THE PROBLEM OF THE PAST: THE TREATMENT OF HISTORY IN THE NOVELS OF PETER CAREY AND DAVID MALOUF.

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ABSTRACT

The intention of this thesis is to examine the novels of Peter Carey and David Malouf and analyse their treatment of history as a theme. I seek to locate their novels in the critical context which encouraged their problematisation of history and explore the political and philosophical influences which led to this problematisation. I argue that scepticism about realism as a literary form was extended to historical narrative in Carey's case and that Malouf's scepticism springs from his more radical doubts about the capacity of language to adequately represent the world.

The treatment of history in the work of these novelists is analysed as a process which varies according to specific novels and which becomes a less important emphasis as strategies for casting doubt on history's truth claims become conventional in themselves.