addition of meaning in the form of attributes of cultural voice (language, tone, and other qualitative features), therefore supplements an absence or a lack, rather than a real object, revealing that 'natural voice' as it is conceived in these terms is an abstraction founded on a system of proliferating metaphors that stand outside the object that is sought, whilst paradoxically being carried by it in speech. In other words, voice as it is perceived in speech is a construction: I perform my voice whenever I speak by writing its presence into my speech. The voice in speech is wholly (self) reflexive and it exists in no other form than this gesture of insistence. As Donald Wesling and Tadeusz Slawek write: 'Turning voice into script does not make the vocal vanish; rather it creates its nervous proliferation. The speaking voice multiplies its productivity to present a convincing argument for its own existence, to get out of the "pit of inexistence", and to cover up traces of its transgressive activities' (Wesling and Slawek 158-59).

Natural and cultural voice encompass that proliferation of metaphors by which we attempt to write voice into the utterance itself and give meaning to the otherwise 'inarticulate cry' of natural voice (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 166). Derrida uses a metaphor to describe this proliferation when he writes in *Speech and Phenomena* of 'the broad daylight of presence, outside the gallery' of which 'no perception is given us or assuredly promised us' (104). Here the gallery stands for those metaphors and

other conceptual material that make up our conception of voice. Voice itself is the world outside the gallery in which the meaning is contained and which is metaphorised in the artwork: just as the world is represented in a painting, but is not the painting itself, so voice is represented in speech but is not speech itself. So too speech is in voice, as the painting is in the world and in being in the world is inextricably tied, through its meanings, to that world, and incapable of existing without it.

The paradox of voice occluding its absence in phonic terms by performing its presence metaphorically in speech is pertinent here because it demonstrates distinctions made in terms of literary voice that affect our reading of a text. These distinctions are significant beyond the domain of literary theory and inform readers more generally, but they are also neatly demarcated in critical interpretation. Importantly, '[t]he subject of the enunciation is [...] "always a construction of the receiver, *not* the grammatical subject of the utterance"' (Coste 167, cited in Aczel, 'Hearing Voices' 475). In other words, the speaker stands outside the speech act, though the content of the utterance sustains the inference of presence—in the same way that phonic voice is inferred from the qualitative features of speech correlating to the aural-meanings derived from sound. The problematic function of the trace marking the presence of something that is absent—constructing presence within the utterance itself—becomes apparent when numerous speakers seem to be available in relation to the same speech act. For narratologists and literary theorists more generally, character point of view functions to resolve the confusion of other speakers being implicated in the narrative by positioning these within a different space and/or time to the utterance in which they are embedded—in the same way, for example, that reported speech logically entails citation.

The rules of language presume the inalienability of a voice from its utterer, and though these rules countenance acts of expression that might distance the one from the other (such as paraphrase, citation, dramatic performance, etc), speech and writing are nonetheless organised around spatiotemporal assumptions of causation—in other words, the causal chain between speaker and voice is to be found in the grammatical, syntactical and speech conventions that enable the paraphrasing, citation, and the embedding of another's speech. With the assumption of presence built into the rules of grammar, logic and rhetoric that determine our competence as users of language, every reader can be said to tacitly accept absence as presence. It is not surprising therefore that the same paradigm might be found, as Derrida identifies, in theoretical frameworks that incorporate, as relevant, notions of voice, speech and utterance.<sup>5</sup> Gérard Genette, for example, proposes three categories ('*time of the narrating*, *narrative level*, and *person*'), which are designed to locate the narrator in terms of time, space and person: in other words, to pinpoint the speaker at the moment of speaking—to locate the narrator within his or her fictional space and temporal perspective relative to the story (Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 216). This is location in relation to the act of enunciation, as distinct from its being historically, geographically and culturally localized.

Given that speech logically entails a single speaker, polyphony must be located and vested in the narrative voice because it threatens to destabilise the narrating speaker's presence by introducing the spatiotemporalities of other speakers that differ from that of the narrative act. The third-person section of the Jerilderie Letter must thus be reconciled with the first-person speaker and this might be achieved by viewing it as a stylised expression of objectivity. That is, except as error, Byrne's perspective is not grammatically entailed, even though it may be historically instanced. The generic boundaries of the letter insist upon such reconcilements, but shifted into the genre of the novel, the potential for other speakers is activated, even when grammatical person is not in issue, as when, for example, the heteroglossia of Catholicism infiltrates Kelly's narrative when he remarks that Harry Power 'went out into the bush I heard him cry every foul word you could imagine thus must the outcast cry in Hell' (Carey 78). The jarring pronouncement seemingly activates a speaker from a different conceptual space—conjuring a priest whose voice is activated in the remembered phrasing. The genre of the letter, however, would lodge this more squarely within the personality of its speaker, eliding the layering of space and time otherwise apparent in the novel. In this way, the novel potentially implicates different spatiotemporalities through the investment and deferral of voices that are represented as being no longer present; and narrative voice is the means by which the confusion of these different cultural voices is resolved.

The indeterminacy of free indirect discourse is overcome by viewing those aspects of speech grammatically inconsistent with narrative voice as representative of subjectivity rather than subject position, with the anomaly of the implied subject position submerged in the narrator's empathic mind-reading: in this way, narrators are seen to enter into the subjectivities of character, informing and

enhancing their own speech with the visual, emotional and intellectual perspective of the character. Character voice, when it operates outside spatiotemporal norms, thereby becomes point of view in both the literal and metaphorical sense. It is because voice in its broader terms comprises variable grammatical and qualitative features (as opposed to the more stable presumptions that attach to grammatical person), that narrative voice must be narrowed to the narrative function and emptied of all other meanings to overcome the potentially deceptive nature of inflected speech in the same way that Rousseau's natural voice is voice without language or meaning. Narrative voice traces in fact a nonpresence: it is an empty category that must be filled with a speaking presence through the addition of (aurally defined) meanings—those same inflections to speech that have the potential to implicate subject positions other than the narrator's in connection with the narrative function. Hence the problematic dispersal of voices that imply and numerate subject positions obliquely or remotely consistent with enunciation.

The vulnerability of narrative voice as an isolated measure of presence can be found in those shifts in person taking place in *True History*. These might be suggestive of self-aggrandisement, as I have already asserted; but they also arguably serve as marks of psychological trauma by representing—without performing—a shift in tone. It is significant that Kelly's speaking position shifts when he details his travels with the bushranger Harry Power. The novel describes the boy Kelly's unwilling apprenticeship in the 'profession' of bushranger and the narrator's feelings about this are conveyed by the shift in person enabling the retention of the boy's emotions of frustration within the dry humour that pervades the description of the scene. This dual expression of emotion (coming from the narrator's past and present) is apparent when the boy Kelly tries to return home:

My mother sighed and shook her head Dear God Jesus save me.  
I said I aint in trouble.  
[.....]  
I come home to help.  
You can't come home I paid the b----r 15 quid to take you on. You are his apprentice now.  
The mother and the son stood separate in the middle of the home paddock the chooks all droopy and muddy the pigs with their ribs showing through their suits the waters of the Eleven Mile already receding leaving the spent and withered oats lying in the yellow mud. The son felt himself a mighty fool he'd been bought and sold like carrion. (Carey 102-03)

This reading of psychological trauma belies the grammatical indicators of a shift from one speaker to another. It suggests instead an emotional response that produces the distancing effect of third-person in order that the speaker might empathise with his earlier self through the dialogic engagement of his past and present selves, evident in the mixture of childish description (the 'droopy' chooks) with a more mature appreciation of the scene ('the spent and withered oats') culminating in the strange entanglement of metaphor in the expression 'bought and sold like carrion'—that is, bought and sold like rotting flesh as opposed to meat or livestock. In this reading the voice of the narrator retains its identification with the narrator of the earlier section who has been established as Ned Kelly, but in doing so the text produces a generalised sense of Kelly. That is, the grammatical shift indicates a shift in the speaker's style of expression: the narrating entity, regardless of identity, has shifted his own perspective by momentarily absolving himself from the task of performing presence.

As Aczel writes, 'it is the notion of self-presence and immediacy which Derrida is, first, and foremost, out to deconstruct' (Aczel, 'Over-Hearing' 599). The constructed nature of voice becomes apparent in writing or in speech when cultural voice and natural voice achieve the impossible and person and personality become extricable. Voice engages in the differentiation and deferral that Derrida terms *différance*, as Aczel explains, and I would add, it cannot do otherwise. The writing in the voice, of which Derrida writes (Derrida, 'Le Facteur De La Vérité' 465), is the implication of presence inherent in our speech and organised by the conventions and rules of language. It is not enough to locate a speaker in grammatical terms, however, for that empty category must be filled with more persuasive expressions of presence if narrative voice is to 'get out of the "pit of inexistence"'. For the most part these different aspects of voice—the one gesturing presence and the other supporting that presence through indicators of personality and cultural situatedness—will coincide. It is at moments such as occurs here in Carey's novel, where they do not, that we might glimpse the constructed nature of our conceptions of voice in a general sense. Carey's novel reveals how it is possible for these different

forms of voice to contradict their conceptual demarcations by disrupting the presumption of presence as it is instanced grammatically, thereby enabling cultural voice to stand for a speaker's absence as a form of presence, whereby absence invokes a generalised sense of the speaker: by moving from one narrative mode to another, Carey seemingly breaks the relation established between the identity of the narrator and the narrative act, and this break performs the conceptual break that exists in terms of these two classes of metaphor. The identity of the narrator would seem to shift from Ned Kelly to Kelly's disembodied voice and such a break cannot be sustained for long without disrupting the cohesion of natural and cultural voice established in the preceding pages through first-person narration. The disruption itself is effectively effaced, however, when Carey re-establishes the connection between this seemingly disembodied narrator and Kelly by adopting a style of expression that enables a relatively smooth return to the first-person mode of narration. This is achieved by Kelly invoking the paternal relation in the conclusion of a third-person account of the boy Kelly being fitted with new boots, enabling this portion of the narrative to be read as a stylised demarcation of self: '*My darling girl,*' he writes, '*your father* never knew what he were looking at for he never wore socks in all his life' (Carey 75-76, emphasis added).

Disjunction between a past self and the contemporary version might otherwise result in nostalgia, but here the grammatical shift creates the disturbing sense of the superhuman, emphasising Kelly's grandiose prefiguring of his iconic status in Australian lore. This effect is sustained, rather than the presumption of a person distinct from Kelly as narrator, precisely because the cultural voice remains largely the same across the pronoun shifts. The narratological conception of voice can only signal this disruption and identify a shift in focus along these lines. It proves limiting, but for reasons that go beyond the need to identify a personality in relation to a speaking person. What I mean by this is that the grammatical indicators of a speaking subject do not always operate to indicate position as opposed to subjectivity, but might emphasise aspects of personality and personal experience instead. The pinpointing of a speaker in space and time does not solve the question of identity; it serves only to identify the relation between speaking position and the described action—metaphorically instanced as proximity, immediacy, or distance. Elements of voice—cultural voice in other words—that supply something more than the assertion of a speaker are therefore necessary in order to comprehend the relevance of a particular speaking position and the reasons for any alterations. The two voices, that is, are not extricable. Each functions to gesture presence in a manner that enhances and sustains the other.

In *True History* the implicit disavowal of a specific locatable presence, united with the motility of cultural voice, results in the performance of nonpresence as omnipresence—softening the anachronistically Australian quality of the voice and enabling the perspective of as many eyes as might see through the social and cultural perspective implied in the voice. This suggests that omniscient narration is a style of speech that strives to disperse the localizable presence of a speaker. It offers an alternative to performative strategies of polyphonic speech such as heteroglossia, though it may operate alongside these. When used in unison, as here, the narrator becomes a speaker for its time, character-type, class, and anyone who might nostalgically identify with these. At the same time, cultural voice enables the possibility of a return to the specificity of presence and the ambiguity of *who speaks?* recasts this potentiality so that Kelly is always prefigured in the opening left by the absence of natural voice. Similarly, the same might be said of the lengthier foray into third-person narration, except that its length would seem to undermine its empathic effect. The two sections are nonetheless connected and the effect produced is of the merging of two enunciative positions—the general and the specific—with each engaged in an empathetic account of the younger Kelly's experience: we get the sense of the two voices (the one apparently objective and the other subjective) united in their disgust, making Carey's extended performance of voice particularly sympathetic to the bushranger's plight as a man whose childhood made him what he was to become—both in life and long after his death.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Deirdre Coleman and John Frow of the University of Melbourne gave their attention to this article in its final stages (John Frow oversaw its earlier manifestation as a thesis chapter) and I would like to thank them both. I am especially grateful to the editors of JASAL for their guidance—in particular, Russell Smith, for his detailed response to my writing—and the anonymous reviewers for their individual insights in the critical review they undertook of this article in its earliest stages.



<sup>2</sup> Carey writes in the 'Acknowledgements' that 'I laboured for four exhilarating weeks in collaboration with my editor Gary Fisketjohn, whose green spiderweb annotations [...] resulted in a tighter, truer, better book' (Carey 401). Elsewhere, Paul Eggert suggests that Fisketjohn's contribution included the excision and/or stylisation of colloquialisms: 'While I found it curious at first that an American editor could be so effective with clarifying Australian idioms the utter, if slightly irritating consistency with which the non-standard features are imposed must be part of the answer' (132). Laurie Clancy notes certain enhancements to Kelly's speech—some derived intertextually and signalled in the novel itself—noting that '[w]hatever its origins, the novel is extremely consistent in maintaining a readable, lively, convincing brand of vernacular language that is also deceptively artful' (53).

<sup>3</sup> Byrne is given an editorial role through the archivist's description of Parcel 8 (Carey 209).

<sup>4</sup> The shift in person actually takes place before the quoted passage and begins more starkly: 'The boy imagined the famous bushranger knew where he were going' (Carey 71).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Derrida's analysis of phenomenology as underpinned by the theoretical structure of its not being metaphysics, which it casts as a form of not-being in a wider sense in terms of its condition as nonpresence—as though, like natural voice to cultural voice, it were the originary seed of phenomenology without itself being phenomenological (*Speech and Phenomena* 6-7).

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