JACK MAGGS: THE USE OF HYPNOTISM AT THE DUSK OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

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ABSTRACT

Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1997) shows the fascination of Victorian Britain for the occult and its link with the anxiety that existed about the survival of the British Empire. The lack of new territories to conquer in this world made the Victorians focus on the otherworld. This is illustrated through the character of Jack, who is hypnotised so that his mind can be explored. Hypnotism is also used to criticise the power that Britain exercised over its colonies, in this case Australia, thus exposing Britain's fear of rebellion: the colonised might take the role of the coloniser, as Jack threatens to do in the novel.

KEY WORDS: The British Empire, Australia, colonial anxieties, the return of the repressed, occult sciences, hypnotism.

RESUMEN

La novela de Peter Carey *Jack Maggs* (1997) muestra la fascinación de la Gran Bretaña victoriana por lo oculto y su relación con la anxiedad que existía sobre la supervivencia del imperio británico. La falta de nuevos territorios por conquistar en este mundo hizo que los victorianos se centraran en el más allá. Esto se ilustra a través del personaje de Jack, a quien se le hipnotiza para poder explorar su mente. El hipnotismo se usa también para criticar el poder que Gran Bretaña ejercía sobre sus colonias, en este caso Australia, exponiendo de este modo el miedo de Gran Bretaña a una rebelión: los colonizados podrían hacerse con el papel del colonizador, tal como Jack amenaza con hacer en la novela.

PALABRAS CLAVE: imperio británico, Australia, ansiedades coloniales, el retorno de lo reprimido, ciencias ocultas, hipnotismo.

INTRODUCTION

Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1997) is a version of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861), but from a different view. It relates what might have been the story of Magwitch, the ex-convict in Dickens's novel. It is about a thief transported to Australia and the troubles he finds when he returns to Britain. Although he is given a conditional pardon, and is thus able to make a fortune in Australia, he decides to break it and leave the country. He wishes to meet Henry, the little boy

who fed him years ago when he was just about to be transported and in whom he has invested a lot of money to turn him into a gentleman. When Jack is rejected by British society, and by Henry himself, his dreams of an ideal Britain begin to crumble. This essay intends to study the importance of hypnotism—also referred to as mesmerism—in the novel, and to explain why this practice, along with other pseudosciences, became a hype in Victorian Britain. To begin with, I will study how this fascination for the occult is portrayed in the book and relate it to the gradual sense of decadence that marked the end of the British Empire. I will also stress how the protagonist's return contributes to this feeling of loss. Afterwards, I will examine the topic of hypnotism, giving a brief historical account of this practice and analysing the author's reasons for choosing it as a vital element of the story.

ANXIETY AND FEAR AT THE END OF THE EMPIRE

Victorian Britain feared that the Empire was coming to an end. As Patrick Brantlinger contends, there were no more territories to conquer, which meant fewer opportunities for "heroism and adventure" (Renk 62). In addition, Britain was afraid of becoming "infected" by the barbaric. After being in contact with the uncivilised for so long, British people feared that they might regress to a primitive stage and dissolve into barbarism (in Renk 62). In the novel, this fear is shown in the anxiety that Jack triggers in England. As an ex-convict coming from Australia, he can be regarded as the colonial presence in the mother land and his return as an invasion. Significantly enough, he is constantly seen as an intruder (40, 46, 47) and almost all characters are afraid of him (4, 19, 185). Jack's past in an Australian prison is also crucial to understand the disturbance caused by his return.

Australia, as was the case with all the colonies in general, represented Britain's repressed unconscious, that is, everything that was considered inferior, dangerous, immoral and sinful. The settlement of penal colonies gives even more strength to this argument. The purpose of deportation was to eradicate the source of moral corruption that criminals represented and ship it so far away that it could not contaminate the rest of the British (Hughes 168). In other words, Australia became "the geographical unconscious" where the hideous refuse of Britain were sent. Consequently, Jack is socially condemned, rejected and feared. He is often perceived as a ghost (46), a beast (93), a murderer (19), a rascal (69), rubbish (84) or trouble (7). This explains his loneliness. He confesses to Henry in a letter: "It is a most melancholy business to be solitary in the place in which I did invest such High Hopes" (82). Jack hides because he can be arrested for breaking deportation rules. His prohibition to return clearly accounts for the negative perception of Australian convicts. Dickens captured this in his works. As Robert Hughes asserts:

> Dickens knotted together several strands in the English perception of convicts in Australia at the end of transportation. They could succeed, but they could hardly, in the real sense, return. They could expiate their crimes in a technical, legal sense,

> but what they suffered there warped them into permanent outsiders. And yet they were capable of redemption—as long as they stayed in Australia. (386)

Quoting Hughes's words, Edward Said ellaborates on this subject, adding that Magwitch's prohibition to return is "not only penal but imperial" (xvi). On these grounds, Jack symbolises the return of the repressed and his presence generates a feeling of uncanniness.

The concept of the uncanny was developed by Sigmund Freud who uses the word uncanny—"unheimlich"—to signify things that frighten. The uncanny occurs when something familiar—"Heimlich"—becomes unfamiliar—"unheimlich"—(Freud 341). Jack is made unfamiliar by being expelled to Britain's unconscious other: Australia. Transportation was a kind of social death and those transported were "mourned" as if they had died. Britain had got rid of them as if they "had been hanged" (Brittan 42). Therefore, Jack's return turns into an even more uncanny fact because it is as if he had risen from the dead. According to Freud, all those issues related to death bring about uncanny sensations in the highest degree (364). Our attitude towards death has changed very little since our primeval stage. The main reasons are the huge power of such an old emotional reaction and the scientific gap that still exists in our knowledge about death. We do not officially believe in ghosts and the return of the dead. Like any other primitive belief, these original anxieties have been repressed by the civilised world, but they remain at the back of our minds: "the primitive fear of the dead is still so strong within us and always ready to come to the surface on any provocation. Most likely our fear still implies the old belief that the dead man becomes the enemy of his survivor and seeks to carry him off to share his new life with him" (Freud 365). Moreover, the return of the dead is connected with animism. Jentsch asserts that: "a particularly favourable condition for awakening uncanny feelings is created when there is intellectual uncertainty whether an object is alive or not, and when an inanimate object becomes too much like an animate one" (Freud 354). Hence, ghosts involve a double feeling of uncanniness. Ghosts are dead people, so they should be inanimate, but they might unnaturally become animate.

It is important to note that Jack is not dead. He has been constructed as a ghost by British society. The novel points to this fact, winning the reader's sympathy for the ex-convict. Dani Cavallaro argues that empathy is normally felt towards human beings who are victims of "spectralisation by inhumane cultural formations" (82). Although Jack is sometimes violent, he is not seen as evil. Readers imagine themselves in Jack's position and share with him such emotions as fear of solitude, exclusion or death in life. In an interview, Carey admits that this is also what he intends in his revision of Dickens's portrayal of the figure of the convict:

> contemplating the figure of Magwitch, [...] I suddenly thought THIS MAN IS MY ANCESTOR. And then: this is UNFAIR! Dickens's Magwitch is foul and dark, frightening, murderous. 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 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 tender sympathy that Dickens's first person narrative provides his English hero Pip. (Original emphasis) (Carey, "Interview").

Although Jack suffers pain and torture in an Australian prison, later on Australia offers him freedom and a new life when he is given land to start from scratch, a chance he never had in his native country. Blinded by his traumatic experiences and led by the belief in a wonderful Britain he has invented to survive, Jack refuses to see this positive side of Australia. Accordingly, he comes back to Britain, not only to unsettle like a ghost, but also to cure his past injuries. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud contends that there is a tendency to repeat earlier traumatic experiences in an effort to come to terms with them. This process can be understood as a desire to redo, to face up to one's aggressor—in this case British society—and accept the past in order to live the present in peace (Butler 264).

The British fear of an invasion by the colonies is reflected in the novel through several events, such as Jack's intrusion into Percy Buckle's house. While Jack is looking for Henry, he passes himself off as a footman and starts working for Buckle. The description of the street where the house is, ironically named Great Queen Street, points to Britain's decadence: "All that remained of the Golden Age were some pilasters and other ornaments still clinging to the façades of a few houses on the west" (9). Buckle's failure to be a proper master gives more evidence of this decline:

> Miss Mott must cook dinner for seven gentlemen. When Mr Quentin had been master, this would have seemed a trifle. Then it had been ten courses every night ... But Mr Buckle ... had not been conscious of his social obligations. He was a bachelor of an oddly private disposition, and often wanted no more than a little cheese and pickle for his tea. He hid upstairs in his snuggery with his book, his glass of porter, his round of Cheshire, and whether the housekeeper was housekeeping or the butler awake, he did not seem inclined to either notice or inquire. (17)

Buckle is a new rich, an ex-grocer who comes into an unexpected inheritance. The novel makes clear from the very beginning that he is not a real gentleman: "Mr Percy Buckle was the owner of a gentleman's residence ..., but he was no more a gentleman than the man [Jack] who was presently entering his household in disguise" (12). His inability to buy proper silver as a true gentleman would do also corroborates this impression: "the silver on the breakfast table accurately fulfilled his [Jack's] prediction of the night before. That is, it was not worth the trouble stealing. Of this low quality, however, Percy Buckle seemed to remain as ignorant as ever" (132-133).

It might be argued that the fall in the number of "authentic" gentlemen who epitomise the old values that alone would enable the Empire to preserve and prolong its existence, parallels, and partly explains, the fall of the Empire and allows the invasion of the mother country by the colonies. In this light, Buckle's house can be said to stand for Britain, which falls into the hands of Jack, an invader from the colonies. When Jack enters the house, he gradually takes over. Buckle, who has never managed to master his own house nor his servants, feels in danger, especially when his house suffers physical damage due to Jack's deeds: "the fresh injury which Jack Maggs's departure had caused to his front door was more disturbing to the

owner than even he ... might have anticipated" (189). Subject to social prejudices, Buckle is afraid of Jack and cannot sleep peacefully any more:

> 'Lord,' cried Mercy, 'do you fancy he roams the house all night plotting ways to murder us? ... Ever so slowly, Percy Buckle opened his bedroom door, and stood silently in the dark, trying to make out the noises of the house ... Now, with his heart beating so hard he could barely hear another thing, he descended the stairs in the night with his sword drawn'. (124-125)

That is why he unsuccessfully tries to murder him using Henry: "Buckle ... was now pushing at his back [Henry's] with the point of his umbrella ... It was Mr Buckle who flung the door open to the living room ... 'Fire!'—and pushed him forward into the room" (352-353).

The fact that Buckle is actually christened Percival, a name that says it all about the character, cannot be overlooked. He often shares the innocence and foolishness of Percival, one of King Arthur's knights (Barber 89). The name Percival also connects him with both King Arthur—one of the strongest emblems of British national imaginary—and the figure of the knight. By the end of the eighteenth century, medieval chilvary was revived in Britain as a result of an increasing interest in the Middle Ages. This revival led to the chilvarous gentleman of Victorian and Edwardian days along with certain ideals of behaviour. A real gentleman was:

> brave, straightforward and honourable, loyal to his monarch, country and friends, unfailingly true to his word, ready to take issue with anyone he saw ill-treating a woman, a child or an animal. He was a natural leader of men ... fearless ..., and excelled at all manly sports... He put the needs of others before his own ... He was always ready to ... come to help of others, especially those less fortunate. (Girouard 260)

Rather than property, the basic requirement to become a gentleman was moral qualities, acquired by proper training. The purpose of the chilvary revival was to form a social class with the appropriate moral values to rule the country (Girouard 260-261). For this reason, Buckle's portrayal as a failing gentleman is not only individual, but it encompasses the whole of Britain as well. Buckle also meaningfully shares his name with another Percival: Arthur Ernest Percival (1887-1966). As an officer whose surrender to the invading Japanese Army undermined British prestige as an imperial power in the Far East, his capitulation is remembered as one of the most humiliating in British military history (Stearn). Given that Buckle might be read in the light of the decline of the Empire, his connection with this historical figure involved in the depletion of British colonial power reinforces this idea.

HYPNOTISM IN *JACK MAGGS*

Pseudoscience became a fashion in Victorian times. As far as questions concerning humans and their place in the universe were concerned, science started offering answers different from the ones provided by religion. Because the division

between science and magic was not clear at all, pseudoscience was considered a more reliable method to look for meaning. Anthropologist Andrew Lang connects the end of the Empire with decadence and the Victorian interest in the occult. Since the British had already charted and taken possession of everything they could on earth, the only world left for them to explore was the otherworld (Renk 61).

The father of mesmerism was Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815). His ideas were based on Isaac Newton's work *Principia* (1687), where he described a "subtle spirit or fluid that permeated solid bodies binding them together, lying at the root of electricity and heat and facilitating all biological processes" (in Plummer 16). Mesmer thought that if that fluid was not distributed properly, it could cause mental or physical illness. Some people could influence that fluid through what he called animal magnetism. This technique consisted in making patients fall fast asleep by passing magnetic rods over their bodies or by touch. During sleep, the fluid would get balanced again and the illness would disappear. Mesmer's theories were treated with scepticism and were often regarded as dangerous due to their secular nature.

Dr John Elliotson (1719-1868) was the major practitioner of mesmerism in Britain. He demonstrated, lectured and promoted mesmerism for its use in surgery—since no anaesthetics existed so far—and in the treatment of nervous disorders, for which he had to face the opposition of most doctors and scientists who condemned mesmeric practices because they lacked demonstrable scientific foundations (Oppenheim 213). Eventually, mesmerism attracted the attention of medicine, a change that derived especially from the work of James Braid (1795-1860), who intended to give it a more scientific approach and employed eye fixation and verbal suggestion to tire the patients' brain and send them to a "nervous sleep" (Plummer 17-18). He called this method hypnotism to distinguish it from animal magnetism, which he regarded as ridiculous. In contrast with mesmeric practitioners, he was convinced that the hypnotic power did not reside in the hypnotist, but in the patient (Oppenheim 214-215), a conclusion that seems to coincide with contemporary understanding of hypnotism (Lynn, Kirsch and Rhue 5). Despite the overall unreliability surrounding mesmerism, it was often practised, both as a scientific technique and as popular entertainment. Mesmerism arrived in Britain when there was no general agreement yet as to what science really was, when "the line between quack and professor of medicine was very thin indeed. Experiments took the form of private or public demonstrations" (Vaugham 1743). Although the development of chemical anaesthetic was fundamental in the decline of mesmerism as a scientific practice, it continued to exist as social entertainment (Kihlstrom).

Dickens was among those Victorians interested in the art of mesmerism. He was taught by Dr Elliotson, a close friend of his, and often mesmerised his family and friends for fun (Plummer 17). In *Jack Maggs* Carey reproduces Dickens's experiments with mesmerism through Tobias Oates, who is also a writer and shares other characteristics with the Victorian author. To name just a few: both lived through poverty and misery when they were children, their fathers went to prison because they could not pay their debts—which explains why Tobias, and Dickens in his books, worry so much about money and sympathise with children's suffering—,

both worked for a newspaper called "The Chronicle" and Tobias has an affair with his sister-in-law, and so did Dickens ("Interview"). Tobias persuades Jack to be hypnotised, claiming that he can cure his facial tic douloureux by getting rid of the phantom which is causing it (52-53). It is known that Dickens actually treated a woman, Madame Emile de la Rue, who suffered from facial spasms. In those sessions, the woman said that a phantom pursued her (Renk 70-71).

Tobias symbolises the hypnotic influence of Britain over its colonies. He is an English writer who, by means of hypnotism, wants to use Jack with a view to studying the criminal mind and writing the book that will make him famous. He is presented as a wizard or obsessive scientist. Faye Ringel explains that in gothic literature wizards are "scholarly, amoral, power-hungry—Promethean" and their goals are often to reach eternal life and discover the utmost secrets of nature. "Post-medieval wizards" include "mad scientific experimenters ... conjurers, jugglers, hypnotists and ventriloquists" (256-257). Tobias is obsessed with the criminal mind and his study is like the spooky laboratory of a mad scientist:

> Tobias was in the habit of purchasing what he called "Evidence" ... he had recently paid a very hefty sum for the hand of a thief ... This hand floated in a ... jar of formaldehyde... He had many such secrets hidden in his study. There, in that cubby hole labelled "M", were the notes he had made on his visit to the Morgue in Paris. There, on that very high shelf up against the ceiling, was a parcel wrapped in tissue paper and tied with black ribbon—the death mask of John Sheppard, hanged at Tyburn in 1724. There was much of the scientist about Tobias Oates. The study, with its circular window and its neat varnished systems of shelves and pigeon holes, was ordered as methodically as a laboratory. (49)

The exploration of the criminal mind lies behind his desire to mesmerise Jack. He regards Jack as both "a butterfly he has to pin down on his board" (48) and a piece of land waiting to be charted. He wants to draw the map of the criminal mind as if he were a colonial explorer, eager to conquer another world. In this way, Tobias embodies the Victorian interest in the occult fostered by the feeling of imperial decline. This is how he describes Jack to Buckle: "What you have brought me here is a world as rich as London itself. What a puzzle of life exists in the dark little lane-ways of this wretch's soul, what stolen gold lies hidden in the vaults beneath his filthy streets... It's the Criminal Mind ... awaiting its first cartographer" (99). Moreover, he uses Jack to travel and explore the exotic land he comes from. An example can be found when he induces Jack to imagine and describe the birds he considers typically Australian: "'What is the river like? ... Can you see birds?' 'Oh yes, Sir, hatfuls of birds.' 'Pelicans, no doubt.' 'Pelicans, Sir. Oh yes... 'Tell me about the birds. Are there parrots?'" (93-94).

Hypnotism thus functions as a metaphor for colonialism in *Jack Maggs*. Tobias's control over Jack parallels that of Britain over its colonies. Not in vain does the hypnotist very often exert powerful control over the mind of the consenting hypnotised. A significant point is made by Elizabeth Ho when she states that hypnosis is about passive imitation: "a radical emptying of the self to be filled with the attributes, even thoughts, of the dominant party" (127). After having studied the

work of early psychologists, Ruth Leys confirms and expands this statement, concluding that hypnotic suggestibility, that is, the complete identification between the hypnotised and the hypnotist, is not seen as suggestibility, but as the hypnotised's own desire (in Ho 127). Hence, Jack's submission to Tobias's mesmerism could be understood as his desire to be "infected" by an English mind so that he can be fully English again. As far as its uncanny effect is concerned, this total identification can be linked to Bhabha's concept of colonial mimicry. Through imitation, the colonised produces a partial representation of the coloniser—"almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 318)—giving the coloniser a distorted image of themselves. That is to say, the familiar becomes unfamiliar. Besides, this uncanny transformation of the familiar "subverts the identity of that which is being represented, and the relation of power, if not altogether reversed, certainly begins to vacillate" (Young 147). It is necessary to note that although hypnotism implies imitation and thus it serves to relate it to colonial mimicry, as Elizabeth Ho points out, the subversive potential of the latter is lost as hypnotism is about passive imitation (127).

Jack's longing for Englishness is obviously the result of deportation and the identity conflicts that derive from this displacement. His identity lies in uncertain ground, half-way between Britain and Australia. For most part of the novel, he believes himself to be an Englishman. He has not formed a stable identity in Australia: "'I am not of that race... The Australian race.'" (340). Alan Lawson asks the question "Who am I when I am transported?" and asserts that this problem was common to those transported, since the new environment "did little to foster any sense of continuity, where the sense of distance, both within and without, was so great that a new definition of self—metaphysical, historical, cultural, linguistic and social—was needed" (169). Jack is obsessed with going back to Britain because, apart from being his birthplace, he suffers terribly as a convict in Australia, an ordeal he manages to endure by idealising England: "the wretched man would begin to build London in his mind. He would build it brick by brick as the horrid double-cat smote the air, eddying forth like a storm from Hell itself. Underneath the scalding sun, which burned his flesh as soon as it was mangled, Jack Maggs would imagine the long mellow light of English summer" (350). This can be linked to what A.A. Phillips called "the cultural cringe", the tendency of Australians to regard all things Australian as inferior to "the accomplishments of larger English-language cultures such as Britain" (Nile 9).

The novel, however, emphasises that Jack does not belong to England. For instance, at the beginning, he is told that he is at the wrong address when he is mistaken for Buckle's new footman (10). Similarly, he feels uncomfortable and constrained wearing the old footman's clothes, the clothes of a dead man, like Jack's actual relationship with England: "he was half-cripped by his dead man's shoes... They squeezed his toes in their vice. They cut his heel with their hooks" (43). That is why he chooses to wear his own Australian clothes, consisting of "comfortable Hessians ... made by an old hunch-backed cobbler in Paramatta" (120). In England he has been confined since early childhood. He was adopted by Ma Britten—a transliteration of Mother Britain—and forced to a criminal life. His stepmother only allowed him to go out to burgle. Jack's blindness about his true relationship

with England leads him to despise his two Australian sons. When he is given a conditional pardon and makes a fortune as a bricklayer, he only thinks about investing his money in Henry. Jack returns to England just for him, at the risk of being arrested or even executed for breaking the conditions of his deportation. He desires to turn this boy into an English gentleman, the same kind of gentleman he has always longed to be. As J.O. Jordan suggests: "Rejected by England, he compensates by creating an English gentleman whose love and gratitude he hopes will heal that earlier wound" (298). Jack's idealisation of England and his obsession with his adopted English son is a kind of mental imprisonment. He is not free until he wakes up from his fantasies by confronting England face to face:

> It is significant that Jack is constantly constrained by fear and the threat of betrayal in England, whereas he is free, socially acceptable and prosperous in Australia. His return to the social order which made him a criminal, which he has romanticised from afar, enables him to recognise the freedom offered by the social order of his former prison, which has itself begun to metamorphose from a penal colony into a site of liberation. (Hassal 134)

Jack's awakening starts when he discovers his hypnotist's true intentions. During the mesmeric sessions, his mind is filled with Tobias's. The ex-convict becomes this man's "alter ego, ... the projection of repressed desires, of the destabilising effects of the unconscious", and in a wider sense, Jack "emerges as the hidden subject of English culture, the discontent at the heart of civilisation" (Woodcock 135). He turns into Tobias's uncanny double, defined by Freud as an "urge towards defence which has caused the ego to project that material outward as something foreign to itself" (358). Since Tobias casts his own demons onto Jack, the Phantom that is supposed to cause Jack's spasms is actually Tobias's. He is unaware that the Phantom is his own construction:

> He feared he had done something against the natural order, had unleashed demons he had no understanding of, disturbed some dark and dreadful nest of vermin... Tobias reflected on how he was to lay this Phantom to rest for ever. He had by now long forgotten, if he ever knew, that this wraith was his own invention, a personification of pain that he had planted in the other's mind. (220-221)

Notice the connection between Jack's social perception as a ghost in Britain and the fact that mesmerism makes living individuals appear inanimate or dead. As Alison Winter argues: "the human and the mechanical ... [are] not the same, but disturbingly interchangeable" and therefore, the distinction between the animate and the inanimate is blurred. It is like "death in life", capable of redrawing the line between them (117).

Jack realises that the Phantom has been introduced into his mind by "Magical Arts", and so he informs Henry in one of his letters (259). Later on, he openly accuses Tobias: "'But you have never seen this Phantom yourself, Toby?' 'Of course not. He lives within you.' 'Then here's a strange thing. I never heard of this Phantom until I met you. I never saw him, asleep or waking ... What would you say if I

said you planted him inside me?' 'How could I do such a thing?' 'I'm damned if I know. But he was not there before.'" (289). Jack discovers that Tobias is using hypnotism to steal his secrets and write a book, so he rebels and the hypnotist's power begins to fade away. This moment marks the beginning of Jack's reappropriation of himself. Roles swap and Jack takes the lead: he takes Tobias as a prisoner (290), persuades him to give abortive pills to his lover (329) and forces him to burn his manuscript (331). "[I]t was the Criminal Mind which now controlled Tobias" (330). Jack's awakening from his hypnotic state symbolises his process of recovery from a traumatic past, accepting himself and his Australianness. His experience as a convict prevented him from seeing the truth. Ironically, Australia, the remote land where he was imprisoned, offers him the chance for freedom, happiness and prosperity that Britain constantly denies him.

CONCLUSION

Jack Maggs criticises the colonial relationship between Britain and Australia in the Victorian period, which came to embody Britain's unconscious other as the establishment of penitentiaries illustrates. Australia was the place onto which Britain excluded its dark self. At that time, there was also anxiety about the corruption and decay of the Empire due to its long contact with inferior lands and the scarcity of new territories to conquer. This is clearly displayed in the panic that Jack's arrival produces in Britain. He stands for the return of the repressed and the possibility of invasion by the colonies. The novel also shows how Victorian Britain became fascinated with the occult, materialised in the popular practice of pseudosciences, such as mesmerism. This increasing interest in the esoteric was linked to the sense of decadence that permeated the imperial enterprise. The lack of new lands to colonise in this world turned the otherworld into an attractive target. Tobias is the character who best represents this paralellism between colonialism and occult sciences. He is a cross between a writer and a scientist, and employs hypnotism to explore and possess the secrets of Jack's mind. Hypnotism is used in *Jack Maggs* as a metaphor for the destructive control that Britain exerts over Jack. This control is so powerful that pushes him to idealise his native country, rejecting everything that relates him to Australia. Fortunately, Jack's return to Britain proves to be therapeutic. It has the effect of putting his feet back on the ground. When he wakes up, he is able to recognise his Australian self and new homeland.

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