

Mending Fragments of the Self. The Bildungsroman as Kintsugi in *Jack Maggs* and *Mister Pip*

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1. Introduction

In their ‘Foreword’ to Joshua Esty’s *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism and the Fiction of Development* (2012), Mark Wollaeger and Kevin J.H. Dettmar draw attention to one of the key issues addressed in the volume: “what happens to the form of the novel”, the two scholars ask, “when the reciprocal allegories of nation-building and self-making that underwrite the nineteenth-century bildungsroman, or novel of education, no longer seem adequate to the representation of life in an increasingly globalized world?” (ix). The question highlights the core arguments of Esty’s insight into the “breakdown of the allegorical function of the coming-of-age plot” (15) in the twentieth century, with a focus on the geopolitical repercussions implicit in the decline of the normative model for individual development provided by the canonical Bildungsroman. According to Esty: “Modernism exposes and disrupts the inherited conventions of the bildungsroman in order to criticize bourgeois values and to reinvent the biographical novel, but also to explore the contradictions inherent in the mainstream developmental discourses of self, nation, and empire” (3). It is a process that acquires particular relevance within a context in which “the relatively stable temporal frames of national destiny” are supplanted by a growingly “global, and therefore more uncertain frame of reference”, and this is “especially visible in the British novel tradition”, according to the scholar, where “colonial modernity unsettled the progressive and stabilizing

discourse of national culture by breaking up cherished continuities between people and its language, territory and polity” (6).

These observations invite further reflection on whether, and to what extent, the Bildungsroman as a “symbolic form of modernity” (Moretti 5) can still make sense today, at a time when notions of individual, collective, cultural, national, religious, or gender identity have been deeply problematized (Belamghari; Hall). It is above all the Bildungsroman’s relation to “a specific image of modernity: the image conveyed precisely by the youthful attributes of mobility and inner restlessness”, and entailing “a bewitching and risky process full of ‘great expectations’ and ‘lost illusions’” (Moretti 5), that has triggered a new surge of interest in the last few years. In line with the wider theoretical agenda of genre criticism, positing that “literary genres are experimental constructs which are constantly being renegotiated by new works that come into contact with them”, some scholars have rejected the “myopic [...] critical commonplace of the decline of the genre during the modernist period”, highlighting instead how, “in reality, the novel of formation continues to thrive in post-colonial, minority, multicultural, and immigrant literatures worldwide” (Boes 234, 239).

Along with the diverse expressions of the Bildungsroman paradigm in European fiction (Summerfield and Downward), the coming-of-age model has thus been shown to move creatively across a much wider range of cultures and to adjust productively to a variety of contexts. As “one of the most popular and enduring genres in literary history”, characterized by a “remarkable adaptability”, as Sarah Graham has put it, the Bildungsroman has been inventively redesigned in order to lay bare the incessant individual struggle to find a place within an increasingly complex universe. Therefore, whilst “historically associated with realism” and “originally concerned with young, white, privileged, heterosexual men”, the Bildungsroman has come “to give expression to the marginalized and silenced, in writing about the formative experiences of women, LGBTQ people, and postcolonial populations” (Graham 1). In this sense, reconfigurations of the Bildungsroman paradigm range from contemporary American fiction focusing on ethnic female identity (Bolaki) to countless African and Australian novels engaging with issues of race, class, nation, sovereignty and violence in a postcolonial light (Hoagland; Pipic). Likewise, the ‘network novel’ that Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse have identified as an ‘alternative’ genre to the canonical ‘novel of formation’

has been shown to be another “distinct but interrelated aspect of the Bildungsroman” (Falk 107)¹.

Arguing that such a radical reshaping of the traditional Bildungsroman has made its contours difficult to draw, Marc Redfield has gone so far as to identify inherent contradictions in what he defines as a *phantom genre*, a mere construct of aesthetic ideology that “may be expanded to apply to any text that can be figured as a subject producing itself in history, which is to say any text whatsoever” (202). To some extent, this broad inclusiveness of the genre was already largely implicit in Franco Moretti’s view of the “semantic hypertrophy” of the Bildungsroman form, considering that “[e]ven those novels that clearly are *not Bildungsroman* or novels or formation are perceived by us against this conceptual horizon”, thus bearing “witness to the hold of this image on our models of analysis” (15). Nonetheless, bearing in mind that “critical attempts to establish the origins of the Bildungsroman as a significant genre in the history of English-language fiction have [...] become contentious” (Salmon 7), it is precisely this flexibility that is regarded today as the very essence of a genre that “can be detached from its initial context and used productively across different historical periods and cultures” (Bolaki 1). Introducing the proceeding of the 2020 Conference on *The Bildungsroman: Form and Transformations*, John Frow, Melissa Hardie and Vanessa Smith have remarked on the inherent variability of the Bildungsroman paradigm as its most relevant and productive feature:

These variations point to the way in which a supposition of the Bildungsroman’s centrality for the European novel in particular is subject not just to formal dictates but also to *transformations* that come in themselves to *trouble the normativity* of this idealised form and promote instead the *instability* of the key terms and concepts it wishes to centre: masculine gender, youthful malleability, cosmopolitan life as ‘worlding’ and education delivered as an adumbration of possibility, experience, or desire. If the Bildungsroman, then, has long been understood as *forming and deforming* in tandem, even scholarship that sought to set the lineaments of the genre in stone gestured toward such *instability*. (1906 my emphasis)

In the light of the ongoing theoretical debate on the ‘transformative’ power of the genre, and with a view to illustrating how the paradigm has been assimilated, reshaped and creatively adapted to new ‘narratives of self-formation’ in the contemporary novel (Armstrong), this paper focuses

on *Jack Maggs* (1997) by the Australian novelist Peter Carey and *Mister Pip* (2007) by the New Zealand writer Lloyd Jones through the metaphor of the Japanese art of Kintsugi. Insofar as it displays cracks and repairs in the mended ceramic pieces rather than hiding them – thus celebrating ‘imperfection’ and accepting ‘the loss of wholeness’ without disguising the damage – Kintsugi philosophy offers the lens, as I will argue, through which the postmodern ‘narrative of self-formation’ in the two texts is reimagined. Without overlooking the diverse backgrounds they emerge from, and the far-reaching repercussions of the different issues they address, the paper sheds light on the different ways in which both novels engage with, and imaginatively reinterpret Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations*, a novel that has itself been regarded as one of the most atypical instances of the English Bildungsroman, a “perverse and obstinate counter-model” (Moretti 265), an “unconventional Bildungsroman” (Cao 2017, 26) weaving ‘anti-novel-of-formation’ aspects into an intricate narrative structure.

To some extent, in line with to the last few decades’ fascination with ‘Victorian afterlife’ (Kucich-Sadoff) and cultural ‘appropriations’ of the Victorians, both works may be said to bear traces of Neo-Victorianism, as it has been defined by Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn, “*self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians*” and testifying to a “sustained need to reinterpret the Victorians and what they mean to us” (4, 9 emphasis in the original). Of course, one should not fail to notice the potential risks of an Anglocentric bias implicit in the term, as the two scholars themselves have pointed out: “replacement – or displacement – of the term ‘neo-Victorianism’ into international and global contexts is not without its own perils, suggesting as it does an overarching narrative that erases the specificities of cultural memory and inculcates a homogenisation of heritage” (Heilmann and Llewellyn 2013: 26). The risk lies, more specifically, in what has appeared to be “a consolidation of an imagined, unified, monocentric perspective on the many diverse neo-Victorian figurations produced globally: a perspective that is at its broadest ‘Western’ and at its narrowest ‘Anglophone’” (Primorac-Pietrzak-Franger 4).

From a wider theoretical standpoint, *Jack Maggs* and *Mister Pip* undeniably establish a complex intertextual dialogue with “the cultural event called ‘Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations*’, to borrow Mary Hammond’s definition: in different ways, they testify to how, far from being “an immutable work of art to be kept behind glass and admired

from a distance”, it should be more aptly looked at “as an Ali Baba’s cave of treasures which can be – and perhaps more importantly, always has been – plundered at will” (11). Admittedly, many other rewritings of the Victorian masterpiece address the issue of identity and self-formation of the ‘postmodern subject’ from a variety of perspectives exemplified, to mention a few, by Sue Roe’s *Estella: Her Expectations* (1982) or Kathy Acker’s *Great Expectations: A Novel* (1983) that creatively switches across diverse narrative viewpoints, identities and genders in her attempt “to deconstruct and even partially explain the instability of the postmodern self” (Hammond 177)². According to Ankhi Mukherjee, in many of these re-workings of the canonical novel

the constructedness of the literary artefact is seen as analogous to the constructedness of identity categories and cultural formation: the work of rewriting, then, is to look awry at virtual pasts, interrupt collective identities and the habitual coherence of cultural experience, and confront the social discourse informing memorable acts of literature. (54)

Set within the context of various adaptations of Dickens’s text in different genres and media formats that have attracted increasing scholarly attention over the last few years (Cao 2016; Hammond; Marroni), *Jack Maggs* and *Mister Pip* more specifically intertwine the topic of the ‘construction/reconstruction’ of individual identity with crucial postcolonial issues (Butter; Colomba; Hassal; Latham; Taylor; Walker); furthermore, the two novels have been shown to entwine individual and collective experiences of shock and suffering in the light of trauma studies (Ho; Sadoff).

Developing at the intersection between neo-Victorian perspectives and postmodern approaches to the issues of metafictional ‘adaptation’ and ‘appropriation of the past’ (Hutcheon) – in the awareness of the several overlapping areas with postcolonial rewriting (Albertazzi; Gikandi; Ho; Moraru; Said) and “postcolonial neo-Victorianism” (Heilmann and Llewellyn 69) – this paper aims to illustrate how the two texts refashion the Bildungsroman model from distinct, but complementary standpoints. In different ways, *Jack Maggs* and *Mister Pip* mark a shift, I will argue, from the idea of ‘Bildung’ as organic growth to an evocative process of ‘mending fragments’, whose metaphorical and metafictional implications deserve more attention than they have received thus far. In particular, keeping in mind “the astonishing range of interpretative possibilities

inherent in the polysemic notion of Bildung” (Horlacher 128) and its complex etymology implying ideas of ‘developing’, ‘building’, as well as ‘shaping’ and ‘outlining’³, the following pages will illustrate how the Japanese technique of Kintsugi – which ‘exhibits’ the scars between the broken parts of repaired pottery by means of gold lines – provides a powerful metaphorical equivalent for the distinctive model of self-formation/self-narration epitomized by the two novels. In this sense, light will be shed on how both *Jack Maggs* and *Mister Pip* bear witness to new ways in which the Bildungsroman – “at once one of the most successful and one of the most vexed contributions that German letters have made to the international vocabulary of literary studies” (Boes 230) – continues to morph and incorporate itself into the contemporary novel.

2. Carey’s ‘reversed’ Bildung: writing back to Dickens’s model

As most notably exemplified by its early canonical expressions, relying on a “model of progressive maturation, insight, and social adjustment”, the Bildungsroman paradigm has been briefly outlined in the following terms: “a young man from the provinces seeks his *fortune in the city*, and undergoes of process of *education in the ways of the world* such that he eventually becomes *reconciled* with it” (Frow et al. 1905 my emphasis). Seen in this perspective, Carey’s *Jack Maggs* appears as a clear postcolonial attempt at ‘writing back’ (Albertazzi; Ashcroft et al.) to the English literary canon by undermining the narrative archetype embodied by an unconventional Bildungsroman such as *Great Expectations*, imbued with patterns of ‘return’, ‘repetition’ and ‘regression’ (Brooks) along with paradigms of ‘growth’ and ‘development’⁴.

Largely inspired by Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), and responding to its invitation to “read the great canonical texts [...] with an effort to draw, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented in such works” (7), Carey asserts that the point of view from which an Australian should read *Great Expectations* is different from the one assumed by the Victorian novelist:

One day, contemplating the figure of Magwitch, the convict in Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations*, I suddenly thought ‘this man is my ancestor!’ [...] Dickens encourages us to think of him as the ‘other’, but this was my ancestor, he was not

other. I wanted to reinvent him, to possess him, to act as his advocate. I did not want to diminish his 'darkness' or his danger, but I wanted to give him all the love and sympathy that Dickens's first person narrative provides his English hero Pip. That's where I started. ("Interview", online)

Hence, subverting Dickens's narrative perspective and his main focus on Pip's 'progressive maturation', Carey shifts the centre of attention from the orphan to the escaped convict, here rechristened Jack Maggs, who becomes the key character. While set in the heart of Victorian London, Carey's novel is thus largely filtered through the eyes of a character who is literally and metaphorically coming back from the 'periphery' of the Empire, from the 'other side' of the world, and accordingly providing counter-discursive views of the metropolitan 'centre'. Considering the prominent issues of 'standpoint' and 'position' in "the dialectic of place and displacement" underpinning postcolonial literature (Ashcroft et al. *Key Concepts*, 5; Bhabha; Goldie), *Jack Maggs* represents, first of all, an imaginative act of *appropriation*, an attempt to 'invade' and 'repossess' ("Interview" online) the spaces of imperial fiction by re-imagining Dickens's fictional universe from an antipodean standpoint (Jordan; Maack; Thieme).

It is from this 'inverted perspective' that Carey refashions the Bildungsroman paradigm, adapting it to the story of Jack Maggs. Like Dickens's Magwitch, Maggs leaves the Australian penal colony and comes back to London illegally with the aim of meeting Henry Phipps, the orphan he has helped to become a Victorian gentleman, thus asserting his own English identity: "I am a fucking *Englishman*, and I have English things to settle. I am not to live my life with that vermin. I am here in London where I belong" (128). The novel emblematically opens with Maggs's arrival in the metropolis where, after realizing that Phipps has mysteriously left for an unknown destination, he takes a job as a footman in the house next door, in order to wait for his return. Unaware of Phipps's true nature as a snobbish and ungrateful parasite who is intentionally escaping the encounter with his benefactor, Maggs breaks into Phipps's deserted house every night through an unlatched window, sits at his desk and writes letters to his 'adoptive son' in order to offer him a 'faithful' autobiographical account of his adventurous existence. He thus provides his own coming-of-age narrative, beginning with the origin of his name – so reminiscent of Dickens's renowned opening paragraph ("My father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both

names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So, I called myself Pip and came to be called Pip"; 3) – and offering the accurate description of his life, from the time he was abandoned on the Thames mudflats and then rescued and raised as a criminal by London burglars, until he was sent to a penal colony in South New Wales:

You have known for many years that my name is Jack Maggs, although Maggs was not my father's name, but a name given to me by my foster mother who believed I talked too much. What my father's name was I cannot tell, for when I was just three days old I was discovered lying in the mud flats 'neath London Bridge. (75)

Written backwards, from right to left, as a device to protect his dangerous secrets, and with a special ink that gradually fades away ("he watched these fresh lines fade, first to lilac, then to white; until, that is, they became invisible"; 74), Maggs's letters offer the first of a series of references to his use of 'writing' as a precarious attempt to construct/reconstruct his identity by giving 'form' and 'significance' to the broken fragments of his tumultuous existence, an idea that bears increasing resemblance to the philosophy behind Kintsugi. But Maggs's letters mark above all a meaningful shift from Dickens's narrative focus on Pip's 'great expectations' to Peter Carey's emphasis on Maggs's 'High Hopes':

I had hopes you might return tonight [...] but I have waited these hours on the settle, and now at your very handsome walnut desk in vain. It is a most melancholy business to be solitary in the place in which I did invest such High Hopes, but I do trust my disappointment will be brief. I have a messenger who will soon fetch you. If you now read this letter it can only be because you have met up with him, the Thief-taker, and has told you how to make these words visible. (74)

If the use of 'disappearing ink' hints at the 'invisibility' to which Maggs has been condemned by a 'respectable' Victorian society that has tried to get rid of the criminals' disturbing presence by making them literally 'vanish' into the penal colony (Dolce 221), mirror-writing signals a symbolic inversion of the narrative stance embodied by Dickens' canonical text. This is "necessary for the expression of subaltern utterance" (Thieme 116) and, more precisely, of the antipodean standpoint of the "returned convict", a figure that "haunted middle-class English society throughout the early and middle part of the nineteenth century" (Thieme 106).

In line with this 'inverted' narrative perspective, Carey's novel undermines the ideology implicit in the Bildungsroman model, beginning with the tenet that 'fortune' must be sought 'in the city' and that a process of 'education in the ways of the world' and an eventual 'reconciliation' with it are the necessary conditions of individual progress (Frow et al. 1905). Meaningfully, these assumptions are overtly challenged by the events that occur during Maggs's three-week stay in London, unfolded in the present timeline of the novel. Far from finding a welcome, let alone his 'fortune' in the city, Maggs keeps knocking in vain on Phipps' closed door ("He knocked quickly, firmly, but politely. When there was no immediate answer, he knocked again. And then, a minute later Rap-rap-rap", 6) and is then icily rebuffed by Ma Britten, his childhood protector whom he once called 'mother', who leaves him standing alone, in front of another shut door, in the opening pages of the novel:

She hesitated, peering into the night, one hand ready on the door handle. "What are you doing here?" she whispered. "You are a dead man if they find you."

"This is a nice home-coming."

"Don't bring your trouble here" she said. [...]

"I'm going well myself" the stranger said. "You going to ask me in?"

She made not move to offer an invitation [...] "Aren't you worried someone's going to hang you?" Having made this bitter speech, she stepped inside the house and closed the door behind her". (4-5)

Ma Britten, who emblematically makes her living by selling abortion pills, undermines the very notion of 'motherhood' associated to 'Mother Britain', as her name ironically suggests: she epitomizes the image of a 'mother country' that has no qualms about abandoning her own children, an idea that is repeatedly echoed throughout the novel. Thus, after discovering the true wicked nature of his 'English' son who eventually even tries to murder him, Maggs wakes from the dream of his idealized image of England (Maack 239), and 'the city of London' suddenly appears to him as a hellish place to escape from, embodying the darkest sides of the imperial 'metropolitan centre' (Said). Accordingly, only three weeks after his arrival, the convict leaves London with Mercy, the maid he has fallen in love with, and returns to South New Wales, where he peacefully spends the rest of his life with his own 'real' Australian children and where, as the final pages of the novel ironically point out, "he very quickly gave birth to five further members of 'that Race'" (327).

In opposition to the Bildungsroman view of individual maturation in terms of ‘social adjustment’ and ‘education in the ways of the world’, Maggs’s final decision rather suggests a stern attack on ‘that world’, a theme that Carey entwines with his crucial postcolonial concerns, offering his unequivocal response to a typical Australian mind-set (Maack 2005), perfectly represented in Dickens’s novel:

The things that engages me with the book were the degree to which I thought Magwitch was behaving in a really Australian way. He is cast out, he is treated very badly, and all he can think to do, at risk of his own life, it to go and live with his abusers. That became the emotional focus of the book because that was about us [...] When I grew up the convicts were nothing to do with me and the people I must have identified with must have been the soldiers, the jailers, and England was home. My grandfather, who had never been here, called England home. (Carey “Inner Conviction” online)

Furthermore, considering the ‘rhetoric of space’ implicit in the tensions between the ‘metropolitan center’ and the ‘periphery of the Empire’ (Albertazzi; Ashcroft et al. *The Empire*, 45-46; Chrisman; Dolce 217-218; McLeod), the convict’s return to Australia challenges the ideological implications of the ‘imperial narrative model’ that conventionally portrayed colonies as an off-stage peripheral location where characters disappear whenever their narrative function has been accomplished (Said).

At a still deeper level, however, what *Jack Maggs* questions is the very possibility of a narrative of self-formation as an organic and coherent ‘Bildung’, an idea that acquires particular relevance in the light of the metafictional concerns that Carey weaves with postcolonial issues in his complex narrative construction. Indeed, Maggs’s attempt at re-counting the story of his life in his letters to Phipps is contrasted with the project of Tobias Oates, the other central character of the novel, an ambitious but penniless novelist at the beginning of his career who is reminiscent of Dickens himself (Maack 231- 32). Fascinated by a ‘criminal mind’ that he sees as a precious source of literary inspiration – a “Criminal Mind [...] awaiting its first cartographer” (90) – he persuades the convict to become the subject of his mesmeric experiments during which he lays bare the dark secrets of Maggs’s long years in the penal colony. Reworking the convict’s ‘stolen’ memories and adapting them to his literary projects, he thus starts writing his own deceitful, biased and ideologically charged version of

Maggs's story in a novel that is clearly reminiscent of *Great Expectations*: "*The Death of Maggs*, having been abandoned by its grief-stricken author in 1837, was not begun again until 1859 [...] it first appeared in serial, then again when the parts were gathered in a handsome volume, then again when the author amended it in 1861" (328)⁵.

Undoubtedly, the conflict between Oates and Maggs, who refuses to become his fictional character ("I'm not your comic figure, Mr Oates", 228), problematizes the Victorian set of values underpinning the novelist's 'representation' of the character's 'formation', by highlighting its unreliability and arbitrariness (Dolce 222-223). It bears clear trace of the typically postcolonial struggle for the 'control of enunciative power', the very root of imperial supremacy, as Rushdie reminds us in *Satanic Verses*: "They describe us [...] that's all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct" (174). In this light, Carey dwells on the increasingly violent reactions of the convict who throws Oates' manuscript into the river – "You will not write my name in your book. You will not write the Phantom's name." "Yes." Jack then hurled the book high out of the Severn. As it flew up into the mist, its pages opened like a pair of wings. (282) – and eventually burns the last bundle of the novelist's handwritten notes in the fireplace:

When the last blaze had died away, the grate was filled with mourning: all those lines of gorgeous copperplate had become sheets of black crêpe which he now stuck at with a poker [...] the wind which one again blew fiercely down the chimney and this time carried the black and broken paper out into the room. The men leapt back, coughing and waving their hands. The burnt papers rose, like black moths as high as the ceiling. (307)

More importantly, the conflict between them above all foregrounds, in broader terms, the difficult process of 'constructing' a coherent narrative of the protagonist's life, which is never offered to the reader as a progressive *Bildung*, a consistent account of "a process of teleological and organic growth, in the manner of a seed that develops into a mature plant according to inherent genetic principles" (Boes 232). Instead, through an intricate web of overlapping storylines and narrative levels, the narrative of Maggs's 'formation' emerges rather as the result of a precarious and shaky attempt to stitch together disconnected fragments, which the reader garners from different voices and incomplete, often incoherent sources:

the convict's memories hastily reported in his letters to Phipps, without following an overall plan ("My previous correspondence [...] was written in a great rush in a Dover Inn, soon after landing. I dare say that my words were not as well chosen as they might have been", 75); Maggs's muddled reminiscences as they arise during the mesmeric sittings, and of which he is thoroughly unaware ("what speeches have I made?" [...] "You have been asleep," Tobias Oates explained, "I asked you questions and you answered them." "Did I answer loudly, then?" "Well, very *clearly*, smiled the young man", 30); the fictitious notes of those sittings that Oates is keeping in order to show Jack Maggs a different version of what he has confessed ("I wrote down what you told me in your sleep, Jack. One day you will read every word of it. Every dream and memory in your head, I'll give them to you, I promise", 265) and, finally, the novelist's real minutes, carefully labelled in alphabetical order:

Here pigeon-holed at 'H' – was the essay on the hands. Beside it, folded in four, were another two pages labelled 'Hair'. This Jack Maggs received incredulously [...] There had been eight magnetic sessions in all, and the record of each one was tied and bundled in good neat order as you see the clerks do at the Inns of Court. (304)

Crucial to the novel is the idea that these fragments seize the true essence of the protagonist's life story not 'despite', but 'by virtue of' their inherently scattered and dispersive nature. Undeniably, the themes of the intrinsic 'fragmentation' of human experience and unreliable knowledge are key in *Great Expectations* where, beginning with the opening page – "my most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things seems to me to have been gained on a memorable raw afternoon towards evening" (1) – Pip soon realizes he has to make his own 'sense of the world' working his way through a multifaceted and labyrinthine universe, an increasingly unstable refraction of his individual search for meaning⁶. Pip's attempt to find a logic and a coherent 'design' in the apparent randomness of his life underlies the narrative structure of *Great Expectations* where, starting from the title, readers are involved in the long series of beliefs and 'false expectations', illusions, mistakes and sudden discoveries that accompany the complex unfolding of Pip's evolution towards final understanding and self-consciousness. This is what Pip himself finally realizes, and Miss Havisham can't deny: "When I fell into the mistake I have so long

remained in, at least you led me on?" said I. "Yes", she returned, again nodding steadily, "I let you go on" (360). Pip's efforts to unveil the *truth*, his attempts to see the overall design of his life by piecing together its apparently disjointed fragments emerge above all in his final dialogue with Jaggers:

I reminded him the false hopes into which I had lapsed, the length of time they had lasted, and the discovery I had made: and I hinted at the danger that weighed upon my spirits. I represented myself as being surely worthy of some confidence from him in return of the confidence I had just now imparted. I said I did not blame him, or suspect him, or mistrust him, but I wanted assurance of the truth from him. (411)

It is this key theme underpinning Dickens's novel that *Jack Maggs* reimagines and recasts within a new context. Far from 'constructing' a consistent project responding to a coherent process of growth towards final understanding of the *truth*, the novel puts together a piecemeal, fragmentary, and therefore more authentic account of Maggs's life: it points to the deepest meaning of the human condition as a never-ending search for meaning that lies in the 'empty spaces' to be filled, as the recurring cartographic metaphor of the blank map⁷ reminds us: "I blame myself for the way I withheld my true history from you. I left a blank map for you and you have doubtless filled it with your worst imaginings" (238). The 'true' story of the protagonist's 'individual development' is thus recounted neither by Oates' *The Death of Jack Maggs* nor entirely by Maggs's letters to Phipps, seemingly only a bundle of 'blank' pages which are now kept, as the novel ironically reminds us, along with seven copies of Oates' work, on the same shelves of "the Mitchell Library in Sidney" (328). The narrative of his 'formation' rather emerges in the 'broken lines' between the disjointed parts that the reader is invited to reassemble, some of which are inevitably lost. It can be read, and largely inferred, in the dotted lines, in the interruptions, in the 'scars' that, like the flogging marks still visible on his skin, reveal so much of the convict's history:

Oates snorted. "Did you not see his back, man? He is a scoundrel. Well, we saw a page of his history" said the little grocer stubbornly. "Whatever his offence, anyone with half a heart can see that he has paid the bill". (88)

Whilst unquestionably drawing attention to “the fracture which is the very condition of post-colonial subjectivity” (Ashcroft 112), this imaginative ‘mending process’ acquires a deeper significance, pointing to the true essence of life as an attempt to make sense of experiences, an endless search for balance between weakness and strength, loss and resilience, never hiding the traces of life’s frailty and imperfection. In this sense, Carey’s reworking of the Bildungsroman model finds a powerful metaphorical equivalent in the Japanese technique of Kintsugi that “takes ceramic destruction and makes a broken object into a new entity” exhibiting its ‘history’, rather than hiding it (Kemske 12). Like Maggs’s unutterable secrets, the precious golden lines between the broken fragments of a repaired pottery lay bare “an intimate metaphoric narrative of loss and recovery, breakage and restoration, tragedy and the ability to overcome it. A Kintsugi repair speaks of individuality and uniqueness, fortitude and resilience, and the beauty to be found in survival” (Kemske 12).

3. Mending hybrid identities: the precariousness of the self in ‘Mister Pip’

Against a background in which the Bildungsroman has shown its great ‘transformative power’, creatively adapting to a variety of contexts, the Kintsugi technique offers an effective metaphor to show how, from a different perspective, Lloyd Jones’s *Mister Pip* (2007) also engages with and radically reinterprets the archetype of the ‘Bildung’ in its imaginative rewriting of *Great Expectations*. The metaphor draws attention, to begin with, to Jones’s reworking of Dickens’s ‘hypotext’ (Genette) by picking, assembling and refashioning fragments of the Victorian masterpiece, and adapting them to his own contemporary ‘narrative of self-formation’; but it is also increasingly associated, from a broader perspective, to the human condition as such, meant as an attempt to survive by stitching together dispersed fragments/narratives of the self in the welter of violence and terror of the 1990 civil war in Papua New Guinea, where the novel is set.

“The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut”, Foucault reminds us, “beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration, and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other sentences: it is a note within a network” (23). Partly in line with the neo-Victorian reinvention of nineteenth-century fictional texts as “an intellectual and cultural mode” (Hailmann-Lewellyn 10), *Mister*

Pip epitomizes the typically postmodernist “phenomena of transposition, transformation and hybridization” through which “contemporary authors continually draw from old stories to revive and update them” (Latham 22-23). While also testifying to “the enduring influence of the Victorian novel on world literature, specifically in its status as a landmark Bildungsroman”⁸, it above all embodies a space of intertextual and intercultural exchange, “an underlining of a continued desire to understand and reinterpret such narratives within more global intellectualized, and also importantly, emotionalized parameters” (Hailmann-Lewellyn 25).

It is in this perspective that Pip’s ‘maturation through suffering’, as it unfolds in Dickens’s masterpiece, is entwined with the different individual and collective experiences of ‘trauma’ of the Bougainville villagers in Lloyd Jones’s fictional universe. Elaborating on the concept of metaleptic transition of literary works into life, *Mister Pip* shows how “characters migrate”, as the epigraph reads, transgress ontological borders, and “live and shape our behavior to such an extent that we choose them” (Eco 10-11). This is the idea underpinning the project of Mr. Watts, or Pop Eye as the villagers call him, the only remaining white man on the isle after the outbreak of the civil war, who decides to reopen the dilapidated local school in order to restore hope in the village children. Having no qualification as a real teacher, he daily reads a chapter of *Great Expectations* to the kids from his own copy of the only book left on the island, thus offering them not merely an ‘escape’ from the atrocities of the conflict, but an entire fictional universe that they can weave into their own life, into their individual struggle for survival and search for meaning in the face of the absurdities of violence. As the thirteen-year-old narrator Matilda recognizes:

Mr Watts had given us another world to spend the night in. We could escape to another place. It didn’t matter that it was Victorian England. We found we could easily go there. [...] By the time Mr Watts reached the end of chapter one I felt like I had been spoken to by this boy Pip. This boy who I couldn’t see to touch but knew by ear. I found a new friend. The surprising thing is where I’d found him – not up a tree or sulking in the shade, or slashing around in one of the ill streams, but in a book. No one had told us kids to look there for a friend. Or that you could slip into the skin of another. (20)

Pip's coming-of-age narrative thus offers Matilda the lens through which she can 'understand' and 'provide a narrative' of her own distinctive "process of *education* in the ways of the world" (Frow et al. 1905), recasting in a radically new context the "bewitching and risky process full of 'great expectations' and 'lost illusions'" (Moretti 5) that underpins any life experience. As the girl admits, "[i]t was always a relief to return to *Great Expectations*. It contained a world that was whole and made sense, unlike ours" (58). While living in entirely different worlds, Pip and Matilda face the hardness of life in a similar way – "Me and Pip had something else in common; I was eleven when my father left, so neither of us really knew our fathers" (21) – and find similar ways to cope with it, as testified by the many references to the Victorian novel, beginning with the opening page of *Great Expectations*, where Pip derives a childish image of his parents from the letters on their tombstones:

The shape of the letters on my father's, gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, "*Also Georgiana Wife of the Above*", I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly. (1)

The scene is echoed quite literally in *Mister Pip*:

The shape of the letters on the tombstone gave Pip the idea his father was a 'square, stout, dark man with curly black hair'. Encouraged by Pip's example I tried to build a picture of my own dad. I found some examples of his handwriting. He wrote in small capital letters. What did they say about him? (22)

But besides Matilda's attempts to weave bits of Pip's story into her own individual journey-into-maturity narrative, the metaphor of 'patching fragments' gains increasing prominence in the novel and is explored at different levels. The chapters of *Great Expectations* themselves, which are read 'in daily instalments' by Mr. Watts – a simplified version of the Victorian classic, as Matilda eventually discovers – are reported in 'scattered fragments' every night by the children to their families: "I could pick up any moment in the story [...] I was still discovering my favourite bits" (21). More importantly, once the only copy of the book is thought to be lost, after the rambos' violent raid, Watts invites the kids to reconstruct the 'original' text piecemeal, by assembling their individual memories of single fragments:

Great Expectations had gone up in flames and could not be retrieved from the ashes. Of course Mr Watts has a different approach in mind. "Let's see if we can remember it", he said. [...] Mr Watts instructed us to dream freely. We did not have to remember the story in any order or even as it really happened, but as it came to us." [...] he warned us. It might come to you in the night. If so, you must hang onto that fragment until we meet in class. There, you can share it, and add it to the others. When we have gathered all the fragments we will put together the story. It will be as good as new. (108-109)

Blending with the children's own thoughts and life experiences ("We could fill in the gaps with our own worlds", 113), portions of Dickens's novel thus emerge in their mind at the most unpredictable moments: "Once I began to turn to fragments of *Great Expectations* it was surprising where and when I found them. This was most often at night, when I needed another world to escape to, but it also would occur in unexpected moments" (109). Each fragment is carefully kept and brought to school, where Mr Watts assembles the single pieces of the children's huge puzzle and writes them down in his exercise book, like a patient amanuensis, adding links to fix them together, in a curious blending of oral and written constructions:

"I wonder if I've gotten everything down correctly, he said. Let's find out". He read back the words. Celia blushed. It was clear Mr Watts had added a line or two of his own. He looked up and found Celia. She gave him a quick nod and Mr Watts pretended to look relieved. Now he looked around for another contribution. "Matilda, what have you got for us?" As I retrieved my scene with Pip making his way to Satis House, Mr Watts smiled to himself, and before I had even finished he was bent over, scribbling into his exercise book. (112)

By picking up and sewing together bits of Pip's story, the children create something new, or better 'revitalized', like repaired porcelain in Kintsugi art, where scars exhibit a 'new' life out of the broken fragments of the 'old' pottery. Indeed, being allowed to "fill in the gaps with their own world, [...] they necessarily insert foreign or parasite elements into the original discourse through the gaps opened by the lost book", as Monica Latham argues, "together they create a hybrid product, Dickensian and Bougainvillesque, written and oral, Victorian and native" (28).

A further step of this hybridization process occurs when Watts invites the children's relatives to come to school and share their own 'knowledge of the world': 'shards' of the Victorian novel are thus mixed in the classroom

with other fragments of the islanders' stories, local folklore, mythology, traditions and magical beliefs. The smell of Joe Gargery's forge, the dark atmosphere of Satis house and of Jaggers's greasy office in London merge, in the kids' minds, with the local stories about the origin of dreams, the names of the winds, or superstitions about flying fish; they merge with Dolores' tales about the devil, and the villagers' beliefs about colour blue, as illustrated by Daniel's grandmother: "Blue is the color of the Pacific. It is the air we breathe. Blue is the gap in the air of all things, such as the palms and iron roofs. But for blue we would not see the fruits bats" (51). Meaningfully, the kids' 'encounters' with the Victorian masterpiece alternate with Dolores' readings from the Bible, the only 'real Book' she considers worthy of study and teaching, and which she sees in contrast to the 'fictional', and threateningly 'alien' universe of *Great Expectations*.

This assemblage of fragments from such different traditions is crucial to the novel's concern with the processes of cross-cultural hybridization of which "the island's children become its new custodians" (Kosew 282), an idea epitomized by the curious shrine Matilda builds on the beach, by assembling cowrie shells and heart seeds all around the name of 'Pip' she has traced in the sand: "I had collected a basket of cowrie shells and was adding these to the heart seeds to make PIP even more visible, when Mr Watts looked up from his beachcombing. He saw me and left the water's edge to walk up the sand. 'A shrine', he said, approvingly. 'Pip in the Pacific'" (59). The novel explores the multifaceted implications of 'hybrid identities' in a postcolonial light⁹, in line with the key questions raised by the theoretical debate:

Hybridity research centers on the relationship between identity and context. Empirical studies of hybrid identities center on the dialectical and mutually productive relationship between a multiplicity of hybridized identities in a shifting, globalizing context. How do different groups, confronted with specific and diverse cultural forces, economic forces, and institutional settings, negotiate identity and cultural space within this context? In what ways are the cultural spaces created by the fissures between, and fusing of, divergent cultural elements in fact productive spaces in which identities are constructed and contested? (Leavy 165)

In this sense, the 'spare room' that Mr Watts and his black wife Grace dedicate to their newborn daughter testifies to an analogous attempt to let

their “coffee-coloured child” (153) construct her own identity by collecting and hybridizing disparate elements from her parents’ different cultural universes, as they are emblematically ‘narrated’ on the ‘walls’ of the room:

And why pass up the opportunity of blank wall? Why go in for wallpaper covered with kingfishers and flocks of birds in flight when they could put useful information up on the walls? They agreed to gather their world side by side and leave it to their daughter to pick and choose what she wanted. One night, Grace wrote the names of her family over the wall, a history that went all the way back to a mythical flying fish. (153)

More importantly, however, the novel increasingly associates the metaphor of ‘mending fragments’ to the very essence of the human condition, an intrinsically hybrid and precarious state *as such*, an endless effort to keep dispersed pieces together, struggling to make sense of them. As Stuart Hall notes:

The subject, previously experience as having a unified, stable identity, is becoming fragmented: composed not of a single, but of several, sometimes contradictory or unresolved, identities [...] This produced the post-modern subject, conceptualized as having no fixed, essential or permanent identity. Identity becomes a ‘moveable feast’: formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented. (Hall 598)

And if it is true that ‘becoming who we are’ always implies the creation of a ‘narrative about ourselves’ (Bamberg; Belamghari; Hall), the attempt to ‘patch disjointed narratives of the self’ is symbolically shown as the only, albeit precarious possibility for survival. This is the way Watts tries to keep Grace’s memory alive, after her death, by gathering the villagers’ scattered memories about her:

Now one of the older men spoke up. “I knew her mother. She was also beautiful...” The man who said this did look up but fastened his eyes on an old memory of female beauty. Others began to speak. They gave their bits of memory to Mr Watts. They filled in a picture of his dead wife. In this way he learned of a girl he had never met. [...] For I moment I had the impression Mr Watts would prefer to join his wife in the ground, but now I saw him happy to remain with us. Especially after hearing all those fragments to do with Grace. (122-123)

This is, more importantly, what Mr Watts himself literally does at the end of the novel, engaging in the only, albeit risky, and inexorably temporary chance to save the villagers' lives and his own, after the rambos have discovered Pip's name traced in the sand and suspect they are hiding a rebel. Thus, appropriating Pip's identity, Watts keeps the rambos enthralled around the campfire:

Mr Watts answered without hesitation, "My name is Pip". "Mister Pip", said the rambo. There were many of us who could have said Mr Wats was lying [...] instead we did nothing and said nothing. We were too shocked to dispute what he said [...] Mr Watts began to recite from *Great Expectations*. "My Christian name is Philip. But my infant tongue could make of it nothing longer or more explicit, so I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip". I could not make up my mind whether this was spectacular daring or complete foolishness. (139)

Like a modern Scheherazade, he cleverly weaves the narrative of his own life with chunks of Dickens's novel, inserting also pieces from the villagers' tales and local folklore as he had heard them at school, reported by the kids' parents ("the donors of these fragments and anecdotes were left to smile to themselves in the shadows", 162), into which he inscribes new meanings:

Those rambos had not heard a storytelling voice for years. The boys sat there, with their mouths and ears open to catch every word, their weapons resting on the ground in front of their bare feet like useless relics. Mr Watts' decision to introduce himself as Pip to the rebels was risky, but it was easy to see why he had made it. Pip would be a convenient role for Mr Watts to drop into. If he wanted he could tell Pip's story as Mr Dickens had written it and claim it was his own, or he could take elements from it and make it into whatever he wished, and weave something new. Mr Watts chose the second option. (141-142)

In Watts's narration, Pip thus curiously grows up "in a brick depot on a copper mine road" (143) like the place where Matilda's father works, and is brought up by "Miss Ryan, and old recluse in a big house with dark rooms covered in cobwebs" (143), plainly reminiscent of Miss Havisham's Satis House. In one of the most memorable moments of Watts/Pip's journey-into-maturity narration, his dreadful conflict with the devil is reported in a way that echoes the exact words used by Dolores in the classroom, when telling the children her stories about the fiend. As Matilda acknowledges: "This wasn't Mr Watt's story we were hearing at all. It wasn't his or Grace.

It was a made-up story to which we'd all contributed. Mr Watts was shining our experience of the world back to us" (163-164).

Predictably, Watts' patchwork narrative, unfolded in instalments over seven nights, fails to save his life. Indeed, his account is abruptly interrupted when the redskins arrive: not only is he shot dead, but his body is cruelly and emblematically 'chopped up' and thrown "in pieces to the pigs" (173), a dreadful ending that he shares with Dolores: "They took my mum to the edge of the jungle, to the same place they'd dragged Mr Watts, and there they chopped her up and threw her to the pigs" (179). Nonetheless, Watts' ultimate, courageous attempt at stitching 'fragmented narratives' survives as his most valuable teaching for Matilda, as a new "symbolic form of modernity" (Moretti 5), an icon, more precisely, of the preciousness and precariousness of existence. It is this teaching that allows her to go through the deep depression she falls into, after leaving the isle and trying to start a new life as a University student: while spending long hours sitting "there, like Mr Watts had once, with his secret exercise book, waiting for fragments" (215), she realizes she has to wait for the 'broken shards' of her life to take shape again, like the pieces of broken pottery that are glued together with gold in Kintsugi. It is this awareness that eventually prompts her to put together her coming-of-age story, once she has recovered, emblematically writing it on the back of the sheets of her PhD thesis on Dickens, still piled up on her desk:

I took the top of the sheet of paper from 'Dickens' Orphans', turned it over and wrote, "Everyone called him Pop Eye. I wrote that sentence six months ago. Everything that follows I wrote over the intervening months. I have tried to describe the events as the happened to me and my mum on the island. I have not tried to embellish. Everyone says the same thing of Dickens. They love his characters. Well, something has changed in me. As I have grown older, I have fallen out of love with his characters. They are too loud. They are grotesque. But strip away their mask and you find what their creator understood about the human soul and all its suffering. (217)

4. Conclusion: reimagining the archetype

What responses can Dickens's Bildungsroman afford us today? To what extent can *Great Expectations* still answer our need for a "symbolic form" in the face of the unprecedented complexity and instability of the world we

live in? It is undeniable that “Victorian literature [...] still matters, greatly, and the reading of Victorian texts, the re-reading of the (neo-)Victorian experience they represent is something that defines our culture as much as it did theirs” (Heilmann and Lewellyn 4). In broader terms, as Azar Nafisi reminds us in *The Republic of Imagination*, all literary texts are crucial to our endless search for ‘form’ and ‘meaning’ in life, which is after all the core of any experience of ‘self-formation’. “Stories are not mere flights of fantasy”, Nafisi points out, “they link us to our past, provide us with critical insights into the present and enable us to envision our lives not just as they are but as they should be or might become” (5). All stories are, to a large extent, the instrument through which we construct our own ‘image’ of ourselves and provide the ‘narrative’ of our inner world and of our relation to the others:

So much of who we are, no matter where we live, depends on how *we imagine ourselves to be*. So much of the home we live in is defined by that other world in our backyard, be it Dorothy’s Oz or Alice’s Wonderland or Scheherazade’s room, to which we have to travel in order to see ourselves and others more clearly. (35, my emphasis)

Engaging with one of most influential stories of self-formation in the literary tradition, *Jack Maggs* and *Mister Pip* offer, each from its unique perspective, an imaginative rethinking of the Bildungsroman archetype. Both novels address the issue of whether, and to what extent, it is still possible to provide a ‘narrative of the self’ against the background of an increasingly multifaceted universe in which “the fully unified, completed, secure, and coherent identity is a fantasy”, as Stuart Hall has put it, a world in which “we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities any one of which we could identify with – at least temporarily” (598).

Yet, far from denying the possibility of ‘development’ – in keeping with the “antidevelopmental narratives” (Esty) of modernist fiction or the postmodernist stress on ‘impossible evolution’ and ‘unachievable closure’ – both novels point to the true nature of the Bildungsroman which is instead inseparable, as Bakhtin puts it, from “the image of *man in the process of becoming*” (19) within a world which is itself in a constant condition of change, “no longer *within* an epoch, but on the border *between* two epochs, at the transition point from one to the other” (23). Weaving the typically neo-Victorian engagement with the nineteenth-century textual and cultural

heritage with postcolonial issues on the one hand, and individual and collective experiences of suffering and generational traumas on the other, the two novels examined in this paper represent the protagonists' "process of becoming" as an endless search for form and meaning out of the broken fragments of their existence in a world that falls apart. If "scholars of the *Bildungsroman* have tended to focus on the formation of the protagonist's 'self', and the way this is 'reconciled' with society", *Jack Maggs* and *Mister Pip* respond rather to what has more recently emerged as a shift in attention towards "the protagonists' role in actually *forming* the society they occupy" (Falk 110 my emphasis) and, above all, *reimagining* their own 'provisional', unstable place in it.

In this sense, reinterpreting the complex polysemy implicit in the notion of 'Bildung' as 'construction', 'form', 'frame', and 'image', the metaphorical process of 'mending shards' exemplified by the Kintsugi technique (Kitty) foregrounds the "contradictions and fragmentations in the *formation* of identity" (Belamghari 2) in both texts. Attention is thus drawn to the precariousness of the 'self' – and, accordingly, of any 'narrative' of it – as most notably epitomized by the vanishing ink of Jack Maggs's letters or Pip's name traced by Matilda in the sand. Embracing the Japanese philosophy of *wabi-sabi*, which is centered on the acceptance of transience and recognizes beauty in imperfection (Santini 2019), Kintsugi points to the preciousness of life not 'in spite' but 'because of' the weaknesses, mistakes and uncertainties we have to face in an increasingly complicated and unpredictable world:

Global pandemics, recessions, disruption, artificial intelligence and how they all interact is a complex web impossible to navigate flawlessly. Therefore, in a turbulent society, previously held knowledge is no longer enough; we need new mindsets. Kintsugi thinking is a crucial philosophy [...] the higher the tolerance for mistakes, the more we will learn. (McCullen 14)

Both Jack and Matilda realize that faults and failures enclose the deepest meaning of their life, and that a true 'narrative of formation' should not hide, but rather celebrate vulnerability. After all, it is our wounds that make our story unique: they are the cracks through which life reveals its hidden beauty: "In the practice of kintsugi, the flaws themselves are necessary to for the enhancement of beauty [...] The suffering and impermanence serves as a pathway towards more profound reflection on the beauty in the object" (Yoder 66-67).

And it is this perspective that ultimately points to the core of *Great Expectations* shedding new light on Dickens's famously multifaceted engagement with the Bildungsroman archetype.¹⁰ The preciousness of mistakes, faults and suffering is, after all, the crucial teaching of what Robert Stange defined as Pip's "moral fable from the moment of his first awareness to his mature acceptance of the human condition" (9). This is what Pip realizes when faced with his 'broken expectations' and 'lost illusions', with the apparent meaninglessness of his life experiences in which no reassuring logic is capable of holding everything together, according to an overall design: "Miss Havisham's intentions towards me, all a mere dream; Estella not designed for me; I only suffered in Satis House as a convenience, as sting for the greedy relations, a model with a mechanical heart to practice on when no other practice was at hand" (323). This is what he learns about the 'darkness' he has to acknowledge as part of his ascent in Victorian society during the trial against Magwitch ("holding the hand that he stretched forth to me", 456), in the awareness that he "owns his respectability to his involvement with a criminal outcast" (Gilmour 117). This is, finally, the key teaching about the value of suffering that Pip learns after his last meeting with Estella, in the original conclusion of the novel: "in her face and in her voice, and in her touch, she gave me the assurance that suffering had been stronger than Miss Havisham's teaching, and had given her a heart to understand what my heart used to be" (509)¹¹.



- 1 The genre's capacity to be endlessly reshaped has been recently epitomized, among others, by the *Geschäftsroman*, "a new type of bildungsroman that discusses the growth of business, instead of a human" (AlAmmouri-Salman 227), in line with a society overwhelmed by commodification processes.
- 2 In Acker's 'heteroglossic' novel "the temporal unification of past and future with one's present – an unmistakable symptom of (Acker's purchase of) the postmodern condition – leads to a breakdown of personal identity" (Mukherjee 57). Other remarkable examples of re-workings of *Great Expectations* addressing the issue of identity from different perspectives include Michael Noonan's *Magwitch* (1982), Alanna Knight's *Estella* (1986) and Tony Lester's trilogy (2010-2011) mentioned in the bibliography. On these aspects regarding the 'cultural translations' of Dickens's masterpiece, see Hammond 174-182.
- 3 Famously 'untranslatable' in other languages (Horlacher), the German term *Bildung* (derived from the verb *bilden*) embraces many meanings along with the idea of 'education' and 'formation', including notions of 'model', 'frame' and 'image' (implicit in the German words *Bild* and *Abbild*), and also embracing the ideas of 'shaping', 'forming', 'fashioning', 'framing', 'outlining', and 'imitating' (Kluge 110).
- 4 As Peter Brooks has pointed out, "[w]hereas the model of the *Bildungsroman* seems to imply progress, a leading forth and developmental change, Pip's story – and this may be true of other nineteenth-century plots as well – becomes more and more, as it nears its end, the working through of past history, an attempted return to the origin as the motivation of all the rest, the clue to what must else appear, as Pip puts it to Miss Havisham, a 'blind and thankless' life" (134).
- 5 Carey's attempt to "claim *Great Expectations* as an Australian narrative" has been read as a way of "inverting, if not dissolving the notion of original text and sequel that is central to the writing-back paradigm" (Schmidt-Haberkamp 258).
- 6 I have elsewhere explored the 'fragmentary' quality of Dickens's narrative universe with a focus on the epistemological implications of a labyrinthine city in which the boundaries between truth and falsehood, reality and illusion

- become increasingly blurred. See Squeo 2003 and 2004 mentioned in the bibliography.
- 7 The metaphor of cartography is extensively explored in the novel. For the far-reaching implications of cartographic representation in imperial policy, see Simon Ryan's study quoted in the bibliography.
 - 8 Strictly speaking, as the two scholars point out, "*Mister Pip* is neither a Victorian nor neo-Victorian text but lies in a different sphere as both critique and appropriation" (26).
 - 9 *Mister Pip* has been read as a "clarifying attack on the neo-imperialist corruption of governments and transnational capital" (Lawn 150) involved in the little known Pacific war of the early 1990s.
 - 10 Whilst describing the progress of a young man from the country to the city and his ascent in social hierarchy in terms of 'education in the ways of the world', the novel undermines Victorian values and reshapes the Bildungsroman paradigm: it criticizes "the fastidious, ostentation and complacent nature of bourgeois respectability" (Brown 139) that produces the protagonist's alienation from himself and meaningfully implies a 'return to the origin' and a "gradual retrieval of the past" (Brooks 129). Recent revisionist readings of *Great Expectations* have seen it as a picture of "the crisis of self-fashioning" and of the Bildungsroman genre at large, testifying to the 'failure' of "European modernity" (Stević 2020).
 - 11 The original ending, written in June 1861, is included in the *Appendix* of the Penguin edition quoted in the bibliography.



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