

TITLE:

The Fictional Man: Ned Kelly in Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* in Comparison with Older Portrayals

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ABSTRACT:

The thesis concerns itself with the analysis of various personality aspects of the protagonist of Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* (2000) – Ned Kelly. Albeit a historical figure, Ned Kelly is approached as a fictional character with focus placed on his symbolic status of Australian nationality, myth and manhood, and on the literary means that point to this. The separate aspects are placed in an evolutionary context through comparisons with older portrayals of the same character – in Max Brown's *Australian Son* (1948) and J. J. Kenneally's *The Complete Inner History of the Kelly Gang and their Pursuers* (1929), all of which use a heroising approach to the man.

The work shows that Ned Kelly may be perceived in many complex ways, with further possibilities for analysis suggested. Comparing the three books, it is found that although considerable unifying tendencies and moments exist, some aspects have a significant difference in focus or emphasis. A shift is noted from a confrontational idealising defence of what is perceived as a historical person to a more mythical glorifying of imperfection. No other clear developmental tendency was found, though a more broader comparison with further books on the subject could offer a better picture.

KEYWORDS:

Australian literature, manhood, national myth, outlaw, hero, Ned Kelly, Peter Carey