Turpin: the notorious – practice as research PhD in creative writing

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TURPIN: THE NOTORIOUS –

PRACTICE AS RESEARCH PHD IN CREATIVE WRITING

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Contents

Abstract

The life of the 18th-century criminal Richard Turpin has been re-imagined for nearly 300 years across a variety of genres and media: criminal histories, ballads, fiction, comic books, theatre, television and film. The thesis for this practice as research project draws from ideas in adaptation studies, biography and history, specific to the context of adapting the life of a real human being, to support the accompanying creative artefact, a four-part television mini-series script.

The thesis examines the ways in which an intertextuality between sources creates a palimpsest of stories, with multiple claims to an emotional or factual 'truth'. This palimpsest, which forms a narrative framework for a new retelling of the Turpin mythology, is underpinned by storytelling positionalities such as realism, naturalism and melodrama, and the thesis interrogates the processes through which fidelity to factual source material, or other sources, shapes the structural and emotional evolution of any adaptation of history. The nature of 'truth' as a shifting, elusive abstraction is also explored in relation to mythmaking in cultural apprehensions of the nature of the outlaw and the antihero.

Resulting from these inquiries is a new model for creative writing based on a historical subject, the 'hierarchy of hypotexts'. The fluidity and adaptability of this model is tested and articulated, alongside the ontological and epistemological positions which lie at its foundation. An exegetical discussion of the creative inspirations and decision-making processes that informed the construction of this model, and its implementation in the development of the artefact, serves as a discursive representation of the creative loop inherent in the formation of a practice as research project of this kind.

Introduction

This thesis accompanies the four-part television script artefact _Turpin: The Notorious_ as the submitted research outputs for a practice as research PhD in Creative Writing (Screenwriting) in the London School of Film, Media and Design at the University of West London. The research subject is the 18th-century English criminal Richard ('Dick') Turpin, who was born in Essex in September 1705 and hanged in York for horse theft in April 1739. The script artefact is divided into four episodes: _Turpin the Butcher_, _Turpin the Rogue, Turpin the Highwayman_, and _Turpin the Thief_, and is an adaptation of Turpin's life from childhood to execution. The practice involved in writing the script drew heavily on the research findings and methods detailed in the thesis below.

The research sought to answer the following questions:

1) How can an original television script re-fashion the narrative of the life and criminal career of Dick Turpin, using available historical evidence and creative speculation?

2) How can a new model for adapting history, the 'hierarchy of hypotexts', support this process of adaptation?

The Literature Review chapter begins with an overview of current thinking in the area of Adaptation Studies, and then a more specific exploration of the theories surrounding the adaptation of history, particularly in the context of fidelity to sources; this discussion also examines existing work on biographies and 'biopics'. The concepts of realism, naturalism and melodrama are reviewed, followed by an interrogation of research on criminal types such as the outlaw, the antihero and the 'gentleman highwayman'. The

literature review finally covers the range of Turpin sources that were used in the production of the script artefact.

The Methodology chapter delineates the ontological and epistemological positions taken by this researcher in the context of practice as research, or the researcher's preferred term, 'creative practice research'. The methodology then outlines how a new model of a 'hierarchy of hypotexts' was used to develop the script artefact, and how ideas around the sublime and the uncanny served as a backdrop to the process of adapting the life of a historical figure.

This chapter is followed by an Exegesis which articulates the challenges addressed during the production of the artefact, in a discussion of how the material apprehended in the literature review was utilised in the creative practice methodology, in tandem with the tacit knowledge revealed through the writing process.

An Appendix section with a supporting creative writing portfolio includes an exercise using 18th-century criminal slang, or 'cant'; a short story set in 21st-century Essex; a ballad poem written in the 18th-century mode; and a newspaper story written in the style of a 21st-century tabloid. A full Bibliography and list of other sources is also included at the end of this thesis.

Adapting History, and the History of Adaptation Studies

Some of the most beguiling denotations of 'history' are an instructive starting point in a discussion of the complexities of adaptation, and our understanding of the respective and overlapping roles of the historian and the storyteller. E.H. Carr defines history as "a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past" (Carr, 2018: 75). Rather less prosaically, to Voltaire it was "nothing but a pack of tricks we play on the dead" (Voltaire, 1958 [1757]: 47). To Hayden White, it became "increasingly the refuge of all of those 'sane' men who excel at finding the simple in the complex and the familiar in the strange… only history mediates between what is and what men think ought to be with truly humanizing effect" (White, 1966: 134). Jean Baudrillard suggests that our experience of history was actually once inseparably intertwined with myth; that the loss of our cognizance of this relationship has given rise to the 'simulacrum', the representation of a reality that never existed. "It is this fabulous character, the mythical energy of an event or of a narrative, that today seems to be increasingly lost," he writes. "The obsession with historical fidelity, with a perfect rendering… this negative and implacable fidelity to the materiality of the past, to a particular scene of the past or of the present, to the restitution of an absolute simulacrum of the past or the present, which was substituted for all other value - we are all complicitous in this" (Baudrillard, 1994: 47).

All these observations tangentially allude to an amorphous, sometimes uncomfortable, often exhilarating conversation between the 'adaptor' and the 'adapted' of a chosen history.

Adaptation studies has tended to focus for the most part on adaptations of novels into films or television series, but there is now a greater and growing scope for examinations of less readily-defined loci at the periphery. "While fictional texts and their feature film adaptations remain at the subject's core," contend Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan, "the study of adaptations has broadened to embrace 'literature' and the 'screen' in the broadest senses of each word" (Cartmell & Whelehan, 2014: 1).

In general terms, Thomas Leitch charts the evolution of adaptation scholarship as follows: Adaptation Studies 0.0, a 'prehistoric' period of "generalizations about literature and film" that ends in 1957 with the publication of George Bluestone's *Novels to Film*; Adaptation Studies 1.0, in which Bluestone's case studies form the beginning of the recognition of 'general principles' of adaptation (medium specificity / fidelity); Adaptation Studies 2.0, marked by Cartmell and Whelehan's insistence that intertextuality (defined by Barthes as "the condition of any text whatsoever… a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located" (Barthes, 1981: 39)) was now central to the discipline, and the subsequent expansion of adaptation studies to include other media such as the comic book; and Adaptation Studies 3.0, the realm of digital read/write modalities or 'remix literacy', whereby the audience become participants in the re-creation of culture (in other words, 'user-generated content') (Leitch, 2017). Sarah Cardwell provides a further sub-distinction – that intertextuality and adaptation are not interchangeable labels. "Intertextuality is a necessary but not sufficient condition for adaptation," she writes. "An adaptation is necessarily intertextual, but… intertextuality is the larger category which includes the smaller subset, or special case, of adaptation." Cardwell is adamant that "adaptation

and intertextuality are ontologically distinct" (Cardwell, 2018: 13). She separates the "state of being" of intertextuality from the "process/product" of adaptation. The creator of a television adaptation, for example, "undertakes adaptation-as-process to form an adaptation-as-product, one inevitable quality of which is intertextuality" (Ibid.,12). She argues that the quality of this intertextuality may be intended or unintended. Thus, if the writer of the adaptation is exploring Barthes' 'field of anonymous formulae', it could also be argued they are likely to be drawing on the intertextuality inherent in a deep cultural instinct – their 'tacit knowledge' – in addition to that of the 'intended' products of specific research. Importantly, Cardwell also recognises the ways in which adaptation (and by implication the 'adaptor') makes use of content from a range of media other than that of the final form of the adaptation itself, and so can be regarded as "the purposeful 're-fitting' of material from one artistic context to another" (Ibid., 13) through intermediality.

Timothy Corrigan identifies the three totemic motifs of adaptation studies as *evolution* (with Darwinian theory as analogy), *fidelity* (the extent to which an adaptation is 'faithful' to a source text, whether that be a novel, film, biography, autobiography, historical document or image), and *intertextuality* the (interrelationship between texts) (Corrigan, 2017). It should be noted here that this researcher's work on adapting the life of Dick Turpin relies upon a generous definition of the term 'source text' that includes a variety of different media. "Understood in the context of the confluence of adaptation and history," Jeremy Strong argues, ideas about intertextuality "should incline us to consider a broader range of texts and artefacts as 'sources'… that other texts may engage and draw upon to invoke and represent history" (Strong, 2019: 174). Corrigan places an emphasis on mythological and theological narratives as early

adaptations, a tradition which "continues into modern times as canonized narratives", i.e. the recurring story templates of Greek and Roman legends such as *The Odyssey* and *The Aeneid* (Corrigan, 2017: 25), and teases out further rhetorical differentiations within this evolution such as "adaptation as quotation, as allusion, as embedding, as appropriation, and as palimpsest". He describes an adaptive ecosystem that we now view from a postmodern perspective, where "history itself becomes characterized as a malleable field" (Ibid., 26), an ecosystem evolving so rapidly that "there cannot be any single or stable definition of adaptation" (Ibid., 34).

One of the sub-topics of this discipline is adaptations of the 'malleable field' of historical events, and the inherently problematic nature of projects 'based on a true story'. The protagonists in successful adaptations of this kind are described by Thomas Leitch as ideally being "agents in history who are not agents *of* history" (italics mine) (Leitch, 2007: 301). Leitch's distinction signals the need for an awareness of the contestations in this area, and the volatility of the related lexis: history-on-film, for example, is also both a branch of film, TV and media studies *and* a branch of history. In addition, he seeks to remind us that these 'histories' themselves necessarily become articulated as story, because "they are all governed by the conventions of coherence that by definition impose narrative form on inchoate data that cannot speak for itself" (Leitch, 2020: 69). He cites Rosenstone's idea that

we come to understand the past in stories we tell about it, stories based on the sort of data we call fact, but stories which include other elements that… arise from the process of story telling (sic) (Rosenstone, 2012:76).

Leitch points to an irreducible enigma in adaptations of history when he asks: "Is there any single genre, medium, or mode of presentation that has a privileged ability to tell the truth?" (Leitch, 2020: 78). At the time of writing, several recent historical adaptations in television and film have even referenced this ambivalence in their intertitles: "Nothing you're about to see is true" (*True History of the Kelly Gang*, 2019); "A fable from a true tragedy" (*Spencer*, 2021); and "All of this is true, most of it happened" (*The Good Lord Bird*, 2020).

So a particular difficulty in this sub-set of adaptation studies is the marshalling of the splintered terminology used, and sometimes shared, by adaptation scholars and historians. Corrigan, as we have seen, is adamant that adaptation defies definition; by contrast, Linda Hutcheon's definition is helpfully succinct: "repetition, but repetition without replication" (however, this does pose an ancillary question about what exactly constitutes 'replication' and what does not) (Hutcheon, 2006: 7). She recommends the utilization of "paraphrase and translation analogies" when examining what she calls "ontological shifts" in the "adapted text" of a real person's life (Ibid, 17). "Just as there is no such thing as a literal translation," she says, "there can be no literal adaptation", but she usefully extends the metaphor by tracing an evolution in the way concepts of translation are perceived, from the "axiomatic primacy" of the source text to a more recent approach that regards translation as something more akin to a "transaction between texts and between languages" which exists outside of those earlier hierarchies (Ibid., 16). Laurence Raw believes the primacy of a source text can be examined in cross sections of 'status', 'origin' and 'features' in the same way as any text in translation studies (Raw, 2017). He draws here on the work of translation studies scholar Dirk Delabastita, who describes these "three dimensions of discursive

reality" in the following way: 'status' is identified as what these "discursive phenomena are believed to be in a given cultural community"; 'origin' as "the real history of their genesis"; and 'features' as that which is "revealed by a synchronic analysis, possibly involving comparison" (Delabastita, 2008: 235).

Citing John Dryden, Hutcheon offers an elastic definition of 'paraphrase' as "translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view" (Hutcheon, 17). "In drawing attention to how adaptation's invocation of an anterior version overlaps with the terminology of history," writes Jeremy Strong, "Hutcheon provides a useful way to commence a consideration of adaptation and history as mutually-inflected" (Strong, 2019: 2). To Hutcheon, an adaptation of the events of an actual life is a paraphrase or translation of a single 'particular' reading of historical fact, a sentiment expanded by Thomas Leitch, who warns against interpreting any adaptation's claim to be 'based on a true story' as a compelling attestation of historical accuracy. "Movies," he says, "can no more be accurate records of the historical events they purport to represent than a film adaptation can be an accurate record of any particular source text" (Leitch, 2007: 282).

This paradox automatically raises questions about the nature of the term 'history' itself in the context of adaptation studies. It challenges the writer of an historical adaptation to honestly evaluate the tension between a) the creative storytelling instinct and b) a nagging sense of responsibility (or even an empathetic impulse) to honour historical sources and their historicity – and even to carefully consider the relevance of the innumerable minutiae of those sources. If, as Leitch, Hutcheon et al suggest, historical fact should be given no lesser or greater prominence than other texts, is it possible – or even desirable – to create an adaptation that attempts to build its narrative around

historical documents, when those documents themselves might be regarded as adaptations of a fluctuating 'truth'? The idea of the importance of 'fidelity' to any particular source has long been debated by adaptation scholars, and rejected by influential critics such as Robert Stam, who, like Linda Hutcheon wishes to push this debate "'beyond fidelity' and into fields of 'intertextuality' and 'transtextuality', where the key terms are 'translation', 'transposition,' and 'transformation'" (Leitch, 2017: 31). However, David T. Johnson challenges the broad assumption that the criterion of fidelity only maintains its relevance because of journalistic reviews of adaptations, arguing that "journalists do not regularly practice fidelity evaluation, nor can they be held responsible for the field's inability to reject it fully" (Johnson, 2017: 94); this idea might also usefully trigger a re-examination of the current global preoccupation with 'fake news' in the context of the areas where reportage overlaps with cultural criticism. Johnson even invites readers to re-frame their thinking around fidelity studies from 'faith' to 'belief', citing Catherine Grant (in Geraghty, 2008) and what she sees as the responsibility of adaptations to elicit a recollection of the adapted work in the audience. For Johnson, what he calls 'fidelity studies' would then become 'belief studies' – an old discipline reinvigorated by a spirit of questioning rather than a search for certainty (Johnson, 2017).

Robert Rosenstone argues that historical facts are 'traces' which the author selects, and that the created content then becomes the 'facts' of the "historical work" itself. Film in particular insists that history is the story of individuals whose biographies are "exemplars of lives, actions and individual value systems we either admire or dislike" (Rosenstone, 2006: 90) and thus "the best [the screen] can do is to provide a construction of proximate realities to what once was" (Ibid.,160). To both Leitch and

Rosenstone, an adaptation of history should be regarded as "not a literal reality but a metaphoric one" (Ibid., 161), but note the important semantic bifurcation: Rosenstone, a historian, does not use the word 'adaptation' at all, but a cluster of phrases like "historical narrative or argument", with their etymology seemingly grounded in and aligned with the OED definition of 'history' as "the *study* (italics mine) of past events, particularly in human affairs". Hilary Mantel makes a similar distinction: "History is not the past – it is the method we have evolved of organizing our ignorance of the past," she says. "It's the record of what's left on the record" – and an adaptation of this historical fact into fiction is "a kind of wobbling to the fabric of reality" (Mantel, 2017, Reith Lecture 1). The nature and experience of this 'wobbling' will be unique to each different adaptor, reader or viewer, as Lydia Nicholson argues: "The wholly subjective nature of criteria for fidelity means that one individual's understanding of 'unfaithful' might be the inverse to another's" (Nicholson, 2020: 148).

Biography as Narrative

Ira Bruce Nadel's ideas about biography can help unravel the complicated evolution of a myth narrative such as Turpin's, which begins in the short biographies published soon after his death in 1739 and evolves over nearly three centuries up to Derek Barlow's *Dick Turpin and the Gregory Gang* (1973) (the central source text for the artefact created as part of this research) and James Sharpe's *Dick Turpin: The Myth of the English Highwayman* (2005). Nadel writes that "what we seek in biography [is] the knowledge that the resemblance between the subject… is equivalent to his empirical existence" (Nadel, 1984: 2). He argues that the narrative structure of biography "frames the subject and affects our vision", in a continual process of "correction and comparison" with other biographical sources (Ibid., 3) as we seek

something that may amount to this 'empirical existence' of a real human being. During this process, we must remain vigilant and aware of the biographer's 'signature', which is "as important to recognize as that of his subject. The former signs himself through literary means, the latter through the record of his life" (Ibid., 4). Barlow's structuring of the Turpin narrative, for example – which suggested to this researcher four discernibly different stages in Turpin's life – is thus a deliberately literary technique, and an element of Barlow's signature; a useful framing of a messy life into a coherent story.

Nadel cites Carlyle and Nietzsche's suspicion of empirical facts alone as being in any way reliable when attempting to fully comprehend a subject; such 'facts', Nadel suggests, are simply receptacles for the collated meaning in an "organic portrait" (Ibid., 7) . This "enactment of character and place through language" transforms the life of the subject into narrative via "emplotment", which "provides fact with fictive meaning while gratifying our desire to resolve our own sense of fragmentation… The fictive power of 'story' provides us with a coherent vision of life" (Ibid., 9). Total objectivity, then, is not only impossible, but artistically undesirable – the biographer seeks his own catharsis by accessing the 'fictive power' of another human being's story, and so the biographer's agenda should never be interpreted as an altruistic regurgitation of recorded fact, as far as those facts can even be regarded as reliable in the first place. Paraphrasing Leon Edel (1978), Nadel suggests that "*how* the biographer expresses the life becomes the real subject of the biography" (italics mine) (Nadel: 154) in a work of 'creative fact'. This 'how' creates a landscape of infinite choice, hence the existence of multiple versions of the Turpin story (or of any number of 'famous' lives): "different lives of the same person exist because there are alternate ways of ordering facts"

(Ibid., 156). And in each new iteration, "biography strives to demythologize the individual, but inevitably this becomes an ironic effort, since readers replace old myths with new" (Ibid., 178); as myths around the subject are repeatedly layered, "the biography continues his presence – in itself a mythic, phoenix-like activity re-creating and perpetuating the self" (Ibid., 181).

From Biography to Biopic

George F. Custen believes that "most viewers, at least in part, see history through the lens of the film biography" (Custen, 1992: 2). Historical figures were popular subjects in the nascent cinema of the end of the 19th century. Newspapers were now carrying photographs in half-tone, and their audience was eager to see on film what the famous or notorious may have looked like. To Custen, the Hollywood biopics of the early 20th century were "an enormous, engaging distortion, which after a time convinces us of its own kind of authenticity" (Ibid., 7). He finds that the majority of these biopics excavated short stories as their source text, and that "by relying on already mediated and abbreviated versions of a life… the biopic assures that a life will be fully explained, that is congruent with other narratives in a culture" (such as memoirs, plays etc.) (Ibid., 179). In other words, the motion picture was in some ways merely a convenient new frame within which to slide a pre-fitted narrative, what Custen calls a "stable and controlled trajectory that still left room for an individual personality and face" (Ibid., 182). Film's utilisation of three reliable tropes – the flashback, the montage and the trial scene – organized any difficult temporal and moral positioning in a source text. The trial scene, in particular, was particularly expedient, as "the imputation of causality itself is the object of everyone's attention" and because the inherently implied moral judgment "is a kind of metastructure of fame, with the famous standing outside

community standards" (Ibid., 186-187). In this way, the 'triumph of history' can be 'rendered individualistic'. If the protagonist is an antihero, Will Storr suggests, we may feel an even more powerful empathy, which has at its core the vicarious thrill of our being taught a lesson:

And left in no doubt about the costs of such selfish behaviour… This, perhaps, is the subversive truth of stories about antiheroes. Being free to be evil, if only in our minds, can be such a joyful relief (Storr, 2019: 168).

There were at least a dozen Turpin films made in the first half of the 20th century alone, because the melodramatic stereotypes of the music hall "translated easily on to the screen," as Michael Chanan explains. "The situations of early narrative films, comedy and melodrama, were readily built around them" (Chanan, 1993: 226) and stories about the 'outlaw hero' (Seal, 1996) had now become such a popular staple on both sides of the Atlantic that the 1925 film *Dick Turpin* opened "the famous Fox Fullerton Theater in California, which, at the time of its construction, represented the height of Hollywood glamour" (Sharpe, 2005: 199). By the time Dick Turpin appeared in the eponymous British television series of 1979, the character had become less the glamourous, propulsive movie hero and more the mischievous boy-next-door – partly because "TV seemingly – though this might not be the best word – democratizes fame, shrinks its contours" (Custen, 1992: 223). This resilience of Turpin as a *character* is to a degree predicated on the domino-effect of successful adaptations; "that is, adaptation may be the *cause* of a character's recurrence in both 'source' and secondary medium" (Strong, 2020: 110).

Strong discusses Rosenstone's examination of the importance of the adaptive process in the production of these 'historical narratives' and infers that this is adaptation in all but name, at least in terms of artistic labour, with equivalences between adaptation and 'history-on-screen' of compression, displacements and alterations (Strong, 2019). He points also to an additional parallel identified by Sarah Cardwell regarding the segmentation of long narratives in fiction and television drama into episodic instalments (Ibid.); it is thus tempting to be drawn to the conclusion that scholars of history in fiction and scholars of adaptation are often referring to identical or at least overlapping concepts when they "delimit their fields" (Ibid., 4), as Strong describes it. Indeed, he catalogues a serviceable taxonomy of labels shared by scholars of both disciplines: 'historical film' (James Chapman), 'costume film' or 'costume drama' (Chapman, Eckart Voights-Virchow, Ginette Vincendeau, David Eldridge); 'period film' (Chapman, Voights-Virchow), 'heritage film' or 'heritage cinema' (Chapman, Imelda Whelehan, Deborah Cartmell); 'biopics' (Chapman); and 'literary adaptation' (Eckart Voights-Virchow (Ibid., 4-5). The list is protean and seemingly inexhaustible, suggesting there are areas of contestation in these fields which may perhaps be unnecessarily pugnacious at the semantic level. Strong argues that "the tenebrous nature of the historical film" has arisen from "the breadth of forms and materials that have fed into its corpus", and that such tenebrity makes hazardous any binary reading of historical film as posited by Rosenstone and Natalie Zemon Davis (2000), i.e. the cleaving of what *is* and what *is not* a historical film into plots which are either grounded in historical events (is) and fictional plots played out against a historical backdrop (is not) (Strong, 2019: 6).

Crucially (in the context of research for a new adaptation of the history of 18th-century criminal Dick Turpin, whose life has been adapted in various forms for almost three hundred years), Strong decides that "it seems probable that early historical adaptations which addressed the lives of known historical figures… influenced the lineaments of all later biopics" (Ibid., 7). This is particularly true of Turpin, whose legend is regularly sculpted and embellished as a result of both artistic license and factual error. Since the early 19th century, adaptations of his life have for the most part ignored much of the historical record – and this presents an opportunity for a contribution to knowledge in this thesis and its accompanying artefact. Robert Burgoyne is referring to the histories of marginalized groups and identities when he talks about "stories or chapters from the past that have been suppressed in the dominant accounts" (Burgoyne, 2008: 10), but an equivalent concept may be useful when considering the way in which adaptations sometimes cherry-pick historical detail.

A 'Hierarchy' of Sources

The already densely complex issue of the temporal and cultural hierarchy of sources is further complicated by what Defne Ersin Tutan calls 'histories in the plural', i.e. multiple re-tellings of historical events by narrators who would not by any means regard themselves as 'historians' in the academic sense. "We frequently speak of alternative histories battling against History with a capital H," Ersin Tutan says. "We see novelists posing as historians and historians as novelists" (Ersin Tutan, 2017: 576). She does not see this as an automatic obstacle to the comprehension of this domain of adaptation studies, however: "Every version of history should be regarded as a rewriting, essentially an adaptation, since the historian adapts the material she or he has at hand into a pre-planned scheme to meet a certain end." To Ersin Tutan then,

"Historians are not the sole authorities in the writing of history to begin with" (Ibid.). In other words: the artist is free to write any history he or she chooses, and it is the very qualifier of 'adaptation' that affords them that creative authority. "All historical representations are radically adaptive," Ersin Tutan decides. "The ways in which these alternative representations are conceived and perceived tell us more about the present than about the past they refer to" (Ibid., 577), she says, though it can also be argued that new meaning is created in this conversation between past and present that may indeed illuminate both to different degrees, but also provides the adaptor of history with a crucial third space, an empathetic 'sandbox' of ideas beyond temporality. In this case, writes Julie Sanders, "a historical event is depicted and deployed both for its own rich literary and imaginative content and for the parallels it evokes with more contemporaneous or topical concerns for the author" (Sanders, 2016: 177). Regardless, Tutan's rejection of 'fidelity' itself is emphatic: "There exist no possible options for fidelity in the case of history as adaptation" (Ersin Tutan, 2017: 585).

Dudley Andrew describes vertical and horizontal axes of film production sharing one "vast two-dimensional cultural economy":

The vertical economy is ruled by past and future, measured by the ancestors and the gods from whom literary, religious and moral values derive. The horizontal economy creates value in spreading this patrimony as widely as possible (Andrew, 2011: 34).

Within this matrix, then, there is room for a new tolerance of fidelity studies to coexist alongside more radical theories which seek its extinction and exclude the commercial

instincts of the layman from consideration. J.D. Connor appears to suggest that there is a role to play for this voice, reminding us that "if laymen have persisted in judging adaptations and in raising fidelity questions when those judgments slip away, critics have persisted in their attempts to silence that conversation of judgment" (Connor, 2007), and that the layman's insistence on fidelity in adaptations is an important navigational outpost in the centre of a highly mutable discourse. Indeed, Andrew describes these lay opinions as a "vernacular version of comparative media semiotics" (Andrew, 2011: 27). Thus, the question might not be one of whether fidelity is of any relevance in adaptation studies, but rather what purpose it might still serve in discourse that accepts Adaptation Studies 3.0 as its starting point: the 'layman' fluent in read / write modalities may have something interesting to say to the adaptation scholar, given that fidelity to historical detail, for example, features regularly in discussions around video game adaptations of historical eras. However, Adam Chapman argues that fidelity battles already fought in debates focusing on other media have rendered anxieties about historical detail increasingly irrelevant. "It is perhaps because of this ancestry of sophisticated and nuanced work," he says, "that historical games studies has also (for the most part) managed to avoid simplistic discussions about historical accuracy" (Chapman, 2016: 360). Adrienne Shaw writes:

Game designers' process of telling history is similar to historians' process of creating histories. It is never enough to talk about accuracy or veracity when analysing these constructions; much more is learned by looking at who is telling the story, how they are telling it, and what that demonstrates about what they find important (Shaw, 2015: 6).

The future of these exchanges will perhaps be centred on machinima, cinematic productions created in real time in computer-generated environments, which, according to Jenna Ng, is now "forming a kind of *mise-en-abyme* of media as media begets media, endlessly reproducing each other as machinima moves fluently – more so than any other media form – through that conversation" (Ng, 2013: 10-11).

Mary H. Snyder has a foot in two camps, being both adaptation scholar and creative writer, and is clear that "the screenwriter carries out a very different role from that of the adaptation scholar" (Snyder, 2017: 104). But she bridges a gap that may be "more imagined than actual" by concluding that adaptation scholars create a product that is itself an adaptation when they write about adaptation – while the *roles* are distinct, the *work* is essentially the same (Ibid., 105). She cites Kamila Elliott's observation that "there is often no clear demarcation between theorists, academic critics, novelists, filmmakers, reviewers and reader-viewers" (Elliot, 2003: 6). The logical end point of Snyder's argument is that adaptation scholars who are critics of fidelity studies show a marked fidelity to sources every time they quote another adaptation scholar. "The chasm between the two camps is not so wide as either group may think," she says (Snyder, 2017: 106).

Adaptation, Reception, and Empathy

Dennis Cutchins and Kathryn Meeks have attempted to shift the fidelity debate in adaptation studies away from 'ontological tail-chasing', as they describe it, and further towards the role of the audience. They write:

Readers and audience members who experience adaptations respond… based on the perception that the adaptation has either been true or untrue not to an 'original' text, but to their original experience with a text (Cutchins and Meeks, 2019: 308-309).

Or as Frans Weiser argues: "Irrespective of the degree of intertextuality in a written text, it is ultimately consumed as a form of adaptation by audiences who transpose it onto their previous network of historical knowledge" (Weiser, 2017: 112). Cutchins and Meeks are keen to place this experience at the centre of our ideas about not only adaptation studies, but about "the roles human beings play in the lives of texts"; they argue that "when scholars write about adaptation, they should allow themselves to be present", an endeavour they describe as "a faithfulness to the experiences with texts and fragments of texts that are embedded in our lives" (Cutchins and Meeks, 2019: 309). It is unusual, when reading adaptation theory, to discover a standpoint so compassionate about the power of the individual reader, but that also resonates with such familiarity in the mind of the artist. "Empathy… may be considered another form of reception," they write. "Mimesis, then, may be more than just the imitation of life on stage or in art; mimesis is also the replication of life, someone else's life within the reader or viewer" (Ibid., 308). And if the reader's perspective is one of empathy, it stands to reason that this too is the clay from which adaptation is shaped by the artist. As Jack Boozer also argues: "The implied sense of a possible personal as well as cultural 'motivation' in the process of adaptation resides here" (Boozer, 2008: 21). This is a heartening and energising alternative approach to adaptation studies, one with the potential to rescue the discipline from the dissective surgery of theoretical abstraction and hand it carefully back to the joyful warmth of creative contemplation.

Integrities: of the Source, and of the Writer's Perspective

Boozer's focus is on the adapted screenplay (from literature) as one layer of development in the film industry, rather than on Batty and Baker's (2018) championing of the 'script' as a finished creative work in its own right, regardless of its status in the industrial process. However, he nonetheless seeks to defend the integrity of the screenplay as "the most direct foundation and fulcrum for any adapted film" and "the essential conceptual and creative bible for the film's construction" (Boozer, 2008: 4) in an industry that has always tended to privilege the literary source text. Traditionally, successful film adaptations have often triggered public interest in the source texts themselves, and "the aesthetic force and cultural meanings of the page and screen texts and their temporal contexts" (Ibid., 10). But Boozer points to the "academic rise of semiotics and structuralism" (Ibid., 19) as being instrumental in re-framing the role of the 'author' from inventor to that of a re-contextualizer: here, the screenwriter is not only hidden from public perception, but his creative autonomy as author is also repositioned (Foucault, 1969) as a vehicle through which sources are simply copied (Derrida, 2017 [1967]) and reinterpreted (Barthes, 1968):

The theoretical extreme led by Barthes and Derrida belittled the role of all authorship by reducing source novel writers, and screenwriters and directors by implication, to invisibility or mere "author-functions" in a galaxy full of textual influences and cultural signifiers (Boozer, 2008: 20).

Boozer argues fiercely against this "conception of the author as the orchestrator of pre-existing discourses" (Stam, 2005: 9) and "the complete erasure of creative inspiration and dedicated conviction of purpose" (Boozer, 21) in this wider discussion

of who really 'originates' what. "Whatever remains of the creative subject and individual inspiration and effort," he maintains, "implies a particular voice, and not necessarily only a culturally mimetic one" (Ibid., 22). In this configuration the writer is located at the generative centre of the process, rather than lost somewhere in an indeterminate and anonymous phase of the industrial pipeline.

From the fidelity perspective of a writer, Mary H. Snyder suggests screenwriters "open up the source text and mine it for its infinite meanings, choosing the direction of the screenplay on the basis of what seems most captivating and not necessarily most respectful" (Snyder, 2017: 114). This loyalty to the 'captivating' over the 'respectful' is an ambition about which some of the heaviest hitters in screenwriting methodology are unambiguously single-minded. "If you want to write a biographical script," instructs Syd Field, the life of your character is only the beginning" (Field, 2005: 271). Robert McKee warns of the perils of adapting 'pure' sources, i.e. stories located at the level of inner or personal conflict (McKee, 2014: 367), and William Goldman is unequivocal about his first rule of adaptation: "You *cannot* be literally faithful to the source material" (Goldman, 200: 179). Guy Gallo is similarly dismissive:

If you strive for a one-to-one correspondence between the source material and what is in the screenplay you are doomed to failure… You are not adapting the aesthetic whole of the construct. You are adapting the fable of the construct (Gallo, 2012: 52-53).

Fidelity to History

Regardless, "reality is not simply a matter to be decided at the level of the whole film," argues Marnie Hughes-Warrington, and "viewers may find some elements of a film more persuasive than others" (Hughes-Warrington, 2007: 111). Any discussion of fidelity to source material in British historical drama might take into account how far, and why, readers (and viewers) were persuaded by Hilary Mantel's depiction of Thomas Cromwell in Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall* series. Colin Burrow's review of *Wolf Hall* is celebratory of Mantel's genius in bringing historical fact back to life: "Mantel's ability to pick out vivid scenes from sources and give them life within her fiction is quite exceptional" (Burrow, 2009). However, the historian David Starkey is less charitable about whether such artistic license should even be condoned, let alone encouraged: "*Wolf Hall* is a wonderful, magnificent fiction… The supposition has got to be controlled… As I understand it, it is based on a deliberate *perversion* of fact" (italics mine) (Furness, 2015). Mantel's own position regarding the 'reality' of her creations sits comfortably alongside Ersin Tutan's understanding of 'alternative representations'; in 2012, Mantel told the *Financial Times*: "I try to make sure that everything I make up could plausibly have happened… but I don't introduce impossibilities" (Kite, 2012). In the broader context of adaptation, she reminds us that this is also an interplay between source and writer, rather than a recursive curation of facts in a coherent sequence, and that adaptation also involves inventive addition. In her fifth Reith lecture, she observes:

Adaptation, done well, is not a secondary process, a set of grudging compromises – but an act of creation in itself. … What the adaptor must do is set aside

the source… put down the text, and dream it… Historical fiction acts to make the past a shared imaginative resource (Mantel, 2017, Reith Lecture 5).

The novelist Tracy Chevalier, who has adapted aspects of the lives of historical figures such as painter Johannes Vermeer and poet and painter William Blake, writes in *The Guardian* of her process:

I am in this world... but I am simultaneously holding in my head another world full of people I have never physically met but know to their core. That world and those people pour out through my pen: rough – often very rough – but insistent (Chevalier, 2016).

She calls this process a "magic trick", suggesting both an oracular, unknowable creative impetus and a writerly sleight of hand – the illusion of reality, brought to life through the artist's skill. However, her insistence that she knows these characters "to their core" conjures an interesting paradox: what, or who, is it that Chevalier thinks she 'knows'? Are her hybrid constructions, her assemblages of conjecture and fact, any more or less real than the people they represent?

In a 2009 interview with *Fiction Writers Review*, Chevalier had qualified this artistic certainty – her complete confidence in her authoritative authorial voice – with the caveat that neither Vermeer nor Blake were the central protagonists; that she is at any rate more interested in the background patina of the lived experience of her characters than a slavish adherence to historical, chronological fact. "Vermeer and Blake are both central to the concept of their books, but they're not the main players," she says. "I

tend to see history… as more about what people's everyday lives were like, and how they differed from ours" (Librie, 2009). In a similar vein, the literary critic Georg Lukács concludes:

The interesting and difficult task of the historical novel is to represent the significant qualities of the 'historical individual' in such a way that it neglects none of the complex, capillary factors of development in the whole society of the time (Lukács, 2000: 231).

Lukács is referring to the historical novel, but his differentiation between the agency of the historical individual in novel and 'drama' is a useful one for us today: his argument is that whereas the historical novel must prepare the reader for the agency of the individual through a slow layering of organic background detail, the drama achieves the same ends via the tension between the individual's actions and the audience's existing supposition of this agency, i.e. "the hero himself gives subsequent proof by his behaviour during the play that he has this mission and is equal to it" (Ibid.), an autolatry in which the audience is complicit. This argument suggests a certain creative responsibility on the part of creators of drama, and that one of the aims of a writer who adapts history should be to create an entry point into the social kinetics of a time *through* the subject, in order to avoid hagiography and the age-old peril of falling in love with one's own creation.

The historian James Sharpe accepts that historical myth, with all its embellishments and factual inaccuracies, is an important part of cultural heritage, but laments the

public's tendency to accept the 'desirable commodity' of these myths uncritically, at face value. Of the Turpin myth, he writes:

We encounter the clear distinction between the type of attempts to reconstruct historical reality at which historians struggle, and the historical myth that so often achieves widespread public currency and triumphs over the historians and their labours (Sharpe, 2005: 210).

Recalling Mark C. Carnes (1996), he distinguishes 'academic' history from Carnes' 'Hollywood History', with its "refusal to let the facts get in the way of a good story" (Ibid., 213). Sharpe's criticism of 'the production team's agenda' can be read as a reflexive and understandable defence of the merits of rigorous academic research, but nevertheless he raises a key consideration, reminding us that Turpin's story, taken as a historical and mythic whole, is "replete with problems about how we approach the past, and what part academic history plays in the process" (Ibid., 217).

Thomas Leitch says, "A true story is both more, and less, than the truth: less because it is only a selection of the truth, more because it has already been constructed as a story" (Leitch, 2007: 290). There is therefore a moral dimension to be contemplated in this fictionalization (i.e. unknown details, surmised lacunae etc.) of events in the lives of real (albeit long-since deceased) human beings. Turpin committed real crimes with real victims, and left behind a wife (and probably a child). The script artefact produced by this research project is of course his story, and the arc is his alone; however, the 'selection of the truth' must also in this case include the voice of the victims of his crimes if it is to convincingly portray the 'real' Turpin with any degree of accuracy.

Consequently, these victims will feature in the screenplay considerably more than they appear in the historical record. As Gillian Spraggs notes in her discussion of Robert Louis Stevenson's abandoned "highwayman romance", *The Great North Road*:

In the face of truthfully represented violence and its consequences for the innocent, the notion that armed robbery is nothing but a glorious adventure, and one, moreover, in which the mortal risks are for the robber alone, is exposed as a hollow mystification (Spraggs, 2001: 248).

Realism

It follows that a thesis and adaptation of the life of a historical character must inevitably address and fully explore the development of ideas about realism in literature and film. These arguments flower in the mid-19th century and splinter thereafter into the contested fiefdoms of realism and naturalism. But as a reading of Linda Nochlin illustrates, creative notions of 'realism' in art must first be wrenched from philosophical Realism: "A basic cause of the confusion bedevilling Realism is its ambiguous relationship to the highly problematic concept of reality" (Nochlin, 1991: 2). "Is pure perception," she asks, "– perception in a vacuum – ever possible?" (Ibid., 3). She quotes the German philosopher Hegel's ideas that art "clothes these events and phenomena with a higher reality… The manifestations of art possess a higher reality and a truer existence" (Ibid., 14), but cautions:

The very aspirations of realism, in its old naïve sense, are denied by the contemporary outlook which asserts and demands the absolute independence of the

world of art from the world of reality and, indeed, disputes the existence of any single, unequivocal reality at all (Ibid., 15).

In an attempt to resolve this paradox, she appears to encourage a creative hyper-vigilance: a respect for, and awareness of, the historical and cultural contexts underpinning any investigation of or engagement with realism in the arts. She argues:

All forms of realism, regardless of time or place, are marked by a desire for verisimilitude of one kind or another. But there can be no perception in a cultural vacuum, and certainly no notational system for recording it, unaffected by both the coarser and subtler variants of period, personality and milieu (Ibid., 51).

These ideas seem to chime with those of Lukács, with their call for an empathetic responsibility to consider all facets of a subject's 'reality' rather than its most striking features in isolation, and with Henri Bergson's, that "what is real is the continual change of form: form is only a snapshot view of a transition" (Bergson, 1911: 301). Invoking Aristotle, Hayden White suggests a further resolution to this question, through art, by "joining both [history and poetry] to philosophy in the human effort to represent, imagine and think the world in its totality…both actual and possible" (White, 2005: 147). After all, "realisms are relative," says Richard Armstrong, "slipping in and out of and between other factors such as narrative, genre and audience in a film or television programme's bid to represent real experience" (Armstrong, 2005: ix). "Fictional discourse," to White, "is interested in the real – which it approaches by way of an effort to fill out the domain of the possible or imaginable" (White, 2005: 47). By 'fill out', White suggests a fattening, through speculation, of the imaginative meat underneath which

lies the skeletal framework of historical fact, of 'truth', of which he asks: "What can truthfully be asserted about such events on the basis of the (professionally determined) admissible evidence?" (Ibid.,148). "The conjuring up of the past," he rejoins, "requires art as well as information" (Ibid.).

White's position seeks to begin mapping out a compromise that will free the artist from earlier and less pertinacious extremes, with David Herlihy entrenched at one end with his insistence that "movies own no immunities" and "must answer for their messages in the high court of historical criticism" (Herlihy, 1988: 1192), and the more liquid relativism summarized by Maria Wyke, who describes how "all history involves storytelling and a plot, troping and figurality" (Wyke, 1997: 12). John Tulloch's apparent condemnation in 1990 of television's "fact fetish analogous to the historian's 'source'" (Tulloch, 1990: 98) indicates that television's approach to the creation of historical drama may actually have shifted in the last two decades away from these "empiricist notions of history" (Ibid.) towards something which more closely resembles Wyke's distillation.

Naturalism, the 'Outsider', and the Reality of Death

Given that the artefact of this research submission re-tells the life of a British historical figure, one must also look to the British context of the development of realism in British television drama; how, for example, Julie Hallam decides it embraces, in the late 20th century, mid-19th-century literary naturalism in the work of directors such as Ken Loach. "The naturalists' preference for dealing with the unpleasant and the taboo aspects of life and society in order to 'tell the whole truth'… are all characteristic of early realists in the novel and drama" (Hallam, 2000: 5). These 'new dramatists',

according to Hallam, "wished to substitute the one-dimensional heroes and villains of melodrama… with the more complex, multi-dimensional and psychologized characters created by the literary realists" (Ibid., 20). In this context, it is worth considering the 'naturalism' of Loach in contrast with the 'non-naturalism' of a contemporary such as Dennis Potter, in order to explore whether the antagonisms of the interior and exterior lives of Turpin and his gang can be reconciled within the language of the screenplay itself. In other words, can creative expressions of these contentious, mutable and imbricated concepts of realism, naturalism and melodrama co-exist within the same artefact? It is important to remember again here that these labels are difficult to fix in clear focus; for example, John Caughie tells us that "naturalism, in popular debate, has come to inhabit a generalized and undifferentiated space" (Caughie, 2000: 95), sliding back and forth between different artistic articulations of interior and exterior realities.

It may be cogent at this stage to define 'naturalism' in drama in two ways. First – as Emile Zola's literary naturalism and the "real experiment that a novelist makes on man by the help of observation" (Zola, 1893), and an evolution into early television 'plays' which were yet to take advantage of the medium and were heavily criticized by playwrights such as Troy Kennedy Martin as having a stilted over-reliance on dialogue and narratives whose events played out in natural time (Martin, 1964). Second – as a style of performance associated with Stanislavski which drew heavily on the dignity of individual human psychology and which itself evolved into Lee Strasburg's 'Method'. Caughie attempts to reconcile and clarify when he laments that "the specific contours and social commitments of Naturalism as a philosophical and aesthetic movement are

often lost in the generality of disdain for a naturalism which has become a sloppy realism" (Caughie, 2000: 95).

Caughie speculates that "the technologies of immediacy seem predisposed to the ethics and aesthetics of naturalism" (Ibid., 100), and there may be room in the Turpin canon for a 'realistic' depiction which draws, at least to some degree, on naturalism: an ersatz Turpin whose 'truth' is revealed through a hard, 'naturalistic' reliance on fact in lieu of direct observation. This Turpin is not a melodramatic hero – although the artefact makes particular use of those tropes for various effects – but a realistic, tragic one, whose narrative arc is driven as much by his internal psychology as the fixed realities of his historical circumstances.

British television flirted, successfully, with a family-friendly 'outlaw' drama on ITV, *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, between 1955 and 1959 (Cooke, 2003). But the 1950s seem to be the last decade of the dominance of popular melodrama, before the seminal first broadcast of *Coronation Street* in 1960. Lez Cooke says that "in its iconography, character types and storylines, *Coronation Street* tapped into the new mode of social realism, or 'kitchen sink' drama, that had been popularised in the theatre, and in literature, since the mid-1950s" (Ibid., 36), and the valiant isolation felt by the ordinary man and woman as they navigated their everyday lives. Colin Wilson had written his influential *The Outsider*, his consideration of the outsider archetype in literature, in 1956. 60 years later, reflecting on its inception, he said:

I was writing about people who feel alienated from a materialistic society, and my original starting point had been those romantics of the 19th century who had

experienced moments of ecstatic vision, then woke up to find themselves stranded in a world they hated (Wilson, 2007: 15).

Wilson himself was interested in D.H. Lawrence's investigation of the imagination, and the strategy Lawrence called 'dynamic objective apprehension', through which "a man may in time add on to himself the whole of the universe, by increasing pristine realisation of the universal" (Lawrence, 1921: 99). Caughie identifies as an 'enduring legacy' of Wilson's existentialism "the romance which attaches to the outsider... Non-conformity becomes heroic, and the individual's responsibility is to himself" (Caughie, 2000: 67).

Cooke sees the first appearance of *The Wednesday Play* on British television in the mid-1960s as a watershed moment that "changed the face of television drama in Britain, introducing contemporary, social-issue drama" (Cooke, 2003: 71) and which featured early commissions for writer Dennis Potter and director Ken Loach. He discusses a 'tension' in Potter's work, "between a drama dealing with themes of class and politics which might engage the viewer, and plays which, increasingly, embrace non-naturalist or modernist techniques" (Ibid., 84). Potter himself was adamant that his interest was 'interior drama'. Interviewed in 1976, he says:

I'm much more concerned with interior drama than with external realities. Television is equipped to have an interior language. Certainly one of the strands in TV drama is that of the interiorising process, the concern with people's fantasies and feelings about the shapes of their lives, and about themselves (Cook, 1998: 175).

However, his contemporary, Ken Loach, was at the same time beginning to move away from this "aesthetic experimentation" towards "a greater degree of observational documentary realism" (Ibid., 109) in television films such as the four-part *Days of Hope*, which follows the life of a working-class family between 1916 and 1926. Asked by Graham Fuller in 1998 about his method of "visually describing history", Loach replies: "I think it's better if you don't light every corner if you do things that are set in the past. You can't recreate the past – all you can do is indicate it" (Fuller, 1998: 50). If Loach's approach to the aesthetic of the past is to render it enigmatic, we are then led to examine our own consumption of historical television drama featuring criminality as its cynosure, and our relationship, as viewers, with acts of violence. Citing Hebdige, Richard Sparks urges circumspection, and an awareness that "narrative closure matters because it carries over into thwarted moral reasoning in the rest of life" (Sparks, 1992: 38). Sparks takes issue (Ibid., 34) with Foucault's insistence that the public performance of the gallows execution, the "gloomy festival of punishment" (Foucault, (1995) [1975]: 8), has been replaced with "a micro-physics of power, whose field of validity is situated in a sense between these great functionings and the bodies themselves with their materiality and their forces" (Ibid., 26). To Foucault, this 'modern system' seeks to correct the behaviour of the criminal and render him docile rather than demanding his confession and punishment. For Sparks, however, there is still "the sense in which fear or horror at particular real events seems partly to be registered by recounting them in a language which assimilates them to fictional and dramatic conventions" (Ibid., 35). He labels this impulse "the survival of the demand for retribution in modern culture" (Ibid., 34).

Turpin's narrative arc is most definitely a cathartic one for the audience in this context, but a challenge in the script was to balance the audience's craving for resolution with the writer's obligation to the historical facts, however grisly. Hangings in the 18th century – 200 years before Albert Pierrepoint, who skilfully endeavoured to make executions by rope as quick and painless as possible – were long, painful and messy. For example, the late 17th-century executioner Jack Ketch, who hanged London's condemned for 23 years, had a reputation for either botching the hangings he presided over or deliberately prolonging the agonies of the executed if he had been bribed by their enemies to do so. "Given the fact that there was no mechanism in place to break the neck of the condemned upon hanging at this point," writes Jessica Cale, "many died at Tyburn of slow strangulation, a process that could take an agonizing forty-five minutes. It would have been up Ketch to set the pace of their death and to limit – or draw out – their suffering" (Cale, 2015). Turpin is said to have leapt off the ladder to expedite his own demise when the time for his reckoning came in 1739.

Many of the hanged would face a further reckoning in the hours and days after their death, as their bodies would often be sold for dissection unless their removal was prevented by friends or family. "With the advance in understanding of anatomy and the corresponding development of private trade in corpses," writes Peter Linebaugh, "we can find in the early 18th century a significant change in attitude towards the dead human body. The corpse becomes a commodity with all the attributes of a property" (Linebaugh 1975: 72). Amidst this relentless hunger for new knowledge, the dignity in death of the poor and condemned was broken like the butterfly on the wheel, as "the accumulated rituals and habits of centuries of religion and superstition were swept aside" (Ibid.). As a grievous cultural wound inflicted on the poor, the desecration of the

dead compounded the misery of society's most wretched. "A belief in life after death…
was connected with beliefs about justice, the law and the value of life," says
Linebaugh. "The added humiliation of the surgeon's scalpel to the hangman's noose
rendered the injustice of the law all the more loathsome" (Ibid., 109). Denied a dignified
passage to the afterlife, the dissected were believed to return as ghosts to torment
those that had defiled them. Linebaugh argues that for the indifferent arbiters of power,
these grisly ends justified a variety of means:

To the surgeons, their spokesmen, and the lords and squires sitting in
Parliament, not only was humiliation at the death of one of the 'Scum of the People' a
passing matter, but such further 'Marks of Infamy' as public dissection became a part
of the policy of class discipline (Ibid., 117).

Melodrama, and the Evolution of the 'Heroic' Highwayman

We may be able to follow and document the stylistic development of the Turpin myth,
in broad terms, through John Gay's hugely successful ballad opera *The Beggar's
Opera* (1728); early narratives ('histories') of his life; the formal realism of early and
mid-18th-century novelists such as Fielding and Defoe; William Harrison Ainsworth's
gothic Newgate novel *Rookwood* (1834)*;* and 20th-century adaptations on film and
television – all of which, it could be argued, are more 'melodrama' than 'realism' (or its
progeny, 'naturalism').

The exploits of so-called 'gentleman robbers' were immortalized by John Gay in a new
template for romanticized criminality: the character of the highwayman Macheath in
The Beggar's Opera. "Suspect my honour, my courage, suspect any thing but my love"

(Gay, 1986 [1728]: 65) is typical of the Macheath doggerel; this dichotomy of agency and vulnerability is emblematic of the outlaw archetype which evolved in the late 16th and early 17th centuries in the picaresque fiction of Cervantes and de Alfarache, and their English equivalents Robert Greene, Thomas Dekker and Richard Head. There is some debate, however, as to when exactly the transformation of Turpin began. In her essay on Macheath, Andrea McKenzie speculates that the concept of the 'genteel robber' was a cultural phenomenon before it was a literary one and that there was already an appetite in the public collective consciousness for disturbing stories about crime in the 1720s, the decade *The Beggar's Opera* was performed (and, interestingly, the point when a young Turpin made his first forays into criminality). "Perhaps no one criminal better exemplifies the mimetic instability among practice, representation, and print," writes McKenzie, "than the celebrated petty thief and prison-breaker Jack Sheppard, who was hanged in 1724, and who is believed by some to have been the model for Gay's Macheath" (McKenzie, 2006: 6). She suggests that contemporary criminals were well aware of the irresistible drama of their acts in the public consciousness, citing the fact that a disguised Sheppard is believed to have mixed with street crowds enjoying popular ballads about his exploits; she is also convincing in her assertion that the public's demand for such stories was in reality a hunger for a greater societal justice: "Sheppard was not the first thief to be used as a mouthpiece to denounce the hypocrisy and corruption of a society of which he was merely the mirror image" (Ibid.).

The Outlaw and the Bandit

The 'outlaw' template – the concept of a heroic transgressor who literally exists in society outside the law – seems to evolve from and overlap with the 'bandit' prototype

described by Eric Hobsbawm. From a legal perspective, a bandit is "anyone belonging to a group of men who attack and rob with violence" (Hobsbawm, 2000: 19). This reductive reading of behaviour as meaning would certainly apply to Turpin, who was a gangster before he was a highwayman. But Hobsbawm creates a significant subcategory of the 'social bandit', those persecuted by the authorities but "considered by their people as heroes" (Ibid., 20). The criminal activity of the social bandit thus carries implicit cultural agency, in that his trajectory pushes upwards through the social hierarchy through its victimisation of those with more money, status or power. Whether or not the bandit himself is aware of the wider implications of this activity may be immaterial, but even for the most pathological of criminals on the empathy spectrum, an understanding of solidarity with one's 'people' would present obvious advantages in terms of remaining out of the reaches of authority. The bandit might not be of heroic character, but would at least be aware, to a degree, of the power and usefulness of the heroic persona, and may have cut his cloth or cultivated this image accordingly.

Graham Seal writes of this duality in a man "who is recognisably one of us, yet at the same time apart from us" (Seal, 1996: 1). This 'outlaw hero', as Seal re-labels the Hobsbawm archetype, "inhabits the grey area between criminality and political or pre-political protest" (Ibid., 2). He operates "outside the legal system of the state, but remain[s] within the unofficial legal and moral code of those who see them as one of their own" (Ibid., 6). However, it is evident that even this 'moral code' is often subject to renegotiation once obstructed by the more granular immediacies of opportunity, impulse or survival. Seal says that those "who disregard these rules are not balladised" (Ibid., 7), but this seems an oversimplification: Turpin's name appears regularly in songs of the period, and his contemporaries would also have been aware from

newspaper reports that he brutalised the elderly, men and women alike – activity that would place his legend in conflict with at least two of the outlaw template's "essentials of respect for women, sympathy for the downtrodden, and robbing the rich" (Ibid., 8). There may instead be a prejudicial balancing of vice and virtue occurring during such 'balladisation', whereby the former, by necessity, is sublimated into the latter. The phenomenon survives up to the present day in "mass media popularisation of the outlaw hero", which operates under the double standard of "glamorising the sensationally violent aspects of the outlaw's career, while being careful to present the proper moralising sentiments about him receiving his just deserts" (Ibid., 14). This ambiguity seems to lie at the heart of our attraction to glamorous villainy of all kinds – we are titillated by its freedom, while desiring ultimate control over its menace. The outlaw hero "has, however clumsily, struck a blow against the hated system of oppression, the blow that every other oppressed man or woman would wish to strike" (Ibid., 189). But no such insurgency can be left unpunished by the system that triggers it. "It was not enough to hang them," writes Peter Linebaugh. "The values they espoused or represented had to be challenged" (Linebaugh, 2006: 213).

Hobsbawm argues that in the UK, the home of "Robin Hood, the international paradigm of social banditry", the archetype effectively disappears from the historical record after the 17th century, "though public opinion continued to find a more or less unsuitable substitute in the idealisation of other kinds of criminal, such as highwaymen" (Hobsbawm, 2000: 22). Gillian Spraggs also identifies the highwayman as "partly reconstructed on the pattern of that much older figure, the greenwood outlaw" (Spraggs, 2001: 245), suggesting a palimpsest of mythologies with Robin Hood buried deep in the exposed underlayer. Thus the people themselves, over

several generations, are complicit in superimposing the desired qualities of the social bandit onto criminals unworthy of the approbation, and turn a blind eye to the grubbier reality of their hero's lived experience, because he fulfils a deep cultural desire for the cathartic potential of moral justice – in other words, "the lore becomes the law" (Seal, 1996, 17). The highwayman of history, the man "with no determined place in society" (Hobsbawm, 2000: 37) who "makes [himself] respected" (Ibid. 40), cannot possibly meet these expectations, and will, understandably, be as driven as his contemporaries by the impulse for self-preservation. Instead, he is transmogrified into legend, whereby folkloric storytelling acts as a surrogate for a truly heroic reality, and offers the utopian vision, or "apocalyptic expectation", of "a world of equality, brotherhood and freedom" (Ibid., 31).

At the same time, such heroes "reflect and reinforce the social, political and economic tensions within any community that celebrates such characters, real and imaginary" (Seal, 1996: 1). Key to the construction of this mythology is "the *perception*" (italics mine) "of deprivation or oppression" (Ibid., 5). The outlaw can thus seek to exploit this perception for personal gain, regardless of whether or not he possesses the motivation to address and improve such circumstances for the people he leaves behind, who remain oppressed. Society's need for heroes runs deep, and seems wilfully short-sighted; one cannot blame the nascent outlaw himself for being seduced by such potent, narcissistic, co-dependent wish-fulfilment. Like the object of infatuation in a toxic relationship, "outlaw heroes are created and perpetuated through the construction of 'convenient fictions'" (Ibid., 184).

The act of transmogrification may indeed happen within the lifetime of the bandit himself, as was the case with Turpin, whose motivations were being whitewashed in ballads even before his capture and execution (Spraggs, 2001: 253). In these pamphlets, "Turpin has been transformed into a version of the righteous robber who goes outside the law in order to punish anti-social elements who cannot otherwise be touched" (Ibid., 254). Spraggs argues that the tedious and odious reality of the man necessitated a reconfiguration of his character in life into something in song more aligned with cultural expectations. "Turpin's very nullity," she writes,

made it more or less necessary for the street poets who attempted to cash in on his notoriety to fill the gap with whatever came to hand: which consisted of ancient motifs embedded in often repeated tales" (Ibid., 254-255).

This balladisation continued into and through the 19th century and fed into the "subsequent media romanticisation" that followed (Seal, 1996: 60). Like a resilient exoskeleton, the bandit's uniform of choice also survives this rehabilitation; the fashionable, flamboyant, rakish 'skin' of the gentleman highwayman advertises a more violent and predatory inner masculinity: "The rural tough's outfit is code which reads: 'This man is not tame'" (Ibid, 41). One can only speculate about how far this appetite for superficial attention would have interfered with the exigency of anonymity, and perhaps therein lies an important distinction: the true social bandit is never afraid to be seen. In the script artefact that accompanies this thesis, the red coat of the cavalry officer, in which the Dick Turpin of popular culture is often presented, is used ironically as a status symbol which Turpin covets but is never actually in possession of until the day of his execution. It was common in the 18th century not only for demobbed soldiers

to take to highway robbery, but for those on active duty to engage in such crimes (Naughton, 2019), so the image of Turpin dressed in the uniform of a serviceman carries a double irony. "Many low-born highwaymen undoubtedly believed that as a result of their violent exploits they had won the right to be regarded as men of honour," writes Spraggs. "Not for nothing did highwaymen commonly assume military titles like 'Captain'" (Spraggs, 2001: 171-172). And in a bittersweet juxtaposition of life's most significant moments, the condemned of the 18th century would often be dressed as elegantly as on their wedding day as they travelled to their execution. "The 'flash' clothes signified anticipation of divine union or a proclamation of innocence before God," writes Peter Linebaugh. "In other cases they perhaps indicated a flaunting, ostentatious display of opposition to the severities of the law and the austerities of prison" (Linebaugh, 1975: 115).

Hobsbawm makes a further sub-categorisation to separate the 'peasant bandit' from the villains of the criminal underworld. The latter are outsiders "who form their own separate society, if not actually an anti-society". They speak their own language, or 'cant', a tool not only useful in criminal enterprise but that also provides a delineation of their separation from the norm: they are "anti-conformists in practice and by ideology; on the devil's side rather than God's" (Hobsbawm, 2000: 43). They may have, in effect, a fluid and perpetually renegotiated relationship with their original communities that also provides them with protection and anonymity when required: a Manichean duality of existence that they exploit as and when convenient. This expediency is not inextinguishable, however. Turpin discovered to his cost that even the patience of family and friends had unassailable limits. And when the outlaw hero's luck eventually and inevitably runs out, after numerous close calls, he is required to

meet his end at the 'carnival of death' of public execution with rugged equanimity: "related to the masculine notions of manliness and boldness is the requirement that the outlaw hero must 'die game'. That is, he must die bravely", with the sting of extinction often intensified through betrayal "by a trusted friend or accomplice" (Seal, 1996: 9-10). The legend then reincarnates into immortality through supernatural "after-traces", which Seal describes as "metaphorical transpositions of the persistent and widespread folkloric reluctance to accept the death of great heroes – or villains" (Ibid., 11).

Turpin is elevated, in folklore, from underworld thug to outlaw hero partly through a presumption of his expert proficiency as a horseman, "one of the qualities that was held to adorn a gentleman," according to Spraggs (Spraggs, 2001: 169), in addition to a repudiation of manual labour, extravagant tastes, civility, and the 'courage' to approach one's quarry in direct view. But it is horsemanship that most "distinguishes the highwayman from the footpad – and marks out the romantic robber of the past from the mugger in the night-time streets" (Ibid., 238). This endows him with "a specialness that had a lot to do with reckless gallops on superb horseflesh" (Ibid., 239). In legend, Turpin lives out this mythology through an almost symbiotic relationship with the fictitious steed Black Bess; the irony is that the Turpin of history is convicted of and hanged for horse theft. Whereas the fabricated ride from London to York on Bess provides *Rookwood*'s Turpin with an iron-clad alibi against the accusation of a committed crime, his human counterpart had no such justification at trial with which to refute allegations he has been stealing horses in Lincolnshire and selling them on in Yorkshire. Spraggs argues that the "relation of mutual attachment" between the Turpin of folklore and Black Bess allows his legend significant moral

latitude in a country that adores its animals: "Turpin's possession of Bess famously allows him to thumb his nose at all authority" and represents "a potent emblem of escape and freedom" (Ibid., 257).

Spraggs also notes that the ideal of the heroic horseman is indicative of a growing cultural melancholy in the 19th century: "In the age of the ever-encroaching city, nostalgia for the mounted robber becomes an aspect of the yearning for the countryside" (Ibid., 245). She claims this explains the prevalence of ethereal moonlight in highwayman iconography: as gas street lighting became more common, moonlight "became more strongly associated with the wild countryside, its glamour of otherness newly enhanced" (Ibid.). Across various iterations, in print and on film, the mounted highwayman silhouetted against a gigantic, preternatural full moon is one of the mythology's most enduring motifs.

The 'Star' Criminal

"Richard Turpin, Highwayman, in 1737, had as big a 'fan' public as a modern famous film star" write Ash and Day in *Immortal Turpin* (Ash and Day, 1948: 70), and this magnetism has outlived him by almost three centuries. Jacob Smith's research on the cinematic lives of criminal social types provides an insight into how outlaw heroes such as Turpin have maintained such enduring appeal in the jump from written mythologies to television and film representation, a metamorphosis which has significantly enhanced those myths' charismatic power. He cites Richard Dyer's (1979) identification of and differentiation between 'social types' and 'stereotypes', with the former bound by society's rules and the latter excluded from them. Smith writes: "Dyer urged scholars to question the extent to which alternative social types represented

'real challenges' to the dominant ideology or were simply 'holidays' from it" (Smith, 2011: 35). He calls this tension in an audience's understanding and enjoyment of these figures the result of "a process whereby such types were co-constituted and carefully calibrated in relation to the dominant ideology" (Ibid., 40). In the 1925 silent film *Dick Turpin*, the eponymous antihero is both bound and excluded by the anachronistic, pseudo-18th-century society the film depicts: he adheres to the code of the Hobsbawm social bandit by robbing the rich and then re-distributing the wealth; is captured and sentenced to hang, in turn also fulfilling a post First World War audience's appetite for justice; and then escapes, providing that audience with a 'holiday' from society's most uncompromising retribution. To that end, the film is rich in what Dyer calls "melodramatic performance", defined as the "use of gestures principally in terms of their intense and immediate expressive, affective signification". He explains that "in melodrama, these emotions are also moral categories, [and]… give primacy to a character's emotional life" (Dyer, 1998: 137). A positive 1925 review of the film in *Moving Picture World* suggests such flourishes were efficacious, describing Turpin as "one of the most romantic figures in English history" and the film itself as "a fast-moving and entertaining story of romance and adventure" (Sewell, 1925). The film's depiction of Turpin's horse Bess, who is mischievous and charming in equal measure, adds to the rosy and affectionate treatment of its subject.

As Dyer reminds us, the melodramatic tradition was key to the development of early cinema (Vardac, 1949; Fell, 1974). By the 19th century, melodrama, or 'song drama', had become the dominant theatrical entertainment and would have an enormous influence on contemporary novelists. Eric Bentley calls it "the Naturalism of the dream life… drama in its elemental form; it is the quintessence of drama" (Bentley, 1964: 216)

and it was characterized by stark delineations between the evil and the heroic act. "Melodrama evolved with an uneducated audience in mind," explains Juliet John, "thus offering an ideal aesthetic template through which to reach those often excluded from serious literature" (John, 2009: 2). The genre seems tailor-made for Ainsworth's rehabilitation of an unsavoury villain such as Turpin into a melodramatic heartthrob.

William Sharp, with reference to Robert Heilman, says that the difference "between tragic and melodramatic heroes… is that the former are concerned with inner struggles and the latter with outer ones… Melodramatic heroes are not bothered by their conscience but by outside forces" (Sharp, 1992: 269). He makes a further distinction between the genres themselves: at the climax of tragedy, the protagonist will not or cannot be re-absorbed back into his environment, but the dramatic satisfaction of melodrama is predicated on the protagonist's willingness to change, or his environment's attempt to re-accommodate him. "In melodrama," Sharp says, "one has either a rotten society that must somehow be cleansed or an inadequate hero that must somehow change his behaviour to conform to that society". This creates a clear separation from tragedy, because the latter requires a "close and sensitive analysis of our world" whose complexity is such that it renders change impossible (Ibid., 271, 272). Put simply, in tragedy we as the audience remain loyal to our world, with all its flaws, and watch the protagonist leave; in melodrama, we commit to the possibility of positive renewal.

Ira Hauptman instead contrasts accepted understandings of "the infatuation with sensation and crude moralism" of melodrama with the "appreciation of quiet truthfulness and more or less disinterested social analysis" of realism

(Hauptman,1992: 281). He begins with Frank Rahill's useful definition of the former, with its taxonomy of the suffering hero, the 'persecuting villain' and the 'benevolent comic'. Rahill says that melodrama is "conventionally moral and humanitarian in point of view and sentimental and optimistic in temper, concluding its fable happily with virtue rewarded after many trials and vice punished" (Rahill, 1967: xiv). Paraphrasing, Hauptman summarizes that in effect, melodrama had always been a form of 'religious' or 'symbolic' drama, whereas "realism's morality is totally of this world, and in fact of this society," with an intention "of defining human beings by their relation to other human beings rather than by their place in the spiritual order of the universe" (Hauptman,1992: 281).

But he suggests that in actuality, the distinction is more a stylistic one of manners, with its history rooted in the ways actors revealed their characters on stage: as 'deformed' or as 'attractive'. In theatrical melodrama, the desires of the hero and villain were often the same, but the stylistic articulation of those desires could signify good or evil. Hauptman offers a fascinating resolution of the two within his reading of the dramatic potential of the antihero, writing that "melodrama in fact becomes more a mode of estheticism (sic) than of morality. The opposite of the villain, if we carry this argument through, would then not be a stiff, virtuous hero but an amoral dandy" (Ibid., 285).

The Disruptive Antihero

The literary label 'antihero' is often used interchangeably with affectionate contemporary categorisations such as 'rogue' or 'rascal', but it also suggests an antagonizing agency at deliberate odds with traditional ideas of the 'heroic', and "linked to a paradoxical, at times provocative stance" (Brombert, 1999: 1). There can be no

antihero without its heroic doppelganger, itself a problematic conceptualisation of propulsive masculinity with its roots in pre-history:

"Heroes were exceptional beings recorded in legend, sung in epic poetry, enacted in the tragic theatre… Heroes are defiantly committed to honor and pride. Though capable of killing the monster, they themselves are often dreadful, even monstrous" (Ibid., 3).

Like the social bandit, the hero is driven by a moral imperative, however vainglorious its implementation or misdirected its motivation. Though the antihero often shares the hero's charisma and romantic appeal, its differentiator is the nature of the external interpretation of its actions: the antihero is "the man who is given the vocation of failure" (Cuddon, 2013: 41), analogous to Ira Hauptman's conceptualisations of both the 'villain' of melodrama, who "fails to get what they deserve", and the 'hero' of tragedy, "who gets not what he 'deserves' but what he brings on himself" (Hauptman, 1992: 288). In reductive summary, it can be argued that "traditional heroes do not have moral flaws. Antiheroes do, and these flaws play a role in the unfolding drama" (Shafer and Raney, 2012: 1030).

These seams of dramatic potential may be fruitfully mined for the delicious contradictions of human vanity. "The negative hero," writes Brombert, "challenges our assumptions, raising anew the question of how we see, or wish to see ourselves. The antihero is often a perturber and a disturber" (Brombert, 1999: 2).

Contemporary pop-culture depictions of anti-heroism such as *Better Call Saul*'s Jimmy McGill, the DC Comics properties Batman, Catwoman and Harley Quinn, the 'benevolent' serial killer *Dexter*, or the bounty hunter Boba Fett in the *Star Wars* franchise, present magnetic, pertinacious individuals who adopt a "fast life strategy", characterised by feelings of singularity and entitlement (Jonasen et al, 2012: 193). These antiheroes are constructed from layered emotional complexities, not only in portrayal but also in audience response. As viewers, we experience the voyeuristic associative thrill of transgression without its consequences, because "the process of moral disengagement may well help viewers overcome the cognitive distress that should theoretically arise from liking a morally questionable character" (Janicke and Raney, 2015: 486).

Building on Murray Smith's (1994) ideas around 'structures of sympathy', wherein audiences traverse varying 'levels of engagement' with different characters, Jason Mittel defines the television antihero as "a character who is our primary point of ongoing narrative alignment but whose behavior and beliefs provoke ambiguous, conflicted, or negative moral allegiance" (Mittel, 2015: 142-143). The protagonist's ethical flaws, with which the drama invites us to empathise, are "juxtaposed with more explicitly villainous and unsympathetic characters to highlight the antihero's more redeeming qualities." (Ibid., 143).

The audience is therefore complicit in the entropic psychological flowering of the antihero as he hurtles through his narrative's 'fast life strategy' towards his inevitable demise. "The intended response is not only to like the antihero, but also, at least ultimately, to dislike him too," explains Margrethe Bruun Vaage:

"The design of the antihero series typically includes a normative element (one should also recognize the antihero as morally bad), and the intended response is aimed at appreciation of this very element. There is thus a 'right' way to respond to these series as an appreciator" (Vaage, 2016: xv).

The 'Gentleman' Highwayman

Erin Mackie identifies the roots of the mythologizing of British criminals through to gangland 'heroes' of the 20th century as springing from three enduring archetypes: "Like the rake and the pirate, the highwayman is a culturally mythic figure valuable for our reading of the passage into modernity of forms of masculinity closely reliant on criminality for their significance and prestige" (Mackie, 2009: 71). She is in no doubt that the story of Dick Turpin is an exemplar of its type, because "In Turpin, claims made for the 'innocence', the inconsequentially playful nature of the gentlemen criminal receive their fullest confirmation" (Ibid. 96). Unlike Andrea McKenzie, however, she believes that "not until William Harriot Ainsworth's treatment of Dick Turpin in *Rookwood* (1834) is the highwayman *properly* romanticized" (italics mine) (Ibid., 71); Gillian Spraggs agrees that "it was *Rookwood*'s runaway success with the public that established Dick Turpin as the highwayman hero par excellence, and led to the almost total neglect of the memories of earlier famous robbers" (Spraggs, 2001: 257). In effect, Turpin becomes the übermensch archetype of this milieu, with his name synonymous with the criminal profession that made him famous.

The first performative iteration of the Turpin story seems to have been William Barrymore's 1819 play *Richard Turpin the Highwayman*, which featured the curious contemporary convention of utilising a live horse on stage as Black Bess, 'galloping'

on a treadmill in front of a moving backdrop. According to Cassie and David Mayer, the protagonist was yet to evolve into *Rookwood*'s glamorous gentleman hero. "There was little comedy and little of a Robin Hood-like generosity to the poor," they write. "This Turpin was a thug" (Mayer & Mayer, 2012: 88). It may be that the public's understanding of Turpin was a splintered one early in the 19th century, and that there was a greater appetite for a dramatization of his villainy before the publication of *Rookwood* in 1834. It is telling that in Barrymore's 1819 play, Turpin shoots Bess dead before his capture; in William H. Milner's theatrical hit *Turpin's Ride to York*, which debuted in 1836, Bess expires from exhaustion after loyally transporting her master to his Yorkshire destination. The final heroic tableau is iconic: "The horse stumbles, regains her feet, then falls again. She then lies still – lifeless. Turpin, standing astride her carcass, is seized" (Ibid., 89).

Mackie examines the seed of the evolution of the Turpin myth: what she identifies as the juxtaposition of the "gentleman and the criminal… around which cluster seventeenth- and 18th-century preoccupations with authority, legitimacy and masculinity" (Mackie, 2009: 2). To her, the phenomenon of gentleman criminal is the overlap of two distinct narratives: the histories of "manners, civility and taste among the elite... and the tradition of radicalism and resistance among the laboring classes" (Ibid.). Within this schema, the Turpin legend emerges from an antecedent, royalist-outlaw gentility, a 'cavalier, libertine masculinity' embodied in the 'criminal histories' of famous Turpin predecessors such as James Hind, Phillip Stafford and Claude Duval; the fashionable 'gentleman highwayman' James MacLaine, active in the decade after Turpin's death and prominently popular amongst the powerful men and society ladies of the beau-monde; and Gay's fictional, mock-heroic Macheath in *The Beggar's*

Opera. This 'type', then, renowned as much for his stylish, heterosexual erotic appeal as for his proficient loyalty to or navigation of establishment mores, figures "the convergence of the culturally prestigious (the gentleman) with the judicially and morally illegitimate (the criminal)" (Ibid., 73).

According to Mackie, Ainsworth's *Rookwood* refashions this 'gentleman criminal' template of popular criminal histories into "a blameless emblem of the world we have lost," propped like a cardboard theatre figure against the romantic diorama of a "nationalistic Neverland of Merry Old England" (Ibid.). In these histories, the individual's misdeeds strain against the narrative-judicial authority of the biographer, and the reader's implicit desire for the closure of incarceration, transportation or execution. Instead, Ainsworth's rural, naïve Turpin is placed outside the ordinary consequences of criminality, and thus beyond the bounds of history itself; his agency is defined by his comradeship with gypsies and their native 'cant', his horsemanship, and his mysterious and charismatic disappearance from the plot once his arc is completed. He is approximate to our contemporary understanding of a 'rogue', i.e. someone who bends rather than breaks the law and earns our admiration for his seductively twinkle-eyed indifference to moral convention. Mackie cites Michael McKeon's articulation of how the criminal biography might nudge a writer towards flipping the dynamic in such a manner: "The delinquent folk hero… is compelling enough in his pursuit of freedom to suggest that the common way of 'error' may in fact be the road of individual truth" (McKeon, 2002: 98).

Yet this spirit of independence, a yearning for financial and moral autonomy, was also a prosaic one for early 18th-century tradesmen like Turpin, who began his adult life as

a butcher. Peter Linebaugh writes that "among those hanged for highway robbery, a disproportionate number had been butchers... the relationship between the meat trades and highway robbery needs to be explained in the context of the transition from a moral economy to capitalist marketing practices" (Linebaugh, 2006: 184). The proletariat's ambitions of economic independence, or at least surviving above subsistence level, were increasingly thwarted by avaricious 'jobbers', unscrupulous wholesalers and dealers who began gaining control of the meat trade in the early decades of the 18th century. Soon, "the markets thus ceased to be the classic site where country people and householders met to satisfy mutual need" (Ibid., 199), and provincial butchers like Turpin were squeezed out of profitability by a thriving and unruly urban capitalism. In 1723, a piece of legislation known as the 'Black Act' made the hunting or poaching of wild game illegal, and punishable by death if the offenders were either armed and disguised, or caught in any of the King's forests (Thompson, 1975), in a country where the rights of the rural population had been steadily eroded since the 16th century by the process of enclosure of common land (Beloff, 1938). "The poor were among the worst placed to withstand the loss" writes J.M. Neeson, but "common usage of commons was not a charity for the weakest in the village, it was a resource for almost everyone" (Neeson, 1996: 174). This shift in societal focus after enclosure led to an erosion in the idea of community and created the perfect environment for the rise of a more predatory individualism. "Productive commons had always been the insurance, the reserves, the hidden wealth of commoners," says Neeson. "They were the oldest part of an ancient economy" (Ibid., 177).

The Black Act inadvertently opened up new and lucrative illicit markets for those willing to take a risk, as venison was greatly in demand at the tables of the wealthy and could

be sold at a premium. It is easy to imagine how the alienation of the working class bred a criminal defiance born out of necessity. E.P. Thompson writes that the Black Act "could only have been drawn up and enacted by men who had formed habits of mental distance and moral levity towards human life – or, more particularly, towards the 'loose and disorderly sort of people'" that the text of the Act specifically condemns (Thompson, 1975: 197).

The Act also created a culture of distrust in communities called 'hundreds', a unit of local government and taxation, which depended on co-operation and mutual reliance. Charles Chevenix Trench writes:

Informers were promised a pardon; and an element of communal punishment was introduced, totally alien to English law, under which all the inhabitants of a Hundred could be taxed to make good any damage done to property by offenders against this Act (Trench, 1967: 116).

This effectively legitimized and rewarded treachery and duplicity amongst poor communities: the type of self-inflicted communal wounds akin to those made legendary by the abhorrent 'Thief-Taker General' Jonathan Wild, who actively sought out homeless youths, trained them in street crime, and then turned them in – often to their deaths – for a reward. Wild was hanged in 1725, when Turpin himself was a butcher beginning to struggle with the demands of his first trade.

Thus the butcher-turned-criminal "aspired to regain a lost independence by taking to commercial activities… on the netherside of 'legitimate' commerce" (Linebaugh, 2006:

213). The networks he had formed as a tradesman – of inns, turnpike and shopkeepers – and the knowledge of transport arteries linking the city to its suppliers, made the life of the poacher or highwayman an accessible and practical alternative to an otherwise inevitable penury.

Smallpox and the Mark'd Man

Contemporary newspaper descriptions of Turpin draw attention to his disfigurement from smallpox as a means of identification. *The London Gazette* of Feb 22nd, 1735, when Turpin was wanted for burglary, describes him as "a tall fresh colour'd Man, very much mark'd with the Small Pox" (Ash and Day, 1948: 33). The differentiation of 'very much mark'd' is noteworthy, because smallpox was common (and often deadly) in England from the late 17th century onwards: "in the first half of the eighteenth century almost everyone suffered the disease at some stage and smallpox was generally thought to be responsible for one death in every five to six cases" (Smith, 1987: 16). Villages in Essex were particularly susceptible as they lay near the busy thoroughfares that linked London to the coast and the disease was rife in Essex at the time Turpin was a child (Ibid., 149). Smallpox was greatly feared, because by the late 17th century it had "overtaken the Plague, leprosy and syphilis as the most common cause of premature death throughout Britain" (Shuttleton, 2007: 1). The "superficial similarity of cutaneous symptoms meant that smallpox never wholly cast off a taint of association with venereal disease" (Ibid., 9), and David Shuttleton also reminds us that in the long 18th century, there was a "traditional association between bodily defects and deformations of character" (Ibid., 152). "The power of smallpox to leave permanent disfigurement," he says, "was taken as a lasting emblem of the underlying corruption of a fallen human nature, responsibility for which could be traced back to a

transgressive femininity" (Ibid.). The irony is that this 'transgressive femininity' is repurposed as flamboyant male potency in various iterations of Turpin in posthumous depictions of his life; in *Rookwood*, for example, Turpin "leaps out of history into mythic timelessness where masculine privilege, power and transgression can be savoured, unburdened by the accountability" that usually accompanies the highwayman legend (Mackie, 2009: 111). In Turpin's real life, smallpox survivors were often physically disfigured, to varying degrees, so the *Gazette's* description of his complexion suggests his pockmarks were ugly and severe enough to warrant this disfigurement being brought to the public's attention.

By the time the second edition of the *Newgate Calendar* (an anthology of 'true' histories of the lives and executions of famous criminals) was printed in 1779, Turpin's image in the popular imagination had undergone something of a makeover: "The spectators of the execution seemed to be much affected at the fate of this man, who was distinguished by the *comeliness* of his appearance" (italics mine) (anon, 1779). At a stroke, in one sentence, Turpin becomes a handsome composite of every extant highwayman myth, and is transfigured from scarred, barbarous hoodlum into a charismatic martyr like Claude Duval, the handsome 17th-century highwayman whose "gallantry and popularity with women lie at the heart of his fame" (Mackie, 2009: 71). It may be that the Duval legend, and that of James MacLaine, the 'Gentleman Highwayman' of the 1740s, set a contemporary benchmark for fantasies about male pulchritude in the context of the outlaw hero; in any event, pockmarks were not regarded as being as devastating to a man's romantic aspirations as they were to a woman's. The 18th-century writer John Cleland, for example, in *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure,* creates in 1748 a suitor "mark'd with the small-pox, but no more than what

added a grace of more manliness to features" (Cleland, 2018 [1748]: 188). Perhaps the truth of Turpin's rugged machismo (he was also 'broad about the shoulders' and above average height) was insufficiently enticing to the *Newgate Calendar*'s target audience. However, Shuttleton wonders "how actual survivors of the disease gave shape and meaning to such a traumatic experience of self-estrangement" (Shuttleton, 2007: 40), and it would be a 21st-century conceit to assume that an 18th-century man was not affected, at least at some emotional level, by a pronounced disfigurement.

Although Turpin is never described as a 'gentleman' in contemporary accounts, there is ample evidence to suggest he aspired to a gentleman's life, and in the 18th century "a gentleman is not allowed to forget that he is scarred… Smallpox is poetic punishment for narcissism and presumptuous social ambition" (Ibid.,141-142). The lexicon of labels such as 'deformed' and 'blemished' used to categorize the ugly, writes Gretchen Henderson, "have correlated ugliness with issues of social class, race, disability, gender and different aspects of culture" (Henderson, 2015: 117) but it is difficult to judge how far Turpin's lack of 'comeliness' influenced opinions of his character or social status, given that there are no references to his pockmarks in the 'canon' of Turpin adaptations after his death. Turpin's scarred face also presents a potential problem for the 21st-century scriptwriter in that the disfigured screen villain has now become an over-utilized and controversial trope, to the point where the BFI has since 2018 refused to fund films which feature a villainous character with a facial deformity (such as the nefarious Raoul Silva in the 2012 Bond film *Skyfall*).

Turpin and the 'Newgate Novel'

Frank Wadleigh Chandler traced the evolution of an indigenous *Literature of Roguery* (1907), which he described as "a study of realism, for it investigates the role enacted in literary art by the observation of low-life" (Chandler, 1958 [1907], vii). It describes

> the occasional criminal who is tending to become professional, or with the professional criminal who stops short of villainy. It depicts the occasional criminal lured farther and farther into the mazes of habitual crime, or else turning back ere confirmed in iniquity" (Ibid., 3).

The tradition develops from pre-16th-century remarks on roguery in the work of Chaucer, Langland and Gower; in the character of the 'Vice' in morality plays, a servant to the Devil; in tales of 'legendary rascals' such as Robin Hood; in the light-hearted 'jest-books' and 'beggar-books' of the 16th and 17th centuries; in the carcarel tracts and repentances published in pamphlets by the Ordinaries of Newgate prison; in 'scoundrel verse' and dictionaries of thieves' 'cant'; and in the large compendia of criminal biographies popular in the early to mid-18th century. Some of the most famous of these biographies, on the feared and powerful gangster Jonathan Wild, mark a shift in tone to "a debunking rather than a mythologizing", says John J. Richetti. "His end is not the occasion for a homily or an exemplum but for destructive ridicule" (Richetti, 1969: 58). Thus the facts are eventually "supplemented by the comic, erotic, and satiric possibilities of rogue legend and picaresque narrative" (Ibid., 59), such as in Henry Fielding's *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great* (1759)*,* in which Wild is now sardonically portrayed as a man "to whom, though nature had given the greatest and most shining endowments, she had not given them absolutely pure and without allay" (Fielding,

2011 [1759]: 13) in a veiled attack on the alleged corruption of Britain's first Prime Minister, Robert Walpole (Howson, 1970).

This 'literature of roguery' canon fed the development and rise of the 'Newgate novel' of the 1830s and 40s, a genre of heady escapades which refashioned records of criminal lives into rip-roaring adventures of chivalry and romantic conquest. "In a manner curious and now foreign to us," says Keith Hollingsworth, "Newgate prison and the gallows, the ultimate enforcers of the law, hovered in the imagination of Englishmen (sic) in the eighteenth century" (Hollingsworth, 1963: 3); by the 1820s, "the huge preoccupation with crime – characteristic of the large new mass of uneducated readers – was fed by newspapers, pamphlets, guides to sporting life, and the theatre" (Ibid., 29).

Based on *The Newgate Calendar* of the 18th and 19th centuries, collections of the most compelling of the stories recorded by the Ordinaries of Newgate, the Newgate fiction genre popularized crime as titillating entertainment. According to Lauren Gillingham, they "tend to accord a degree of primacy, licence, and pleasure to the exploration of criminality" (Gillingham, 2009: 7). The problem with the Newgate novel, she says, was its tendency to transform thuggish criminals like Turpin into 'melodramatic' heroes (Ibid., 6). "Ainsworth makes his highwayman a merry fellow," says Hollingsworth, "with a high regard for his profession" (Hollingsworth, 1963: 102). The Newgate novels could be looked at as embryonic versions of the gangster genre that emerged in American film in the 1920s, in which the catharsis of hero-punishment is celebrated at its most naked, without self-consciousness or irony. "Certainly our response to the gangster film is most consistently and most universally a response to sadism," writes Robert

Warshow. "We gain the double satisfaction of participating vicariously in the gangster's sadism and then seeing it turned against the gangster himself" (Warshow, 2016 [1948]: 229), which for Sparks "raises a question about the audience's guilty complicity in the heroization of gangsterism" (Sparks, 1992: 38).

Highwayman or Gangster?

The criminal protagonists of this genre were often real people, but according to J. E. Smyth, "few scholars have been willing to consider the gangster as a historical figure… the gangster has remained an uncharacteristically passive and nameless figure, a set of mirrors between public life and public culture of the interwar years" (Smyth, 1977: 59-60) that Smyth believed satisfied a dualistic desire in audiences for an embodiment of the heroic and the villainous in a single individual who could manipulate "the impressive forces and events that controlled postwar American history: modernity, Prohibition, wealth, crime" (Ibid., 61). In the gangland of 1960s London, the British were treated to two singular individuals of this genus. Twins Ronnie and Reggie Kray, menacing and feared organised criminals operating in the East End, found, and courted, a parallel fame as media celebrities, a duality mirrored in their differentiated personalities and modi operandi. Dick Hebdige argues that the brothers existed

> not merely as professional criminals, but as a living complex phenomenon, an organic Myth nurtured by press and public alike, until their actions ceased to have any meaning outside the theatre constructed for them (Hebdige, 1974: 9).

Their notoriety has persisted in two film adaptations of their criminal lives, neither of which have attempted to deconstruct this myth at the expense of its allure. In his 1974

paper 'The Kray Twins: A Study of a System of Closure', Hebdige writes that the infamous thugs who sought to dominate London's gangland in the 1960s, and grow their brand through an attendant celebrity fanbase, were expected to "fulfil the expectations of their audience… The Krays became a polysemantic symbol, our own White Whale within whom massive contradictions found dark and mysterious resolution" (Ibid.).

Hebdige was critical of the stance of anti-existentialists like Norman Mailer, whose response to "the burden of personal responsibility in a post-Nietschzian universe" (Ibid., 1) he regarded as a celebration of psychopathy and "an imaginative exercise undertaken in bad faith" (Ibid., 3). Rather than being positive agents of masculine physicality, as Mailer, and presumably Ernest Hemingway, would have seen them, Hebdige regards the Krays as rats caught in a trap not entirely of their own making. A full half century after their crimes, the Krays now appear more historical and cultural oddity than the feared, titanic villains the 1960s tabloids had created. Upon their convictions in 1969, for example, the *Mirror*, Britain's biggest newspaper at the time, opened their full-page cover story with a schadenfreude lede of "The Kray Firm is finally out of business", placed with criminal irony alongside the famous glamour portrait of the brothers taken by celebrity photographer David Bailey.

The 2015 film *Legend*, written and directed by Brian Helgeland, is liberated by the decade and a half that had passed since Reggie Kray's death in 2000, and inspired in part by the visual contradiction in the wreaths of carnations spelling out the film's title on the roof of Reggie's funeral hearse. Helgeland's twins, played by Tom Hardy, are cartoon confections, emasculated from the twins' brutish reputations by the script's

reliance on an unsettling preference for a comedic near-hysteria. The queasy 'them and us' diremption of the gangster film is still there; Reg taunts a policeman with "The difference between us… is that I, right, I work for me. And you, well, you work for them." But the film rejects Robert Warshow's idea that the gangster is "what we want to be and what we are afraid we may become" (Warshow, 2016 [1948]: 228). Hardy's interpretation of the psychopathic sadist Ronnie Kray veers more towards disdainful parody; Ron is bug-eyed and nasal, and devoid of the genuine menace that the real brothers probably possessed. Instead, the film willingly steps on to the same hamster wheel of celebrity content creation that Hebdige had identified 40 years earlier – chaos repackaged as commodity. "That's my formula," says Reggie. "Mix celebrities with a villain or two. The punters love it. It's really good for business." As a comparative study, *Legend* provides a salient lesson that there is a tendency in adaptations of the lives of real criminals to glamorize and/or fetishize both the crimes themselves and the age and context in which they were committed.

Criminal Myth

George Custen describes the myth-making of criminal lives (with reference to 'biopics' in general) as "the hero's antagonistic relations with members of a given community… Within this conflict, the hero is attempting to reformulate the boundaries of a given community" (Custen, 1992: 72). Custen cites Brecht's assertion that "the element of conflict in these bourgeois biographies derives from the opposition in which the hero stands vis-à-vis the dominant class. This is Ibsen's type of the enemy of the people" (Brecht, 2015 [1944], 19). Brecht is referring specifically to Wilhelm Dieterle's film biographies of the grand-bourgeoisie, but if we see Turpin as someone who, like the American gangster, is both of and against the people (and a man who courted

acceptance by the Yorkshire gentry towards the end of his life), the analogy is a practical one. Turpin is a gang member, but escapes the fate of the gang (for a short time, at least), whose members are all captured, and either executed or transported. He not only re-shapes the configuration of the gang – he himself is something of a loner – but it can also be argued that the real Richard Turpin sits outside, and thus antagonizes, the 'community' of adaptations of his criminal activity that began to appear even while he was still alive.

Steve Neale hints at an ambivalence in the way personal histories of the 'masculine' are presented in film, arguing that they either exaggerate or downplay the protagonist's narcissism, depending on whether this protagonist has been cast as either hero or villain. He identifies "a contradiction between narcissism and the law, between an image of narcissistic authority on the one hand and an image of social authority on the other" (Neale, 1993: 14). From what we know of his behaviour both before and after capture, Turpin seems to have enjoyed his own infamy. He was hanged in York in April 1739 after a ten-year criminal career of deer-poaching, aggravated burglary, highway robbery, murder and horse-theft. At the time of his capture he was the most wanted outlaw in England, but he was unique only in his ability to evade justice, and the scaffold, for as long as he did.

'Histories' of Turpin

Narratives of Turpin's life, from the 'histories' that began appearing days after his execution, through to James Sharpe's comparatively recent *Dick Turpin: The Myth of the English Highwayman* (2004), offer their own lessons in the complicated (and often highly unreliable) subject-object relationship of narrator and narrated. Thomas Kyll's

objective and factually verifiable account of Turpin's trial, *The Trial of Richard Turpin* (Kyll, 1739) is followed in the same year by Richard Bayes' *The Genuine History of the Life of Richard Turpin, the Noted Highwayman* (Bayes, 1739). Bayes is the first to introduce plausible conjecture into the narrative, appearing to decide (although he may have been referring to a contemporary source) that the young Turpin was "frequently guilty of misdemeanours, and behaved in a loose disorderly manner" (Ibid.,3); throughout, Bayes' narrative embellishes the raw reported facts of Turpin's crimes published in contemporary newspapers with an invented dramatic persona who speaks and behaves in a suitably criminal idiom.

The continued success of *The Beggar's Opera* coincided with the rising popularity of collections of criminal histories in the early to mid-18th century, such as *A Complete History of the Lives and Robberies of the Most Notorious Highwaymen, Footpads, Shoplifts and Cheats of Both Sexes,* (1719) by 'Captain Alexander Smith'; *A General History of the Lives and Adventures of the Most Famous Highwaymen, Murderers, Street-robbers etc.* (1736), by 'Captain Charles Johnson'; and *Lives of the Most Remarkable Criminals Who Have Been Condemned and Executed for Murder, the Highway, Housebreaking, Street Robberies, Coining Or Other Offences* (1735, anon.). These compendia, with their long, evocative titles, were based in part on the chapbooks written by the orderlies of Newgate prison. The chapbooks detailed, with some accuracy, the chronology of the criminal lives of the condemned and their reflections in the hours and days leading up to their executions, but by the time they had been plagiarised and refashioned as catalogues of criminal histories, these narratives had been embellished with the picaresque flourish of artistic license.

The faceless 'Captains' of the compendia – one of whom is rumoured to have been an early-career Daniel Defoe – also found it difficult to resist stitching the tales together with a thread of moralizing (and probably disingenuous) disapproval. In *Lives of the Most Remarkable Criminals*, the anonymous collator writes:

I should never have undertaken this work without believing it might in some degree be advantageous to the public… I should therefore think myself unpardonable if I did not take care to furnish them with such cautions as the examples I am giving of the fatal consequences of vice will allow, at the same time that I exhibit those adventures and entertaining scenes which disguise the dismal path, and make the road to ruin pleasing. They meet here with a true prospect of things, the tinsel splendour of sensual pleasure, and that dreadful price men pay for it – shameful death (Anon, 1927 [1736]: 27).

Whether the readers of these tales consumed them for moral nourishment or the vicarious thrill of voyeuristic spectacle is open to question. Preambles placed before the "tinsel splendour" of the collected narratives create a distancing effect for both reader and writer alike, suggesting a deliberate, intentional purpose for the writing and its consumption beyond simple enjoyment. Regardless, the public appetite for tales of roguery had been stirred, especially by characters whose criminality was distilled in these histories as small but heroic rebellions against the unfair distribution of wealth. Lincoln B. Faller says that as the highwaymen in their pages were "aspiring to be genteel, they could seem to want nothing more than the unearned income, the status and accoutrements of gentlemen" and that they were typically "shown acting as lone

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gunmen… because they were at their most attractive and most entertaining when they stood outside all bodies politic" (Faller, 1987: 179).

Many, like Turpin, began their criminal careers in violent gangs, but there was little narrative heroism to be found in the grim details of torture and mutilation that characterized the brutal, gin-fuelled burglaries on the outskirts of London of the 1720s and 30s. Turpin was a large, aggressive man, with a face disfigured by smallpox; his literacy and intelligence allowed him to avoid capture for several years, but he was eventually caught because of a barbarous act of petulance: after shooting his landlord's rooster, seemingly for his own amusement, he then threatened to blow the head off an innocent bystander.

There is little of the historical Turpin to like, but by the time the history of his life had been printed in the first *Newgate Calendar* in 1776 – a sort of 'greatest hits' compilation of the earlier compendia – the anonymous author had embroidered an important aesthetic detail – Turpin's 'comeliness' – that did not appear in any of the histories published soon after Turpin's death in 1739. But it would be years before this transfiguration was fully exploited. In the decade *Rookwood* was published, a series of Criminal Reform Acts in the 1830s was recalibrating society's attitudes to unlawful behaviour, and many of the crimes Turpin and his ilk had committed were no longer punishable by death.

The (Un)Loveable Rogue

The larger details of Bayes' account persist through to *Rookwood* a century later, but the somewhat confessional nature of Ainsworth's prefaces to *Rookwood* are telling.

"Turpin was the hero of my boyhood," he writes. "I had always a strange passion for highwaymen, and have listened by the hour to their exploits, as narrated by my father, and especially to those of 'Dauntless Dick', that 'chief minion of the moon' (Ainsworth, 1931 [1834]: 6). This is qualified, in the preface to the second edition, with a crucial admission: "Turpin, so far as he goes, is a pure invention of my own" (Ainsworth, 1834: 4).

William Harrison Ainsworth's *Rookwood* features the extended cameo of Richard – now 'Dick' – Turpin, an edgy but loveable rogue who fraternizes with Romany gypsies and completes an implausible overnight ride from London to York on his magnificent but fictitious black horse, Bess. A 1706 coaching notice reprinted in *Immortal Turpin* advertises the completion of the 200-mile journey in four days; Derek Barlow identifies the misappropriation of this improbable single-rider achievement from the 17th-century highwayman John 'Swift Nicks' Nevison to Turpin as first appearing in an 1808 chapbook titled *The Life and Trial of Richard Turpin, A Notorious Highwayman* (Barlow, 1973: 447). Curiously, the nickname 'Dick' does not seem to appear in any posthumous Turpin stories or histories preceding *Rookwood*, or in any contemporary newspaper accounts during Turpin's lifetime, but the appellation is used once by Turpin's childhood friend James Smith in the transcript of the former's trial in 1739 (Ibid., 402). Unaware of, or undeterred by, the facts of his subject's life, Ainsworth eulogizes this idealized, phantom 'Dick' Turpin as if he were the real but extinct idiosyncrasy of an idyllic, Chaucerian England. "With him expired the chivalrous spirit which animated successively the bosoms of so many knights of the road," Ainsworth gushes. "With him died away that passionate love of enterprise, that high spirit of devotion to the fair sex" (Ainsworth, 1931 [1834]: 210).

Ainsworth's creation is met with a starkly revisionist riposte at the close of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th, when a number of popular historians angrily repurpose Turpin from romantic hero back to irredeemable social enemy and outcast, arguably a reflexive response of the Victorian and post-Victorian mores of the time. In his *Book of Scoundrels*, Charles Whibley thunders, "Turpin was never a gentleman of the road at all! The ruffian… was a common butcher, who burned an old woman to death at Epping, and was very properly hanged at York for the stealing of a horse which he dared not bestride" (Whibley, 1897: 37). In his indignation, Whibley himself swallows a chunk of the myth he censures, and attributes blame to Turpin for the murder of an old woman that never actually transpired. Charles George Harper's *Half-hours with the Highwaymen* is similarly exasperated and plaintive: "Lies are brazen and immortal; truth is modest; and the Great Turpin Myth is too fully established to be thoroughly scotched" (Harper, 1908: 16), as is Arty Ash and Julius E. Day's *Immortal Turpin* (1948), which advertises itself as "The Authentic History of England's Most Notorious Highwayman" before proceeding, like Bayes, to drape the most disingenuous artistic licence over the bare bones of surviving newspaper reportage (although we must also be circumspect about the factual accuracy of the reports themselves). Ash and Day use a surfeit of pulse-quickening psychological exposition to flesh out their story with dramatic 'authenticity': "Turpin's wits, however, were far too quick for him to be caught so easily. With unerring intuition he sensed what would happen, and he was taking no chances" (Ash and Day, 1948: 61).

It is not until the publication in 1973 of Derek Barlow's sprawling but authoritative *Dick Turpin and the Gregory Gang* that we are able to traverse an objective Turpin narrative

that navigates Turpin's history across meticulously researched touchstones of historical fact, but which ultimately fixes this life in a wider speculative framework. Barlow uses *Immortal Turpin* as a dialogical sparring partner, making note of Ash and Day's extensive exploration of the historical record but robustly interrogating the validity of their more speculative assumptions. Barlow codifies his Turpin biography through the following explanation:

Some attempt has been made in this account… to shew (sic) how even facts become distorted to be retold as fiction, how fiction was inspired by rumour or motivated by people who wanted to capitalise on the public interest in a man who eluded their grasp like quicksilver (Barlow, 1973: 430).

Tellingly, he makes consistent use of the archaic 'shew' instead of the more didactic 'show' throughout his narrative. Yet he also leaves little room for sentiment in this history, and recounts Turpin's life with a forensic objectivity; the closest he comes to any sort of creative empathy is in his rather gruff assessment of Turpin's state of mind on the gallows: "All things considered, drunk or not, he made a brave enough exit for a man who had no choice in the matter" (Ibid, 429).

James Sharpe's *The Myth of The English Highwayman* (2005) examines "how the disjuncture between the historical and mythical Turpin, and the way in which England's best-known highwayman [is] constantly being recreated, reflect[s] on the uses and meanings of history in modern Britain" (Sharpe, 2005: x). Sharpe is wary of myth when it cuckolds recorded fact. He counsels that "if the past is worth anything, the past that is on offer should be recreated at as professional and technically skilled a level as

possible" (Ibid., 216) and that "fame is a strange commodity, and there is no doubt that Dick Turpin will continue to enjoy it; the historian might be forgiven for thinking that he enjoys it in rather larger measure than he deserves" (Ibid., 217).

Dick Turpin – The Television Series

The 1979-1982 LWT series *Dick Turpin*, written by Richard Carpenter, arguably recasts Turpin furthest from the historical facts of his life. Cultural historian James Chapman writes that Carpenter's Turpin

need[s] to be understood in relation to the ideological context of Thatcherism and oppositional cultural practices in the 1980s. It is generally held that Thatcherism provoked two distinct cultural responses: on the one hand the heritage costume drama, deploying the past as a site of nostalgia but also offering space for social criticism; and on the other hand the contemporary realist drama, focusing on the sense of exclusion felt by many of the less privileged in British society at a time of high unemployment and socio-economic distress" (Chapman, 2015: 137).

According to Chapman*, Dick Turpin* is "a point of convergence between these two traditions" (Ibid.,), although family-friendly heartthrob Richard O'Sullivan was cast in the title role to make the undercurrent of anti-capitalist rebellion more palatable to a Saturday teatime audience; the Turpin of history craved acceptance from the higher echelons of a society that Carpenter lampoons with such relish. "That the class politics of Dick Turpin are explicitly left-wing is left in no doubt," says Chapman, "by the thoroughly unsympathetic representation of both the aristocracy and the military… the underlying narrative of Dick Turpin is one of class struggle" (Ibid.).

In the series, Turpin's arch nemesis is the corrupt, Dickensian sheriff and landowner Sir John Glutton, who drives Turpin's farming parents to starvation while he is away on military service, in a clever synthesis of the historical backgrounds of royalist highwaymen Claude Duval and James Hind. Stripped of his family inheritance, Turpin vows, like Robin Hood (the subject of a subsequent and highly successful Carpenter television project) to resist this tyranny at every turn. "I shall wear them down like water dripping on a stone," he says. "And I'll make my own justice." This mythology places him in the 'outlaw hero' rubric formulated by Graham Seal, who says that "all outlaw heroes operate outside and against the official legal systems of the state, but remain within the unofficial legal and moral code of those who see them as one of their own" (Seal, 1996: 8). Thus the audience is recruited as the surrogate poor for the duration of each episode, and given license to excuse Turpin's criminality while he champions the social sovereignty of the downtrodden everyman. There is a convenient caveat: while the TV Turpin's activity would be regarded as 'bending the law' by a modern audience – other British dramas of the era, such as *The Sweeney* (1975-1978) and *Minder*, would explore these contradictions more explicitly – many of the crimes the historical Turpin committed were punishable by death.

"The themes of *Dick Turpin*," writes Chapman, "particularly the suggestion that crime is caused by the politics of poverty and social exclusion, clearly had parallels for early Thatcherite Britain" (Chapman, 2015: 146). Turpin's final words before his looming execution at the end of season two are appropriately sombre in both tone and implication: "The law is like a flimsy cobweb," he laments. "It catches the small flies and lets the big ones fly right through." The finale of the episode remains faithful to the

tropes of the genre, however, and a gleeful Turpin escapes from the scaffold and rides off into the sunset of a final season.

Dick Turpin and the Thriller Picture Library Comics

The iconography of Turpin, for almost three centuries, has also undergone a complex process of rehabilitation. Much of this myth was constructed in visual recreations of his persona in film and comic books, and the Turpin now vividly fixed in the popular imagination is a dashing outlaw swashbuckler with a romantic social conscience, in "a *Boy's Own* environment of knowing in the mainstream popular culture" (Seal, 1996: 188).

Cheap chapbooks of folk tales and legends, some with rudimentary woodblock illustrations, had been popular since the 1500s. But by the middle of the 19th century, steam-powered printing presses were revolutionising the commodification of the written word and allowing short, entertaining stories to be consumed cheaply and widely. This was the era of the penny dreadfuls and the longest-running serialization by any author to date. Edward Viles' *Black Bess, or the Knight of the Road* (1863-68) took Ainsworth's novel as its inspiration and stretched the Turpin mythology across 254 volumes in five years, complete with illustrations and covers by the prolific Robert Prowse, who dresses him in a red coat, probably for the first time. The series even shoehorned a guest star into the story, the nephew of Claude Duval – who had hanged 35 years before Turpin's birth – for good measure.

At the end of the 19th century the penny dreadful spawned 'libraries', with each issue featuring 32 pages of outlaw adventures and a vivid, chromolithographed cover. Turpin

had his own 'library' for most of the first decade of the new century, printed by the Aldine Press; these tales reappear as pocket-sized threepenny novels in the interwar years, but with a single, meagrely drawn illustration. At the same time, manufacturers like Lambert & Butler were releasing collectible cigarette cards featuring a rogues' gallery of pirates and highwaymen: miniature snapshots of a lush world of glamorous malefaction. It wasn't until the post-war years that Turpin was finally brought to life in comic strips that could do real justice to the evolving perversion of his history. The young readers of post-war Britain wanted heroic icons that denoted the dynamism and vigour of a bright new age. This was the era of the cinema swashbuckler – Dick Turpin had already appeared on the big screen in various guises since the first silent films, and was a mainstay in the imaginations of British youth. But until the second world war, the movie swashbuckler and the comic 'funnies' were rivals for the attention of the same pocket money.

Alfred Harmsworth's Amalgamated Press, which had acquired the rights to the stories in Aldine's *Dick Turpin* Library, launched their own *Thriller Picture Library* in 1951 in comic strips shared with other AP stable titles such as *Comet*, *Knockabout* and *Sun*. The stars of these series were Turpin and Robin Hood, whose serials ran until the end of the decade. Their brash celebrations of monarchy and chivalry can be seen as self-conscious articulations of a nation reasserting its identity as a relevant global power; Britain's former territories had began to fight for, and gain, independence from the crown, fears were coalescing around the rising power of the Soviet Union, and the protagonist of the swashbuckler, as Chapman puts it, was "invariably cast in the role of protector of the state against tyranny and subversion" (Chapman, 2011, 85).

In order to create the rather otherworldly visual tone of an imagined, picaresque England, Amalgamated hired a number of Italian artists from the renowned Milan studio of Rinaldo D'Ami, and the famous British painter Septimus E. Scott (Chapman, 2011), whose vibrant, muscular work was widely recognizable in First World War propaganda material and the railway company posters of the 1920s. Though a rare eye-witness description of Richard Turpin in the 1730s has him dressed in a blue coat, he has almost invariably been painted in the luxurious regimental red of a mid-18th-century Royal Dragoons cavalry officer since the covers of Viles' *Black Bess*. The cheap, hematite rust red of infantry uniforms had been a standard since Cromwell's New Model Army of the 17th century, but the bright rust-red of the expensive cochineal beetle was reserved for the officer class and above. It is in these covers that the pseudo-military DNA of the Turpin myth rises insistently to the surface – this Turpin is an outlaw, but he is also an officer and a gentleman, with all of the accompanying skillsets that this symbiotic antagonism affords him. *Rookwood* had already asserted the primacy of the highwayman's sex appeal over that of the soldier:

As to the women, they dote upon him: not even your red coat is so successful. Look at a highwayman mounted on his flying steed, with his pistols in his holsters, and his mask upon his face. What can be a more gallant sight? (Ainsworth, 1931 [1834]: 82).

It was a logical next step to simply assimilate the visual appeal of highwayman with that of the soldier, and let the former appropriate the accoutrements of the latter. Viles dresses Turpin to the nines, with something of a simultaneously lingering but condescending gaze:

He was tall and muscular, and sat in the saddle with an ease and grace as rare as it was admirable. His attire was well calculated to set off his figure to the greatest advantage; it was that so much affected by military officers in the reign of the second George… A three-cornered black felt hat, trimmed with broad gold lace, and with a long black feather trailing from it… A crimson-coloured coat, very long in the waist and very stiff in the skirts trimmed and faced also with gold lace… We have said nothing of the jewellery upon his person, and which glistened faintly in the moonlight. A refined taste would have considered there was a little too much of it (Viles, 1863: 2).

By the time of the publication of Alfred Noyes' 1906 poem *The Highwayman*, the visual archetype of carmine virility was permanently fixed in the zeitgeist: "Blood red were his spurs in the golden noon / wine-red was his velvet coat" (Noyes, 1906).

The Thriller Library Turpin is both the able swordsman of the Errol Flynn swashbucklers and the pensive measured detective of Arthur Conan Doyle: part Robin Hood, part Sherlock Holmes, in adventures which feature, early in the series, run-of-the-mill vignettes of gallantry and social redress. In a 50s Britain insecure and reactionary in the face of increasing immigration from Ireland and the former colonies, broad, aggressively negative racial stereotypes predominate in its popular culture. Turpin is assisted by a fat Irish inebriate called Jem and a boneheaded, comical African known as Beetles, a character played by Britain's first black film star, Ernest Trimingham, in the 1912 silent picture *The Adventures of Dick Turpin – The King of the Highwaymen*.

The Dick Turpin Thriller Library becomes increasingly odd and transgressive as it nears its end, sensing, perhaps, the postmodern upheaval to come, and responding to a changing readership hungry for the gothic, the monstrous and the supernatural. Turpin was now paired in a charged but chaste partnership with a svelte female crime-fighting outlaw called Moll Moonlight, who makes probably her first appearance in Leonard Matthews' illustrated 1946 children's book *Highway to Yesterday*, and then becomes a mainstay of the Turpin comics of the 1950s and 60s; her creation was no doubt inspired by the runaway success of the 1945 costume film drama *The Wicked Lady*, in which Margaret Lockwood plays a beautiful and charismatic highwayman impersonator. It is also possible that in addition to its pleasing alliteration, the punchy single/double syllables of Moonlight's name are also an oblique reference to the cross-dressing entertainer Moll Cutpurse (aka Mary Frith), 17th-century England's most notorious female criminal.

In the Thriller Library, Moll is pitted, in increasingly tongue-in-cheek storylines, against the peculiar and sinister new villain Creepy Crawley, a royal grenadier turned traitor. In *Dick Turpin and the Castle of Peril* (1958), for example, a schizophrenic mash-up of Dracula, King Kong and Red Scare paranoia, Dick and Moll travel to a castle in the wilds of Scotland to confront the evil Russian Count Vronsky and a 100-million-year-old defrosted Siberian giant with the strength of twenty men.

Who is this 1950s Turpin in the context of postmodernist criticism? Irving Howe was dismissive of comic characterization, which he said "consists of persistent identification of each name with an outstanding personality trait" and that "the deepest identification we can feel towards a mass culture hero… is ultimately with our role of

social anonymity" (Howe, 2009: 48). Robert Warshow was less vituperative, conceding of comics that "perhaps the worst thing they do is meet the juvenile imagination on its crudest level and offer it an immediate and stereotyped satisfaction" (Warshow, 2009: 76). But as Leslie Fielder remarks, "It is here we begin to see that there is a politics as well as a pathology involved in the bourgeois hostility to popular culture" (Fielder, 2008: 130). Like the character fighting the Siberian giant, Turpin is as much a cypher for the Nietzschean übermensch as he is for Umberto Eco's 'parsifalism': the mythic chastity' that protects the superman from "the events, and therefore the passing of time, connected with erotic ventures" (Eco, 2008: 155).

As discussed, the spirit of Dick Turpin was to return in the eponymous late 70s British television series as a social crusader – a raised middle finger to Thatcherism hidden in a rollicking Saturday teatime family drama – and in the quasi-pirate new romanticism of 80s pop star Adam Ant. He therefore lives in an odd purgatory, neither alive nor fully dead in the public consciousness, an icon of reinvention who inhabits no fixed point in our imaginations:

For all his relative coherence, the heroic highwayman is still something of a shifting and indeterminate figure… he swims in and out of focus as he moves through his texts, and it is finally this significance that determines his usefulness as a cultural symbol (Faller, 1987: 175).

But like the multi-slice imaging of a cultural scan spanning three centuries, an attentive examination still reveals much about the physiology of a rich and enduring myth.

Turpin and the Victim's Voice

We can attempt to offset the less palatable elements of Turpin's fame by giving a more urgent voice to the victims of his criminality, despite the structural problems this may pose for a script centred upon a notorious historical figure. An under-researched area in adaptation studies is how victims of historical crimes are represented in adaptations of the lives of the perpetrators of those acts. Esther Snell recognizes a burgeoning interest in victims' stories surfacing in the newspapers of the mid-18th century, a recognition of the sufferer's voice that she describes as a "discourse of victimization, defined as the distinct experience of the victim separate from that of either the criminal or the regulating authorities." In this "collation of details that particularly drew attention to the victim's perspective" (Snell, 2007: 29), there would be no doubt in the public's mind about the danger that violent crime could present, as "the consequence of this discursive shift was to present an almost unremittingly frightening and disturbing picture of the nature of aggravated larceny" (Ibid., 37). Snell asserts that newspapers were critically important in public perceptions of crime and its perpetrators: "Discursive printed narratives… constitute perhaps the most extensive extant medium in which historical discourses of criminality were shaped… in disseminating crime stories the newspaper press operated on an unprecedented scale" (Ibid., 3).

Given that contemporary 18th-century newspaper reports form the textual anchor upon which most 'histories' of Turpin were moored, the adaptor of history must put 'journalism' in its proper context as an ordering of information in a narrative. It is impossible to know exactly how much information appearing in newspapers of Turpin's time is verifiably and completely accurate. In his study on truth and trust in the 18th-century print world, William B. Warner describes the newspaper of the era as "an

unblended mixture of differently sourced news items" (Warner, 2018: 31). In this increasingly competitive environment, newspapers relied on a network of stories which were 'free posted' or 'franked' from other publications. Thus, "the trustworthiness of each newspaper depended upon the truthfulness of the whole network", and "a concern for the truthfulness of the news became embedded in guild values and practices" (Ibid., 34). Newspaper editors "assumed the sober posture of an historian" (Ibid., 35); paradoxically, "the anonymity of much of the writing… taught readers to sift and evaluate the ideas of strangers" (Ibid., 36). An effective balance was nonetheless struck, because "the very qualities of the eighteenth-century commercial newspaper that seemed to vitiate its credibility broadened its influence" (Ibid., 37). Readers trusted what they read because of an apparent transparency of purpose that seems astonishing by modern standards.

These publications also created a kind of proto-serialization through their inability to print lengthy or complete accounts of newsworthy events soon after their occurrence, and this enforced delay would have whetted the appetites of their readers for further 'instalments'. "Because of its periodicity," writes Warner, "the newspaper made the implicit promise that each account is oriented toward the more correct, complete and meaningful account to come. The news of an unfinished event drew readers into a very lifelike suspense as to how a news story would end" (Ibid., 38). Anyone following the Turpin saga would therefore have been hungry for a steady diet of news about sightings of the fugitive, with regular updates on his behaviour and crimes.

At the same time, much of the Turpin myth being created during his own lifetime was based on hearsay and embellishment, and editors were no doubt also balancing

credibility with titillation in a manner not unfamiliar to any reader of 21st-century tabloids. In effect, then, contemporary newspaper reports about Turpin were micro-adaptations in their own right. "Adaptation and journalism each qualify the other *as adaptation* and *as journalism*," argues Kyle Meikle, "while at the same time they qualify our sense of the 'real'" (Meikle, 2018: 88). In broad agreement with Thomas Leitch (2015), who argues that "reportage has always been adaptational" (Meikle, 2018: 91), he suggests that journalism represents "the first rough draft" of an adapted history. "Both adaptation and journalism", Meikle continues, "represent breaking points at which stories become stories, and are then able to tell other stories" (Ibid., 89). It is also useful here to keep in mind Mieke Bal's separation of 'narrative', 'story' and 'fabula', in which 'narrative' is the conveyance of "a story in a medium", 'story' is "the context of that text", and 'fabula' is "a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors" (with 'actors' defined as "agents that perform actions") (Bal, 2017: 5).

In the case of an adapted history (including biographies), the extracted 'fabula' of newspaper reports become source texts for the 'story' and 'narrative' of that adaptation, in lieu of primary sources such as observation or interviews; we are at the mercy of our imagined integrity of any author of such reports. The exception is Thomas Kyll's first-hand account of Turpin's trial, the aridity of which might be seen as evidence of its reliability. In a similar way, victims of or witnesses to Turpin's crimes may have had little *obvious* motivation to lie, either in a deposition or an encounter with a reporter (not that this excludes the possibility); memory, however, is unreliable, and fear a powerful muse, so *unintentional* embellishment by angry and frightened victims may also have made its way into the historical record. Hilary Mantel argues that our public

selves can even be seen as adaptations of a more private, primary self. "We send out a persona to represent us, to deal for us in public," she says. "There are two of us, one home and one away, one original and one adapted" (Mantel, 2017, Reith Lecture 5). But in the end, perhaps there is no 'source truth', no irreducible purity in the Turpin narrative. As Meikle puts it: "journalism is drafty" (Meikle, 2018: 92); it is also, like its source event, a "quicksand of relativity" (Randall, 2015: 138). Truth, then, might be just collectively unreliable narration – and all of us its unreliable narrators.

Methodology

The Writer's Ontology

Within the parameters defined by *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* of 'ontology' as "the philosophical investigation of existence, or being" (Craig, 2005: 756), this work is underpinned by the constructionist ontological position that much of reality is created in the mind (Schwandt, 2003), and, more specifically, the anti-realist, relativist epistemological stance of social constructionism (Hammersley, 1992), whereby "if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas & Thomas 1928: 571-2). The foundations of this position are four pillars of belief, namely: that our understanding of existence is based on our perception of that existence, not on objective observation; that knowledge exists in evolving historical and cultural contexts; that knowledge is a result of social processes; and that this knowledge is connected to social action (Burr, 2015). The inclusion of the social in this perspective differentiates it from the constructivist focus on the individual (Young and Collin, 2004), and allows this project to place an examination of a plurality of Turpin identities and texts within the context of a social arena, or 'dramaturgy' (Goffman,

1959), that creates, evolves, disseminates and consumes those iterations (Bryman, 2012; Crotty, 1998).

The inherently reflexive nature and "artist like processes" (Steier, 1991: 4) of a practice as research project, with creative writing as its artefact, anchor it in this constructionist perspective, alongside its adherence to the idea that no creative research methodology or epistemology can "yield an unmediated self-evident truth" (Nelson, 2013: 6), and that all 'facts' arrive with an "accompanying bias" (Hicks, 1991: 69-70). Robin Nelson points to the work of Nöe (2004) and Varela (1993), who observed that cognition is "the enactment of a world and mind" (Nelson, 2013: 43) rather than the representation of a 'pre-given' reality, and it is this 'enactment' of individual and social 'realities' that is the fabric of the human interaction within which art is both seeded and woven. Via this postmodernist emphasis on plurality, "stories are constructions of their time", (Etherington, 2004: 27), reality is "constructed in discourse" (Nelson, 2013: 54), and the individual postmodern self-apprehended as "a collection of fragments" (Griffiths, 2012: 168), "constructed in response to the social and power structure it inhabits" (Ibid., 169).

Annexed to this position, however, is an exculpatory caveat that warns against the "god trick" of social constructionism enabling the "conquering gaze" of relativism (Haraway, 1991), through which those in power become arbiters of agreed truth (Barrett, 2010). This seems of particular importance in our 'post truth' 21st century, but is also of relevance to a creative writing project which examines the hierarchy of 'hypotexts' assembled in the adaptation of the life of an 18th-century historical figure, using Genette's (1997) formulation of a text (the 'hypotext') serving as the source of a

subsequent text, or 'hypertext'. Genette identifies five types of transtextuality, itself defined as "all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts" (Genette, 1997: 1). These are as follows:

Intertextuality, "a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts" (Ibid.);

Paratextuality, the "secondary signals" (Ibid., 3) of a literary work, such as its title, subtitles, foreword, cover, and so on;

Metatextuality, the "relationship most often labelled 'commentary'. It unites a given text to another, of which it speaks without necessarily citing it… This is the critical relationship par excellence" (Ibid., 4);

Architextuality, "a relationship that is completely silent, articulated at most only by a paratextual mention" (Ibid;) and

Hypertextuality, "any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the hypertext) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the hypotext), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary" (Ibid., 5).

It is the last of these types which is of relevance to this research, and in particular the playful and transgressive nature of its application. As Genette explains:

Every form of hypertextuality entails some kind of game, inherent in the very practice of reusing existing structures; at bottom, whatever its urgency, tinkering is always a game, at least to the extent that it processes and uses an object in an unforeseen, unprogrammed, and thus 'unlawful' manner – true play always entails some degree of perversion. Using and processing a (hypo)text for purposes foreign to

its initial program is likewise a way of playing with it, of having fun with it and making fun of it (Ibid., 399).

The solution to the danger of the 'god trick' inherent in such mischievous assemblages, according to Haraway, is to sustain "the possibility of webs of connections" (Ibid., 144); consequently, any hierarchy of hypotexts must be democratically fluid and adaptive, and with due consideration to the subjective agency of these actors, as per Weber's (1904) interpretation of *verstehen* or the act of 'understanding'. This also provides the creative writer with an opportunity to unlock the innate artistic potential in all human testimony for "fiction, simulacra, dissimulation, lie and perjury" (Derrida, 2000: 29). The reflexivity (Bolton, 2014) of a creative research project therefore demands a self-awareness of the researcher's own positionality in a range of contexts (Bourdieu, 1993), and an "imaginative openness of mind and heightened receptivity to reality" (Bate, 1963: 18). This "looping process of reflexivity, chaos and complexity" (Hasenman and Mafe, 2009: 214) leads to a 'shock of recognition' (Sullivan, 2006) and a further immersion into the creative loop (Goldstein, 2005) where further "novel, reflexive zones" (Slager, 2009: 51) are encountered and mapped.

After a thorough review of this range of ideas in adaptation studies, and of the wide variety of textual sources in Turpin mythology, it was evident there was a new contribution to knowledge to be made through a script artefact that explores how these ideas and sources can be synthesised into a complex fictional composite of a real human life. This synthesis of the disparate tacit with the specifically explicit combined the extraction of embodied knowledge from the researcher with research undertaken amid the exterior knowledge located in the corpus of Turpin sources. Within the

accompanying methodology and exegesis, a further contribution to knowledge is offered that utilises the original concept of a fluid 'hierarchy of hypotexts': this model, and its application in the artefact, will be further explained in the methodology below, and the exegesis that follows. Knowledge is therefore embodied in the creative work, articulated in the exegesis, and contributed via the integration of the two; it is in the nature, however, of the hermeneutics of artistic research that this process does not achieve "objectivity as traditionally conceived" (Nelson, 2013: 20), and that its thought process is "not constrained to the abstract and propositional but embraces embodied passions" (Ibid., 62) in the search for "a means of expressing previously inexpressible psychological states" (Barrett, 2007: 10).

An Epistemological Methodology for Creative Practice Research

A supporting epistemological, multi-mode framework can be erected around this researcher's instinctive conviction that every creative act, however tiny, is an incremental contribution to the evolution of the human experience. The creative impulse nudges the artist, through trial and error, towards an outcome that can be privately enjoyed or publicly shared; with every striving towards an original idea, virgin creative territory may be claimed, and new vistas open up ahead, which have this territory as their vantage point. This 'evolution' of our creative understanding of the world can and does include fictions, misunderstandings, deliberate untruths, mistakes, and missteps.

In this intrepretivist-constructivist model, reflexivity makes the 'tacit' knowledge (Polanyi, 1983; Schön, 1983) of the writer explicit and meaningful through the 'act' of 'material thinking' (Carter, 2004), whereby "the materials and processes of production

have their own intelligence that comes into play in interaction with the artist's creative intelligence" (Bolt, 2007: 29). 'Knowledge' and 'knowing' are distinct entities, with the latter arising through a 'processual relationship' between subject and object (Nelson, 2013). The model draws heavily on Nelson's 'praxis' (theory imbricated in practice), comprised of the tripartite knowledges of 'know-how' (tacit or embodied knowledge), 'know-that' (external or propositional knowledge) and know-what (the tacit made explicit), whereby the externality of 'know-what' is re-located through reflection in an oscillation from the proximal to the distal (Polanyi, 1983; Nelson, 2013) and back again, in a "continuing process of negotiation" (Nelson, 2013: 58). This tacit knowledge "can also take the form of feelings and intuition" (Knudsen, 2018: 127), with the warm, insistent buzz of innovative certainty experienced as "a delicate conviction in the bones" (Gibson, 2018: ix).

These 'multiple resonances' then emerge as 'discernible forms', in a learning structure analogous with the 'iterative cyclical web' model of Smith and Dean (2011) with its multiple points of entry and transition, and resultant diversity of insights and perspectives. While Smith and Dean's framework attempts to reconcile the tangled, sometimes unhelpful, and often competitively contradictory research terminology now current in the creative academy, this researcher prefers the more inclusive nomenclatures of:

1) 'artistic research', which "does not really involve theory building or knowledge production in the usual sense… it creates room for that which is unthought" (Borgdoff, 2012: 61) and

2) 'creative practice research', an umbrella term bringing together a cluster of homogenous methodological labels, which "demands that the creative work is either *the result of research* and therefore performs the research findings (practice-based research, research-led practice), or is used as *a site for systematically gathering reflections on the process* of doing/making, in order to contribute knowledge to the practice of doing/making (practice-led research, practice as research)" (Batty and Kerrigan, 2018: 7).

Since the artefact in this researcher's project is both the result of research and a site for reflections, the latter nomenclature would seem most appropriate in this instance. This specific creative practice research project thus combines a selection of theoretical models without being bound to them, as it is an openness to the unexpected and unplanned which allows for innovations to occur in the creative practice context. These underpinning models, which provide the theoretical skeleton on which innovation can be grown, also include the Csikszentmihalyi 'flow' model, wherein the "mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. Optimal experience is thus something we make happen" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 3) after a period of unconscious 'incubation' of embryonic creative potentialities (Sacks, 2017). The artist is enclosed in this prepared space of creative receptivity, "a state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter" (Ibid., 4), or what Goodall identifies as "knowledge-based dreaming" (Goodall, 2011: 204); Nelson describes the same as an analogous pathway of "anticipation, preparation and sixth-sense awareness" (Nelson, 2013: 47).

When this state of flow is repeatedly achieved and its resulting ideas are brought to fruition, its products can be manifested in a broader academic context:

Creativity results from the interaction of a system composed of three elements: a culture that contains symbolic rules, a person who brings novelty into the symbolic domain, and a field of experts who recognize and validate the innovation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996: 6).

The state of flow can be augmented by the 'scavenger methodology' (Halberstam, 1998:13) known as 'bricolage' (Lévi-Strauss, 1966), a mode of collection and assemblage of different tools and influences. At the theoretical level, the 'bricoleur' "works between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011: 5), at the centre of a complex intermeshing of conceptual frameworks. For the more granular and specific stratum of creative writing, Webb and Brien utilise Tess Brady's (2000) 'bowerbird' analogy to envision a hyper-aware, intellectually agile researcher who finds "harmonies and synergies" and combines them in a nest-like "satisfying and resolved creative artefact" (Webb and Brien, 2012: 199). In Robyn Stewart's interpretation, "the resulting bricolage will be a complex, dense, reflexive, collage-like creation that represents the researcher's stories, representations, understandings and interpretations of the world and the phenomena under investigation," (Stewart, 2007: 128).

In this research project, the bricolage process also peels away, and then reconfigures, the palimpsests of texts and layered identities that constitute the Turpin mythos, thus

contributing to the harvesting of knowledge outputs jointly externalised via the combined praxis, iterative cyclical web, and flow models of creative practice research.

The Structural Specificity of Script as Artefact

Creative writing research makes knowledge contributions to "practice and formal innovation," and "discourses on creativity… social formation and historical narrative" (Webb and Brien, 2010: 199). Perhaps most pertinently, in the context of a historical adaptation, its "most concrete contribution to knowledge outside the boundaries of its own disciplinary practice… has been, arguably, in defamiliarising the familiar (Morley 2007)" (Webb and Brien, 2010: 203): the bi-directional shifting of the "known to the unknown", from a 'scientific', data gathering research perspective, or the "unknown to the known", whereby the amorphous, tacit mass of inspiration is made concrete (Sullivan, 2010: 100) in writing outcomes, as both the result of research and the site for reflection. In the case of Turpin, this 'defamiliarising' is of the 'familiar' fictional construct of Turpin in the romanticised retellings of his life that begin even before his capture and execution, and continue to the present day.

If screenwriting is the chosen primary research method of a creative writing project, chosen for its suitability as an artefact constructed from a bricolage of sources, it needs first to be positioned specifically and accurately within its wider screen production context. "The screenplay as research artefact," argue Batty and Baker, "uses its inherent devices – such as form and format, structure, character, theme, setting and dialogue – to *tell* research" (Batty and Baker, 2018: 75). However, it is important to also highlight the distinction between the screenplay as 'blueprint' for the 'collaborative labour' of production (Conor, 2014), on the one hand, which can result in an inhibited

creativity (MacDonald, 2010), and screenplays as 'independent texts' (Horne, 1992) or 'ontologically autonomous' works of literature (Nannicelli, 2013), on the other. This duplexity suggests a life for the screenplay written in the academy beyond the 'industrial model' of production (Sawtell, 2016), instead of the lonely furrow of something akin to entering a bake-off armed with just the recipe (Taylor, 2016). In other words, the script – the recipe – can *itself* be the end product.

It is thus helpful to use a greater specificity in the structural definition of the final artefact; Baker prefers the term 'script' for this outcast, this "textual other, the exiled abject of mainstream film and theatre discourse" (Baker, 2013: 1), through which a reader 'sees' this film or series in the abstract (Blumenberg, 1990):

By not signalling the mode of production or reception (stage, television or cinema), the term 'script' hopefully reorients the reader from approaching the text as ancillary to a staged or screened production to understanding it as finished creative and research work on its own terms (Baker, 2013: 2).

In the interests of avoiding any cognitive dissonance regarding the 'structural integrity' of the Turpin project, it should be stated that this four-part script follows the formatting conventions of a television mini-series production blueprint, but is not bound by the established industry orthodoxies of three- or five-act dramatic structure. The success or failure of this approach, which has as its core justification the concept of a 'hierarchy of hypotexts', is rigorously examined in the exegesis which accompanies the final artefact. It could be argued that because the script could be further adapted to a medium other than television, it represents a more substantial contribution to

knowledge than an artefact which strictly adhered to the protocols of the commissioned screenplay. Though the script can hopefully stand on its own merits, it has nonetheless been written under the influence of the 'quality TV meta genre' aesthetic, defined by Dan Hassler-Forest "as a form of adaptation, successfully 'remediating' the aesthetics of cinema on the one hand, and the narrative structure of the 19th-century realist novel on the other" (Hassler-Forest, 2014: 163).

Methods and Hierarchies

This research relies on an assortment of methods for its retrieval of qualitative data: archival research; textual analysis of sources from biography, history, literature, folklore, story and screenwriting theory, and popular culture (film, television, theatre and comic books); and the tertiary source of a) inspiration gleaned from site visits (York Castle, York Tyburn) and b) artistic source material on the periphery or outside this subject domain, which includes creative works across different disciplines which in some way have inspired an element of the script's development. These influences are referred to and discussed, where relevant, in the exegesis, and articulated in an additional portfolio (Appendixes A-D) of four pieces of creative writing: a monologue written in 18th-century thieves slang or 'cant'; a Turpin ghost story set in the present day; a Turpin ballad written in the form popular in his time; and a modern tabloid news story reporting Turpin's execution. Experimenting with four separate modes in this way assisted in the development of an appropriate tone for the script artefact, and with accessing ideas from different narrative perspectives that could add flavour and texture to the finished piece.

The Hierarchy of Hypotexts Model

Central to the main artefact's evolution is the concept of a hierarchy of hypotexts, a fluid system for collating and arranging sources, with a liquidity determined by the demands of a specific scene. Again, in this model, the 'hypotext', as defined by Genette, refers to an earlier text 'transformed' in a 'text B', the hypertext. Genette's theory of the layered, 'palimpsestuous' nature of texts delineates the mimesis or extraction of elements from a source hypotext by a derivative hypertext. By way of explanatory analogy, Genette writes: "On the same parchment, one text can become superimposed upon another, which it does not quite conceal but allows to show through" (Genette, 1997: 398-399). Julia Kristeva further explores and explains such intertextuality as "a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (Kristeva, 1986 [1966]: 37). In this context, "we understand texts not as self-contained systems but as differential and historical, as traces and tracings of otherness" (Martinez-Alfaro, 1996: 268). Marcus Nicholls develops this analogy a step further, arguing that adaptation belongs to a degenerative/regenerative process of entropy and decay, and that "adaptations are predicated on engagements with the textual afterlife of their sources" (Nicholls, 2021: 318). According to this configuration, any adaptation is therefore an evolved 'reanimation' of the 'corpse' of the decomposing source text(s).

In an historical adaptation, this understanding of the nature of a text can be applied to any 'readable' material used in the palimpsest formed in the recreation of time, character and mythology; these hypotexts can also often be seen to belong to a complex web of intertextuality, whereby a source regarded as a hypotext for this adaptation can also function as a hypertext for another source, and so on. For

example, a reference in the hypertext of the script, such as a scene from a 1950s Turpin comic book, may simultaneously function as the hypertext of a source such as a 'penny dreadful' narrative from a century and a half earlier. This penny dreadful hypotext can in turn function as the inspiration for a different reference in a separate scene. As delineated by Genette, this intertextuality can be i) explicit, i.e. directly and deliberately referenced; ii) covert, i.e. buried from the reader; or iii) hidden, i.e. signposted through allusion (Genette, 1997).

Thus a hierarchy of hypotexts can be utilised as a tool for establishing priorities amongst the competing needs of different sources germane to a particular scene. In this researcher's model, the hierarchy has an approximate default 'mould' or framework: a foundation of assumed 'truth' which anchors all other combinations, with recorded historical depositions at its highest stratum:

- Trial deposition / witness depositions

- Contemporary documentation / non-fiction

- Contemporary newspaper reports

- Biographies

- Criminal 'histories'

- Folklore

- Turpin iterations in literature / pulp literature

- Iterations in modern media, i.e. silent film, colour film, comic books, radio, television etc.

- Turpin memorabilia: artefacts, cigarette cards etc.

- Observations and creative inspiration gained from site visits

This 'anchoring' should not be seen as a restriction on research-driven creativity. These secure positions of agreed historical fact are instead analogous to the fixed fastening points utilised by a climber engaged in a planned but risky ascent. The creative trajectory can change, be re-evaluated or course-corrected, but the writer/researcher is still able to rely on the 'safety' of such anchors as he seeks to chart an inventive course forward. As a working model, this allows the researcher to shuffle hypotexts in the hierarchy, examine and make use of the new synergies they potentially produce, and reflect on what is disclosed about the elusive, mutable truth about a real human being whose identity is splintered across three centuries. For example, due to this writer's own positionality as a journalist, the hierarchy privileges deposition at the top for its hermetic judicial silo, into which imagination cannot easily enter or penetrate, and which is thus likely to be as close to the 'truth' as we can apprehend: almost a frigid 'extratextuality'. However, this recognition of positionality also comes with something of an exoneration. As Kyle Meikle explains: "Adaptation and journalism are both paradoxical forms that claim authority and primacy for texts that are always, in some ways, already secondary. This is/not a/the true story" (Meikle, 2018: 92).

It can be conjectured from the evidence of his sullen, barely polysyllabic deposition that the historical Turpin was a dull, isolated figure who lacked, ironically, the performative rhetorical swagger with which to extricate himself from legal jeopardy. This 'reality' would make for dreary television, and so, by way of an example, instinctive adjustments to the hierarchy of hypotexts were made in the trial scene of this research artefact to favour other sources as and where appropriate. From a wider perspective, each iteration of Turpin is an accretion, a living stone gathering moss; it

is also a shape-shifting creature, a resilient adaptive organism that gathers new attributes as camouflage for each evolutionary adaptation to its latest ecosphere of time, society or genre.

The Sublime and the Uncanny

The Turpin of this artefact is a composite Turpin of different realities, at once *the* Turpin, *a* Turpin, and *every* Turpin, a photo-fit fabricated through the shifting scene-specific emphases in the hierarchy of sources. The four episode headings, *The Butcher*, *The Rogue*, *The Highwayman*, and *The Thief*, indicate a multiplicity of Turpins within a unifying plural determiner: *The Notorious*. In this context, adaptation can also be seen as a framing, an intervention in history that creates other realities, like the double-split electron experiment in the parallel universe theory; these 'fictional worlds' can be seen as 'possible worlds' distinguished by their "independent parallel ontology" (Ronen, 1994: 198). An intensity of meaning is condensed within this frame; that which remains outside and unframed coexists with what is revealed within, and the two maintain a constant dialogue, an uneasy but ongoing negotiation. This perspective lends the process a pleasing incongruity, an edgy apprehension of otherness. For example, the script aims at a sublime (as per Edmund Burke's and Emmanuel Kant's respective definitions, below) recreation of England in the early 18th century, in which the reader feels the disquieting visceral shudder of the known made unknown, of the present lurching into the awful beauty of an uncanny past:

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates

in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling (Burke, 1998 [1757]: 36).

The feeling of the sublime, is at once a feeling of displeasure, arising from the inadequacy of the imagination in the aesthetic estimation of magnitude to attain to its estimation of reason, and a simultaneous awakened pleasure, arising from this very judgment of the inadequacy of sense of being in accord with the ideas of reason (Kant, 1973 [1770]: 106).

This researcher seeks to trigger in the reader a feeling of sublime dread, in order to help approximate in their response the maelstrom of emotions that might be experienced if they were bodily transported to the England of the 1700s: a feeling of strange, liminal similarity, of a disquieting familiarity with the alien but uncanny world of three centuries ago. Here, the 'uncanny' is understood to be "that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar" (Freud, 1919: 1).

In its totality, this creative practice research endeavour is guided by an openness to the liquid inspiration and anomalous resonances that occur when the unconscious is given permission to navigate such an undertaking; when the mosaic pieces of the bricolage are shifted through material thinking and allowed time to form novel synergies in creative incubation.

Exegesis

In the footnotes of the Penguin edition of *The Beggar's Opera*, 'facts' are defined as

"discreditable information; 'evil deed' or 'crime' was the most common meaning of the word 'fact' in the early 18th century" (Loughrey and Treadwell, 1986: 91).

And in Ash and Day's *Immortal Turpin*, the first Turpin biography heavily to feature excerpts from 18th-century texts, the preface begins with a section of a 1739 'street ballad' aggressively asserting the factual veracity within the pages of the popular contemporary compendium of true crime stories, the *Newgate Calendar*:

Come and buy a Calendar,

'Tis TRUTH, I do declare! (Ash and Day, 1948: 9).

Turpin's life overflows with 'facts', in this 18th-century sense – it is ultimately the ignominious story of a brutish career criminal. His 'truth' is more complicated: a palimpsest of what we know, and what can never be known; layer upon layer of embellishment and reimagining, a collage one can step back from and, with a soft and perhaps indulgent focus, form an impression of both the man as he may have been and the mythology into which his story has evolved. "Biographical truth does not exist," according to Freud, "and if it did we could not use it" (Freud, 1970: 127); neither can reliably factual truth be found somewhere hidden inside the myth. "It is not the purpose of folklore to provide 'historical truth'," writes Graham Seal, "though its bearers often believe it does" (Seal, 1996: 181). Rather, the textual fragments that form the palimpsestual whole include "fictions that are at once 'artful untruths', insofar as they

tell a tale that may bear little relevance to 'truth' – yet they are also believed to be the truth" (Ibid., 185). For the writer, an engagement with this elusive truth is akin to a confrontation with a burly, intimidating monster. "Historical truth is a rough beast – shapeless, blundering, hard to tame," says Hilary Mantel. "It fights you every step. It cuts against storyteller's instinct. Your characters are never how or where you'd like them to be" (Mantel, 2017, Reith Lecture 4). Within a wider societal context of storytelling, this mission to tame the truth appears still more challenging. "Narratives may be interpreted as essential aspects of social life that enable the passing on of knowledge," writes Robyn Stewart, "without being necessarily concerned with the legitimacy of such knowledge" (Stewart, 2007: 130-131).

I first became interested in Richard Turpin (1705 -1739) and his mythology when I decided I wanted to write an historical adaptation with an unsettling but paradoxically mundane evil at its centre; something that would trigger the shudder of recognition that is John Bradford's "There but for the grace of God go I." I was looking for a tenebristic event in England's history that had never been adapted into film or television; a story about ordinary people who end up doing awful things, and then see themselves as too far from redemption to be able to turn back: like Macbeth, wading in bloodshed, for whom "returning were as tedious as go o'er". I am as intoxicated by that line in Shakespeare as I am by documentaries about violent criminals in solitary confinement: by the idea of the bitter tragedy of terrible decisions, or the grievous agency of the perpetrator of violence, or the endless sting of regret, numbed by the hollowing out of the soul as an act of self-preservation in the face of spiritual oblivion. When an historical tragedy is adapted into fiction, this razor-edged thrill of empathy is further heightened. "Our attention is transfixed," says Hilary Mantel, "as we watch

someone stride towards the edge of a cliff, when we can see the edge and the character can't. The reader becomes a small, conflicted god, or a disbelieved prophet" (Mantel, 2017, Reith Lecture 4).

Having begun and then abandoned some rudimentary preliminary research on the Pendle Witch Trials of 1612, I eventually alighted on Richard Turpin as my subject when I discovered we shared a birthday (September 21st); however mawkish, this coincidence now captured my attention. My understanding of Turpin as a character had been formed as a boy in the late 1970s and early 80s watching the LWT Saturday evening television drama series *Dick Turpin* (1979-82), which portrayed him as a charming, benevolent Robin Hood figure who swashbuckled his way in and out of frothy adventures; no one was ever badly hurt in these stories, and the injustices of everyday life, in a world weighted heavily against the poor and the unfortunate, were always rebalanced, if only for just that episode. I remembered, also, the impact on popular culture made by the pop star Adam Ant at around the same time, who appropriated the fashion iconography of the highwayman and the pirate as a rebellious, defiant statement of flamboyant masculinity posed, tongue in cheek, amidst the thrilling seriousness of thundering percussion.

These were the dominant 'texts' of the Turpin composite in my mind's eye, until I read *Dick Turpin and The Gregory Gang,* in which Derek Barlow recounts, with a dogged reliance on and interrogation of historical documentation, a life that was more chaotic opportunism than noble flamboyance. In his summing up, Barlow begrudgingly describes his subject as "a man whose one remarkable attribute was that he somehow contrived to live longer than others like him" (Barlow, 1973: 430). This Turpin –

reassembled in Barlow's narrative as a disfigured, morose and vicious human being with little to recommend him – was the poignant embodiment of wasted human existence I had been looking for as the focus of my script; to find him buried under three hundred years of cosmetic reconfiguration was an unexpected gift. How had this oafish, unpleasant creature regenerated into the dashing heartthrob of Saturday evening family television, or the strutting provocateur of the pop music video? Why had the truth of his life never really been accurately told in a dramatic reconstruction? As I began to tell my own version of Turpin's story, I would later come to understand that 'accuracy' was as slippery a concept as 'truth' or 'facts', but I also knew I had identified a biographical structure that would cleave easily into a four-part television miniseries script: failed young butcher, violent rogue, elusive highwayman, careless thief. His was a miserable life, but a fascinating one, rich with the potential for an exploration of how callow, casual immorality can mature and metastasize into destructive nihilism and despair, against the background of an English legal system that routinely punished the poor for having the temerity to survive. "In some respects the eighteenth century showed toleration: men and women were no longer killed or tormented for their opinions or their religious beliefs, as witches or as heretics," writes E.P. Thompson. "But in every decade more intrusions upon property were defined as capital matters" (Thompson, 1975: 197). This is not to suggest that the latter crimes of Turpin and his cohort where motivated purely by survival – their behaviour during the house robberies demonstrates an alcohol-fuelled, sadistic abandon. But it is possible to argue that their viciousness, however unforgiveable, arose from festering wounds of injustice first dealt long before they had been born.

It felt logical to pursue this four-part structure chronologically, without flashbacks or other temporal experimentation, because I wanted Turpin's life to expand on the page with a linear clarity that might reveal a further poignancy in his journey towards capture and execution. The major exception was the prologue scene, in which an already dead Turpin is rescued from anatomisation by a group of poor citizens in a town that is not his own; this scene is revisited and completed as a bookend at the end of the final episode. This idea of the poor reclaiming the poor was a compelling one, even though Turpin probably did little during his life to deserve this posthumous redemption, because it helped me to empathise with and find depth in the character I was creating: here was a dead human being protected from the surgeon's knife by humble people who refused to be bought and sold as commodities, and were thus seemingly willing to claim a notorious villain as one of their own, as they "brought away the body thro' the streets of the city, in a sort of triumph" (Kyll, 1739). Given that Turpin's inner life may have been rather a lonely and unhappy one, it felt fitting that in death he might find a new 'family' of sorts that were committed to making sure his corpse was treated with respect. By beginning and ending the story with death, I also hoped to demarcate the finite boundaries of Turpin's life and attempt to remove him from the looping zombification of mythology. This is futile, of course, and my own iteration of Turpin is just the latest zombie in a long line of Turpin undead, a ghost in the infinity mirror. However, it felt appropriate to at least let my version of the character find a sort of peace within my narrative, if no-one else's.

This queasiness felt at this 'zombification' is further intensified if one imagines an adaptation of their own life constructed from emails, Tweets, hearsay, photographs, video or other ephemera. Can anything be reconstructed from these texts that would

feel 'authentic'? Or would they reveal a more profound truth, hidden even from the subject? If so, what responsibility, if any, does the writer bear to the subject during this act of reconstruction? Is creative conjecture really just harmless psychological play, or does it leave some sort of metaphysical narrative wound in the remembered life of that subject? I enjoyed experiencing this sense of responsibility, even if at close examination it appears ludicrous; there were moments when it also felt deeply satisfying and electric. For example, an important hypotext in many of the scenes was verbatim reporting from contemporary newspaper reports. By having the characters read these words aloud, I found I could create an eerie, non-linear temporality, as if the truth of the past was interacting with the ghostly actors of those printed fabula. The characters are confronted with a truth that has outlived them, like a messenger from the future sent back to cement them to the past: they are alive in the script, but already slaves to their fate. I was thrilled by this strange apprehension of time. It was like observing three hundred years trapped in the amber of predestination; I experienced the unnerving amalgam of the sublime and the uncanny that I was hoping to achieve in the writing, and that I had observed in the science fiction television series *Devs* (2020), in which a team of engineers create a quantum computer that can observably approximate any moment in history, such as the crucifixion of Christ, or the execution of Joan of Arc. As a creative writing exercise to further explore these ideas, I experimented with the idea of Turpin as a ghost in 21st-century Essex in a short story (see Appendix: C), and as the subject of a modern-day tabloid newspaper report (see Appendix: D).

I also enjoyed the idea of the mind of Turpin being present during the writing process; this conceit brought life to the character and helped me shape a person with a sense

of humour, whose irritation and indignation about my inventions could be apprehended as a creative spirit-level, a way to balance the known and the unknown, the probable and the improbable. In addition to the portrait of him I commissioned from a painter friend, and the mugshot photograph I constructed in the FBI photo-fit software Faces, the Turpin in my head was my companion throughout the often lonely and isolated PhD journey, and an avatar for my own desire for productive agency via reflexive practice.

We do not look back at our own rich and interesting lives and ruminate about how they might be improved by interventions in their chronologies. Initially, and naively, I wanted to adopt the approach of the time-travelling explorers in the 1952 Ray Bradbury story *A Sound of Thunder*, endeavouring as far as possible to avoid stepping on the butterfly and changing Turpin's 'history' forever. For the most part, I chose to maintain a fidelity to the chronology of Turpin's life as delineated by Barlow, but there were several compressions and excisions that were impossible to avoid. Here the process of adaptation can be seen as requiring subtraction as much as addition: a distillation of sources down to a coherent relevance, whereby the writer's imagination provides the emotional proxy for the missing factual data. For example, the Gregorys and their associates committed a string of burglaries that needed to be merged in their re-telling, as the grim details of these crimes were often morbidly similar. At one point, it was also necessary to ruthlessly staple the 1720s to the 1730s, where there is an interregnum in the historical record that might otherwise have revealed more of Turpin's whereabouts or activity. Accordingly, the execution of Jonathan Wild, where I allow the character of Mary Brazier a pickpocketing excursion, is quickly followed in

the script by her first encounter with the gangsters Joseph Rose and Jeremy Gregory – two events separated in history by several years.

These temporal problems had obvious solutions which I hope make little difference to the reader's appreciation of the narrative. But it was also necessary to change some first names to avoid confusion, and excise a number of real people from the story to avoid a cluttering of indistinguishable characters; Samuel Gregory's gang of poachers and burglars is believed to have numbered in excess of twenty people, who congregated in smaller groups according to their availability for particular enterprises. I culled this number to eight, an adequate quota both in terms of character differentiation and logistical plausibility. In the script, Turpin himself has two siblings: his sister Dolly (changed from Dorothy) and a younger brother, Christopher, whose death from smallpox precipitates Turpin's emotional withdrawal from the world. In reality, Turpin also had two older brothers and an older sister, but there is next to nothing about them in the historical record, so their presence in the narrative seemed superfluous and unnecessarily complicated. Dolly, on the other hand, is important, because of evidence that her husband Pompr refused to accept receipt of Turpin's letter from York Castle requesting their assistance. This crucial moment in the plot also presented an additional creative opportunity, in that Dolly could embody a conscience her brother lacked, a reminder that Turpin was not simply a victim of circumstance and that his life might have turned out differently had he possessed greater moral fortitude. Thus the character of Dolly becomes the anti-Turpin, a surrogate soul who lends her brother empathy by dint of genetic propinquity.

As these alterations to history were made in the script, it grew obvious that there might be a dangerous temptation to allow the narrative to just flow wherever it wished. For the most part, I resisted this impulse, at least in the first draft, and mapped out important events in the order they occurred; by later drafts, there were gaps in the narrative, rather than the historical record, which needed to be plugged by pure invention, a 'bricolage' of details, dialogue and behaviours that seemed appropriate to the storytelling demands of each episode. One example is Turpin's visit to Figg's boxing amphitheatre in Marylebone in Episode 1, an addition that expanded an extra-textual moment I had created with the inclusion of two eyewitnesses in Episode 3, the brothers Jackie and Randolph. The two men were boxers in the mid-20th century, with the surname Turpin, and I made the decision to give them a moment of uncanny, covert intertextuality by inserting them into the 1730s and hinting they were acquaintances of the central character. During a re-draft of Episode 1, there was a need for an additional scene that further elucidated Dick Turpin's growing attraction to violence. As Figg's Amphitheatre was a real place, and an enjoyment of boxing did not seem incongruous to the image of Turpin I was creating, the scene could serve several purposes: a connecting thread between Turpin's roots and his future as a highwayman; a device for creating tension as Turpin realises he needs to put distance between that past and his new circumstances; and a tool for embedding a nod to the strangeness of writing about a man who exists simultaneously in different iterations.

As the writing progressed, more of these conundrums arose, growing like amorphous sinew and viscera upon the more solid osteology of the chronological skeleton beneath. The organic flow of this process became more and more interesting to me; every new scene was an organelle fertilising an additional creative process that would

incubate during time away from the writing routine. It occurred to me that ideas about how a scene could be constructed had their own molecular weight, and could rise and fall in the base solution of the wider narrative; when agitated by adjacent ideas, they could be pushed downwards or propelled upwards in a fluid hierarchy of competing constituents. In one scene, details from a witness deposition would exert supremacy – there seemed a solemn responsibility to ensure that the victims of Turpin's crimes should be given space to tell their stories – while in others, historical detail was reduced to sensory accents lending authenticity to imaginative speculation. This concept of a 'hierarchy of hypotexts', i.e. a competitive micro-ecosystem within each scene, where different texts jostled for supremacy, asserted itself as the core inquiry of my research question.

This necessitated a pivoting away from my original research question, which had intended to interrogate the ways in which ideas about realism, naturalism and melodrama might shape an adaptation of the life of a historical antihero. While I explored source material that could shed light on Turpin's portrayal in 19th century and post-19th-century adaptations as a dandified romantic, I struggled to pin down a research inquiry that would present a coherent and convincing contribution to knowledge. The examination of highwayman and outlaw mythologies is a well-worn path, and while my literature review brought me into contact with a range of texts which proved invaluable to my understanding of these iconographies, this body of knowledge felt cold to the touch, and I was at a loss to understand how to re-animate it. By contrast, the warm thrill of the writing routine itself began to signpost a new direction with increasing urgency. Why was I making particular creative decisions in each scene, and what did that reveal about the process of adaptation? What new 'truth' was

emerging about Richard Turpin? As author, where did my loyalties lie, and why were they often sacrificed in the maw of the imagination? This parturition from instinctual, embodied knowledge to explicit knowledge is a fulfilling but painful one for the artist. Tacit knowledge lives a perfect existence in the womb of unchallenged implicit truth; the explicit articulated knowledge that it becomes through process gasps in the cold air of objectivity.

The original impulse was something akin to photojournalism, an eagerness to create a simulacrum of the past from historical sources, and then observe, record and narrativize what was 'seen'. But this would have been a flat, sterile world, built from slices of activity lacking any emotional context; historiography has a tendency to reduce people to the best and worst of their recorded behaviour, steamrollering their complexity in the process. Writing in the year of Turpin's execution, David Hume speculated that there was, in any event, no such thing as a fixed external self, and that other people remain "nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement" (Hume, 1739: 534). From this somewhat anamorphosic perspective, the excavated 'bundle' that is Turpin can be approached as an aggregation of facts, mythology and adaptations, something akin to a near-futile 'bertillonage'. Given that there is so little in those sources to provide anything other than a broad insight into the real Turpin's perceived personality, an oxymoronic body of 'anecdotal evidence', he needed to be propagated as a plausibly three-dimensional character in the petri dish environment of the scenes of the script themselves. I did not always really know how he was going to behave, or what he was going to say, until I placed him in situations that demanded responses of him. Gradually, he grew into himself: a consistency of

behaviour emerged, as did a mischievousness, and physical presence, all of which remained robustly reliable in the narrative, and suitably 'Turpinesque'. He is a synthesis of the different qualities of Turpin-ness: while the real Turpin is essentially unknowable in his totality, the *idea* of Turpin is knowable through the unifying 'knowing' of arts practice. He seemed to evolve out of indelible consistencies in the historical record – he was violent, he was narcissistic, he was surly. These were pillars of the hierarchy of texts as it related to Turpin as a character. I added a layer of insecurity about his smallpox scars, and a dry, intelligent sense of humour which seemed to dovetail with the knowledge that not only was he was able to read and write, but had the cunning to evade capture for considerable stretches of time.

Turpin's language in the witness statement of William Harris, his landlord in Yorkshire, was the one historical vein that could be mined for glimpses of his authentic disposition. It might, in all fairness, have been anomalous – perhaps he was in reality soft spoken and deferential when sober – but it seemed more likely, given the nature of his criminal activity, that this bizarre drunken outburst, reprinted in its entirety by Barlow, reveals a range of traits:

"[Turpin] then told [him] if he would go over the water with him he would shew (sic) such a pair of pistols as he never saw in his life and that he did not fear the Bailiffs for in plain terms I am everything or words to that effect… 'twenty pounds is easily as got as two pence' he then had laid upon the table to pay for a pint of ale and then said drink about not catch me not have me but before they do catch me a great deal of blood shall be spilt" (Barlow, 1973: 300).

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In the hierarchy of hypotexts, this source assumed a primacy above all others, because in a few words – Turpin's own words, albeit filtered through the memory of a witness – it suggested, in exhilarating detail, the way Turpin regarded himself. I utilized much of this passage verbatim in a critical scene in Episode 4. Because of my own background as a features journalist who tends to construct articles from a bricolage of the more interesting quotations from the interviewee, this nugget of language was precious to me, as it gave me a sort of living Turpin vernacular that I could nurture into an articulation of his personality throughout the story. Turpin's only other recorded dialogue is that of his trial deposition, in which he appeared to be deflated and defeated, or simply bored by the imposition of having to explain himself, so this inebriated chest-thumping in the tavern by necessity assumed the role of the seed from which the adaptation could grow. It told me Turpin was vainglorious, insecure, and frightened. The micro-encomium "I am everything" captured my imagination with its oddity (notwithstanding Harris' qualification of "or words to that effect", a cul-de-sac of ambiguous focalisation I chose not to investigate). I wondered what kind of desperate, bloated, isolated ego would need to bolster and reassure itself with a statement of such absolutist bravado.

The phrase also triggered a memory of a verse in an altogether different hypotext, the Book of Revelation:

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (King James Bible, 1611: R:1-8).

Here I ventured far outside the historical record and gave Turpin a tattoo of 'R:1-8' at the base of his thumb, a signifier for what I imagined to be not only his spiritual impoverishment, but also an ironic reminder that this literate man had made no productive use of his literacy, and had thus far escaped the branding (usually the letter 'T', for thief) routinely given to criminals in the 1700s (Beattie, 1986). In my adaptation, he had learned to read and write by copying Bible passages, but had chosen to transmogrify a verse about the infinite majesty of the Christian God into a private signature of self-celebration. I felt this made him at once terrifying and ridiculous: a charismatic, complex mixture of the wretch and the egomaniac.

Though there is little reliable recorded evidence of tattooing being widely practiced in 18th-century England, it may have been relatively common in the criminal underworld (Morgan and Rushden, 2005). I utilised the hypotext of a startling report in a 1739 newspaper as a pretext for giving the psychologically priapic Samuel Gregory a chest tattoo, and a knowledge about tattooing, or 'pricking', that he could pass on to Turpin as a gesture of camaraderie. The report reads:

"a Rogue of about 15 years of age convicted of stealing Weights out of Sadler's Shop in the Borough, from a Natural Propensity to Villainy, [who] had on his Breast, mark'd with Indian ink, the Poutraiture of a Man at length, with a Sword drawn in one Hand and a Pistol discharging Balls from the Muzzle in the other, with a Label from the Man's Mouth, G-d d-amn you, stand. This the Rogue would have conceal'd, but a Discovery being made thereof, he was order'd to shew his Breast to the Court, who were all shock'd at so uncommon a Sight in so young a Ruffian" (Ibid, 49).

By marking their own bodies before they are caught and condemned, the characters of Samuel and Turpin invert the expected narrative of punishment and judicial dominion, and claim ownership of their fate in a celebration of their outsider status. In the "new print culture" of the 1700s, which was "used to spread the word – and the image" (Ibid., 39), those fleeing justice or tyranny could now be pursued in the press and identified by the marks on their faces or bodies. For the Turpin of the script, I also thought it important that his tattoo was a psychological corrective to the disfiguring smallpox scars over which he had no control. Morgan and Rushden write that "in these most personal markings, the runaways, criminals and other troublesome people created signs of their own lives and values, in effect a kind of narrative of their own" (Ibid., 50).

As much of this research was undertaken during a period of lockdown during the coronavirus pandemic, the idea of the mask as both hiding and revealing the 'soul' of the wearer became more immediate. The Black Act legislation of 1723, with its warning of capital punishment to those "having his or their faces blacked, or otherwise disguised" (Thompson, 1975: 271) on enclosed land, looms large in the script, and its implications about identity and disclosure afforded me an opportunity to explore this idea in different ways. The gang members are careful to disguise their faces in their earlier robberies, but become more and more cavalier as the intensity of these crimes progresses: a kind of counterintuitive 'mask fatigue'. The gaze of the characters also becomes, at times, communicative emotional shorthand; Mary Brazier and Samuel Gregory understand this power and use it accordingly. Turpin's mask-wearing signifies a duality: romantic ideal with the bandana, disfigured hoodlum without it, i.e. mask as signifier for mythology. While writing the script, I often contemplated a vivid memory

from 2009 when I lived in the Upton Park area of East London. I was walking on the vibrant, multicultural Green Street, and was suddenly transfixed by the startling beauty of the eyes of a young Muslim woman wearing a *niqab* face covering, who briefly but fiercely stared back at me in recognition of that appreciation. It was a moment of complete knowing, and complete non-knowing, which I requisitioned when attempting to create impact in the gazes of the characters in the script.

At certain points, a flirtation in the writing with the spiritual – and supernatural – lent itself to a cursory exploration of magical realism, beginning with the tale of the 'hidden people' in the bluebells told to Dolly by their mother. The bluebells became Dolly's motif of hope, but for Turpin I wanted them to represent a peripheral awareness of a spiritual reality less dogmatic and unforgiving than the Christian ideology that he rejects through his satirical appropriation of its most psychologically overwhelming metaphor. These scenes or images – in his dream of meeting his dead brother in a field of bluebells; in the visceral colour of the village night fair; and in the murder of the crane fly by the wasp, for example – again emerged from the realisation that what I was creating was something undead, something necrotised and necrophiliac placed like a puppet in an artificial script-world more akin to an hallucination than to any approximation of a lived, human reality, whatever the era. Thus the aesthetic became energized not solely by a diligent commitment to historical detail, but also to a looser allegiance to an alternate truth driven by a deeper, more radical instinct. This instinct became more urgent with each iteration of the script, and I repeatedly added more colour and visual dynamism to each scene, as an artist would add highlights and detail in the final moments of a painting.

Because the script begins and ends with death, this no doubt also somewhat influenced those aesthetic choices – I was in the process after all of reanimating a dead man in a dead England from a dead time, to see if he would speak. In her first Reith lecture, Hilary Mantel says, "We sense the dead have a vital force still – they have something to tell us, something we need to understand. Using fiction and drama, we try to gain that understanding" (Mantel, 2017, Reith Lecture 1). I wondered if writers are also guilty of a sort of violation of the past when they disinter people from history. We dig through layers of sources, until there is nothing left beyond the bedrock of the historical record but our own imaginations: a mental reconstruction that may at best be Baudrillard's understanding of 'history' as facts embedded in myth, and at worst his idea of the 'simulacrum', the meaningless void of the constructed unreal.

This reanimation of people and places meant I had to choose a vernacular for the overall script, and an argot for Turpin and his associates. I aimed for a mode of language that would feel suitably alien to a modern reader without alienating them, that would give a sense of another time without interfering with the reader's enjoyment of the story. The writer of this kind of adaptation "must try to work authentically, hearing the words of the past," says Hilary Mantel, "but communicating in a language the present understands" (Mantel, 2017, Reith Lecture1) – both figuratively and literally.

For the dialogue of Turpin and his gang, I experimented with the 'cant' in use in the 18th century from the *Thieves' New Canting Dictionary* in Captain Alexander Smith's *History of the Lives and Robberies of the Most Notorious Highwaymen* (1719), the anonymously written *A New Canting Dictionary* (1725), and the *Collection of Canting Words* in Nathan Bailey's *Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (1737). I initially

wrote a short monologue soliloquy for the gang leader Samuel Gregory (see Appendix: A) to attempt to determine the point at which the script would become too saturated with a heteroglossia of unfamiliar language and thus overwhelm the hierarchy of hypotexts. This experiment was written from Samuel's perspective as he is rescued from the pillory by the rest of the gang. For example:

He shites through his teeth. Casts up accounts. Now, now he fees. Yes, you couch a hogshead, my dear nug. I knock him on the costard. How he yelps. I kimbaw the cull. I culp his grinders. Gust the shite, hector. Shitten luck is good luck. Now he cries cockles. His throttle thrummagemmed with shite.

While there is a visible framework of meaning in the syntax of this passage, akin to a nonsense poem, and I was enamoured with the visceral, rhythmic urgency of the language, it was clear that too much of this kind of hypotextual detail could render the script impenetrable. In the final artefact, I therefore opted to use cant as textual seasoning, added sparingly to differentiate the gang members from other characters, as in this example from Episode 2:

SAMUEL

Haines?

TURPIN

With his married bundle-tail, I suspect.

SAMUEL

And you. Glad you could grace us, Sir Quibble-Queere. Not too early for you?

Turpin drinks, expressionless.

SAMUEL

Never took you for a hector.

WHEELER

(to Rose) What's a hector?

ROSE

(sotto voce) Coward.

The unfamiliarity of the language to those outside the gang, which includes Turpin early in the script, presented an opportunity to channel any linguistic aporia in the reader through that of the characters (in this case Wheeler, the newest and youngest member of Samuel's gang.) Thus language in the hierarchy of hypotexts becomes a device for revealing character dynamics rather than a dominant driver of the reader experience. Turpin uses more and more of this cant as his role in the gang becomes more established, but he also quotes liberally from the Bible passages which the script suggests James Smith uses to teach him how to read and write: I hoped that this hypotextual incongruity would help illustrate the contradictions within an intelligent, literate character living a life of iniquity.

Witness depositions and official proclamations were invaluable hypotextual resources respectively when I was constructing voices for the gang's antagonists, such as the Duke of Newcastle, or their victims, such as the maid Dorothy Street. In the case of the former, I adapted and extended the register of power, with the convoluted sophistication of its sentence structure, and for the latter, I preferred the humble,

matter-of-fact simplicity of an unadorned remembering. Wherever in the script the victims are given a voice, their words are taken almost verbatim from their depositions, and are thus prominent in the hierarchy of hypotexts in those scenes. I felt that the quiet, poignant dignity of these statements often spoke for itself, and needed little creative embellishment.

In order to introduce a vein of contemporary humour and social wisdom to the language, I also made use of Thomas Fuller's 1732 compilation *Gnomologia: Adages and Proverbs, Wise Sentences, and Witty Sayings, Ancient and Modern, Foreign and British.* An example is cited at the beginning of each episode in the artefact, and these sayings are utilised liberally throughout the script to function both as a kind of communicative lubrication between characters and a form of cultural signposting to indicate the perceived wisdoms of the period. Outside their own individual arcs and agencies, each character also belongs to a social fabric within which they operate, and I was interested in exploring the tension between these tacit cultural understandings and the antagonistic, hypocritical behaviour of certain actors within that moral environment.

On the opposite ends of a spectrum of pleasure, I introduced the judgmental solemnity of sermons of 'reformation' and the unfettered ribaldry of songs and ballads, both of which were ubiquitous in Turpin's time. The former were part of "the national campaign for a 'reformation of manners'" popular in the late 17th century and throughout the 18th, whose "main aims were the punishment of dissolute behaviour; the provision, where necessary, of new laws against vice; and the general improvement of religious and moral standards in public and private life" (Dabhoiwala, 2007: 290). For the latter, I

referred to the six-volume collection of songs and ballads published between 1692 and 1720, *Wit and Mirth: or Pills to Purge Melancholy,* which drew from a range of sources including the broadsides, single sheets, 'drolleries', 'courtesy books' and folio song-books (Day, 1932) that were in their different ways accessible to every stratum of society.

I wanted to experiment with a textual background of precarious hedonism; the idea that Turpin and his associates possessed an innate understanding that their lives were likely to be short, and would be driven to enjoy those lives as much as they could, in a gin-soaked haze of nepenthe, rather than dwell too long on any introspective examination of why that might be so. The ballad and the sermon were employed as Faustian, hypotextual devils and angels on the shoulder, to create the impression of characters queasily lurching through life as they bent their ear towards one, and away from the other, as the different moral gravities of society effected their respective pulls. To develop an understanding of the rhythm and language of the ballad form, I also wrote a short ballad on Turpin in the style popular during his lifetime, but from the perspective of a 21st-century researcher with a broad understanding of the facts and fictions of his life (see Appendix: B).

In Episode 2, I included a scene where the performance of bawdy ballads from *Pills To Purge Melancholy* is accompanied by steady and determined gin-drinking by Turpin and his fellow gang members; indeed, most of these characters are rarely sober at any point in the narrative, and I wanted to make this functional alcoholism an ever-present patina behind which they operate, as they seek a clumsy intimacy through the 'unsocial sociability' (Kant, 1784) of mutual antagonism in lieu of emotional availability.

The middle decades of the 18th century in London and the surrounding counties were the halcyon days of an "orgy of spirit-drinking" (George, 1966: 26) driven by the potent and dangerous gin known as 'Madame Geneva', a cheap product of years of low corn prices and ineffective licensing laws, and easily available to the masses during this period (Warner, 2004; Dillon, 2002). "Almost every shop daily resorted to by the poorer classes also embarked upon the selling of spirits," writes Dorothy M. George (1965: 28). "The typical gin-drinkers were the poorest and most wretched of the community, their poverty a cause as well as a result of their craving" (Ibid., 40).

Born in a public house, Turpin was likely introduced to alcohol at a young age; it may have become a faithful companion, a self-medication against challenges public and private, until the very last moment of his life. Thus much of the script is soaked in this inebriated haze, a background hypotext rooted in historical probability. In addition, I was indebted to Emily Cockayne's remarkable 2007 book *Hubbub: Filth, Noise & Stench in England* for much of the finer descriptive detail applied to each scene in its final drafts. "This book is about how people were made to feel uncomfortable by other people – their noises, appearance, behaviour, proximity and odours," she writes. "It considers physical and emotional reactions to unpleasant things" (Cockayne, 2007: 1). By also including these less savoury textual fragments of historical sensory experience, I endeavoured to sometimes make the reader as uncomfortable as the characters they were observing in their 18th-century milieu.

To aid in the exploration of 'historiophoty', or the "representation of history and our thought about it in visual images" (White, 1988: 1193), I made use of a number of 18th-century sources that depicted the world of the script as seen by its inhabitants of that

time, particularly the prints and paintings of William Hogarth. For one scene in Episode 2, in which the fence Mary Brazier is captured, the anchor hypotext was Hogarth's *The Four Times of Day: Night* (1737), which I used as reference for psychological 'set construction' that would lend some further authenticity to the immersive palimpsest of sensory information I was seeking to create. Many of the details of the painting are reproduced in the script, and overlaid with the dialogue and behaviour of the characters operating through the narrative, akin to theatre actors traversing the stage set I had built for them. I found this gave me ideas about how these characters moved through imagined or borrowed spatial constructions. For instance, in the Mary Brazier scene described above, they have to swerve to avoid an emptied chamber pot, or step over the broken pieces of the cart in the street: both are details from Hogarth's painting. Since these borrowings from Hogarth were so crucial to my understanding of the 18th-century lived experience, I decided to reward him with a small speaking cameo in Episode 2, where he quotes from his 1751 print *The First Stage of Cruelty* as a playful temporal tear in the palimpsestual narrative.

An important point of comparison for my adaptation of Turpin's life into a television script was the 2019 film *True History of the Kelly Gang*, directed by Justin Kurzel and written by Shaun Grant, and adapted from the 2000 novel of the same name by Peter Carey. There seemed much I might learn from this adaptation: it used fiction as its source text, a hypertext that was itself a sympathetic palimpsest of hypotexts from real events in the life of the 19th-century Australian outlaw Ned Kelly. "By appropriating Kelly's life-story," writes Julie Sanders, "Carey enacts appropriation's semantic meaning by carrying out an 'occupation', or a 'takeover', but not as a hostile act" (Sanders, 2016: 180). In a similar vein to the multiple 'true' and 'authentic' re-

appropriations of the Turpin story, "Carey is retelling but also reinventing history," says Sanders. "The phrase 'true history' connects his project not only to historical research as an academic discipline but also to the art of fiction" (Ibid., 181). As one character reminds Kelly, in the vernacular of the novel that adopts his voice: "It is history Mr Kelly it should always be a little rough that way we know it is the truth" (Carey, 2011: 404).

Kurzel's stylish, bombastic film is a further 'occupation', at another remove from its source 'fabula': a postmodern riff on the Kelly legend propelled by its own energy. "I think that sometimes we get caught up in historical accuracy actually being the truth," the director told the Deadline website:

I don't really care what the wagon wheel looks like. What I really care about is the inherent truth of the character, and how those times could have felt. When we made that decision, it was really liberating, and a lot of that was inspired by the spirit of the book (Utichi, 2019).

While viewing the film, I wrote in my notes:

There is always an undercurrent of fear and tension, an acceptance that Kelly will be caught and hanged. For Turpin, how do you create that jeopardy and still maintain the illusion that he may survive?

There was no answer to that question, no compelling reason to hide this inevitability from the reader, to pull an eleventh-hour rabbit out of the hat like the whimsical Turpin television series from the seventies. "The retelling of Kelly's life in *True History of the*

Kelly Gang relies upon a reader's awareness, albeit in outline, of his life and the mythology surrounding it," writes Sanders of the source novel. "Carey uses this to foster a sense of predestination and predetermination… both we as readers and Carey's Kelly writing his personal history know how it will end" (Sanders, 2016: 186). Instead, I decided I would aim for compassion and empathy, so that Turpin's eventual death would still have its sting. There was, however, one serendipitous surprise at the close of the film: the end credits feature a punk song recorded by the cast called 'I Am Everywhere'. I searched in vain through Ned Kelly sources to find a root source for this phrase, as I was delighted by its coincidental kinship with Turpin's own rebel yell: "I am everything."

I discovered during the creation of the artefact that in most Turpin narratives, women are usually represented only as love interests, or the witnesses or victims of crime (with exceptions like the formidable real-life 'fence' Mary Brazier, or the fictional female swashbuckler Moll Moonlight). Because my own *Turpin: The Notorious* is centred heavily around the activity of Turpin and his predominantly male accomplices, and the depiction of his often destructive masculinity necessitated the inclusion of love interests such as the highwayman Matthew King's sister Liza or the innkeeper William Harris' (fictional) wife Briar, I wanted to write a scene that inverted this power dynamic and expose a vulnerability in the image of Turpin when confronted with confident female agency. The scene that opens Episode 4, where Turpin robs a carriage of actresses on their way to a rehearsal of *The Beggar's Opera*, is probably the most layered example in the artefact of the interplay of a number of different elements in the fluid hypotextual hierarchy; these texts rise to the top of the hierarchy at different moments in the scene, like playing cards shuffled in a deck.

The scene is inspired by William Powell Frith's 1860 painting of the 17th-century highwayman Claude Duval, which its subject dancing for a besotted female passenger of the carriage he has robbed, as per the Duval myth of the highwayman as a chivalric, romantic male ideal. I made Turpin the aggressor in the robbery of three female characters: Moll, Lavinia and Kitty, with the latter two based on the famous 18th-century actresses Lavinia Fenton and Kitty Clive, who I hyper-feminised in elaborate dresses and jewellery in the manner of Duval's victim in the Frith painting. Moll, who is fixing a broken axle on the carriage while the others shelter from the weather, is dressed in the breeches, shirt and waistcoat of the highwayman 'impersonator'. The three mock Turpin with 'heroic' lines from *The Beggar's Opera* and Shakespeare's sexually charged narrative poem 'Venus and Adonis', and act out a brief tableaux as the three witches from Macbeth, in a foreshadowing of the messy fate that awaits this "Thane of Essex".

Confused and humiliated, Turpin angrily relieves the women of their valuables, including a silver-framed mirror, and a cypher for their robust femininity that he knows he can control: Moll's most beloved horse, the obsidian-black Bess, the fictional equine star of Turpin tales since the 19th century. Turpin throws the mirror into the mud as he rides away, in a rejection of the chivalric stereotype, and as a reminder that his face is disfigured by smallpox scars and nothing like the Duval-esque ideal. This molten palimpsest of textual references, from classic literature to pop culture iconography, allowed me to play with a deeper hierarchy of hypotexts than in other scenes. I was aiming for a heightened, melodramatic energy which would plunge the Turpin of this

narrative in a cauldron of competing cultural influences, where ideas would bob to the upper surface of the hierarchy like disassembled ingredients in a heady broth.

For this 'seasoning' of the broth of the entire script, I drew from copious notes made and journaled over the full four years of the research project; these inspirations came from a variety of places, as the writing was not carried out in a research-specific vacuum. These were 'bricolage' details, which I plundered like a magpie from any source I found interesting or inspiring. They could be specific shots from a film or television series; a painting or a photograph; a piece of music; a snippet of an eavesdropped conversation in a pub; an aleatory thought. They became a reservoir of inspiration which I could access whenever I was reaching for more 'clay' to add to the written sculpture, and took the form of mental doodling, with observations or questions to be considered, followed up or discarded. Some examples are presented below:

- *24 Hours in Police Custody*, Channel 4 (TV series). Bedfordshire Barry. Thief. Takes 6 sugars in his tea. Dad traded horses, was a bare-knuckle fighter. Barry was called 'pikey' as a kid, fought back. He is half frightened boy, half electric, livewire menace. Large eyes in sunken sockets, unibrow, quick simian gait. Enormous personality and swagger.
- How would you feel if you were one of Turpin's victims, and he was now famous?
- *County Lines* (film) – If you want to show poverty, show its quiet tiredness, its exhaustion.
- Arthur Rimbaud wrote in a letter to friend in 1871: "I am a spectator at the unfolding of my thought; I watch it, I listen to it."
- BBC's *Time* (TV series) – Cons and ex-cons have emotions flattened. Sinister, imposing, glib, glassy-eyed, shell-like affect. And everyone is 'sir' and 'miss', like school. Power infantilizes.
- If people really had superpowers they would be arseholes at best and serial killers at worst.
- Wilde: "Society often forgives the criminal. It never forgives the dreamer."

- 'Nightclubbing' (David Bowie) – Nightclubs are artifices. Castles in the sky held up by the imagination. Turn the lights on and they are just tacky basements. Turpin chases the high, like Bowie, and never finds it. It shimmers in the distance forever, like heaven.
- *Better Call Saul* (TV drama) – A beer bottle placed precariously on the edge of a balcony, mid-conversation.
- Who are the 18th-century populists – the Farages, the Johnsons?
- You know what I like about gin? You say the things you would say sober if you had any balls.
- Does wearing a mask change the content of what people say?
- Crazy stolen outfits, like African child soldiers.
- More colour and lyricism, like *Flash Gordon*.
- Norman Mailer on Muhammed Ali – Women audibly gasped, men looked at the ground.
- *Seven Samurai* (film) – character introduced with a short burst of violence. Now we know exactly who he is, before he speaks.
- *In and of Itself* (film) – "We are all the unreliable narrators of each other's stories."
- The Richard Hambleton painting of red clouds swirling is actually a close-up of the blood swirling in a hypodermic syringe. He says his muse was a "cracked-out junkie ho."
- Two drunks down below on the seafront. One clutching his 2l bottle of cider, the other vomiting on the bench next to him. They are completely wasted, in that fuzzy no man's land between comically genial and violently psychotic. Standing one looking around like he's at a club, bouncing on his feet like he's ready to party. There's no one here; just the sea. Desperately holding on to his buzz after hours of drinking. Everyone's gone, a new day has started but he is still in last night.

Outside of this collation and analysis of different textual sources and ideas, I also made a site visit to York Castle Prison, where Turpin was held in the months before his execution, and the site of York Tyburn, the location of his execution. I had also planned a visit to the pub where he was born, The Blue Bell Inn in Essex, but the establishment appeared at the time of writing to have gone out of business, and to my disappointment a visit there was not possible.

The site visit to York was not motivated by any overarching interest in psychogeography, defined by Merlin Coverley as "the point at which psychology and geography collide" (Coverley, 2006: 10.) I did not expect to uncover any mysterious metaphysical insight, any ghostly or residual 'truth', as I sat alone for an hour in Turpin's stone cell in York Castle on a quiet weekday morning. However, the experience was enormously valuable from a creatively empathetic perspective: it allowed me to visualise his experience and imagine the enigmatic sadness of his captivity, with its low light, heavy iron door, the greys and ochres of the cell walls and floor. For the 'bricoleur', these details are essential: they allow access to tacit knowledge through an emotional unlocking and articulation of instinct and empathy.

Staff at the museum were also kind enough to allow me to handle the ivory whistle rumoured to have been in Turpin's possession until he died. Its provenance is undetermined, and there will never be any way of knowing if the rumour is supported by definitive fact. In *Immortal Turpin*, it is mentioned in the "words of a witness", possibly from a contemporary newspaper report about Turpin's behaviour in the moments before his death: "Arriving at the fatal spot he talked some time to the hangman, and presented him with a small ivory whistle" (Ash and Day, 1948: 127).

It is frustrating, and perhaps appropriate, that Ash and Day provide no citation for this account; similar contemporary newspaper reports in the record make no mention of the whistle. Ash and Day would probably have been aware that the whistle had been in the collection of what was then the Yorkshire Museum since at least the 1930s; it is photographed in the 24th March, 1939 edition of a newspaper called the *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, where it is described, as publicity for the upcoming

bicentenary of Turpin's death, as being "given by Turpin to the clergyman who attended him on York gallows". Between 1939 and the publication of *Immortal Turpin* in 1948, this clergyman recipient somehow – fittingly – becomes Turpin's executioner, Thomas Hadfield.

The whistle may have been Turpin's, or it may not. As I held it carefully in my rubber-gloved hands in the museum's archive room, and looked at its undemonstrative detail – the small story of a man rolling a barrel, told in a simple and unelaborate carving – I felt oddly distant from Turpin and his legend, and at the same time intimate with the creative possibility made manifest in this humble object. This did not belong to Turpin; this could have belonged to Turpin.

I decided that he should own the whistle in my script: that it would be a wedding present from the mentor who betrays him, James Smith, and that he would gift it to Hadfield on the scaffold before he dies.

This is *not* Turpin. But it *could* be.

Conclusion

The research outlined in the thesis above interrogated the challenges present in adapting the life of a famous historical figure. Prominent in this discussion were ideas about how notions in adaptation studies of 'fidelity', 'history' and 'truth' are subjective and fragmented, and the ways these contradictions and complexities can be harnessed in the creative writing process to develop a multi-dimensional representation of a real human being, re-imagined as the protagonist in a television series script.

The literature review incorporated a broad range of academic sources in addition to adaptation studies theory, including writing on biography; outlaw / antihero figures; 18th century social and cultural history; screenwriting theory; practice as research methodologies; and existing research on the life of Richard Turpin and adaptations of his story in a variety of media. By drawing on a rich multiplicity of academic and creative resources, the researcher was able to generate i) a composite picture of the man Turpin was understood to be during in own lifetime and posthumously, and ii) an overview of the historical and cultural contexts within which the Turpin mythology was configured.

Two research questions formed the interrogatory roadmap for this research:

1) How can an original television script re-fashion the narrative of the life and criminal career of Dick Turpin, using available historical evidence and creative speculation?

2) How can a new model for adapting history, the 'hierarchy of hypotexts', support this process of adaptation?

In response to the first question, the research findings nudged the researcher towards an empathetic approach to the source material, as the palimpsest of stories and myths that make up the cultural approximation of a real human life became apparent, particularly in the case of an outlaw figure such as Turpin, who has been mythologised across several genres for hundreds of years. If the 'real' subject of a historical adaptation could never be apprehended in a fixed and immutable form, a more instinctive emotional truth could bring that character to life in a viscerally satisfying way: a 'duty of care' that would recognise the complexity of the human condition without staking a claim to be the indisputable facts of that person's existence. The emergence through the creative reflection of the writer of a convincing dramatic character, who represented every Turpin mythology simultaneously but remained human and believable at his core, was documented in the exegesis chapter of the thesis.

The research process led to the development of the 'hierarchy of hypotexts', a creative writing model which emerged as the basis for the second research question. If the source-stories of a real person's life formed a layered, intertextual collage, then those layers could be shuffled in a hierarchy according to the dramatic impetus of any specific scene. This model can be seen as a potentially useful tool for a writer attempting an adaptation of history and can also be considered a device for deconstructing the various textual influences at play during the consrtruction of different scenes in a script. This synthesis of source texts operating in a fluid hierarchy,

and the articulation of the artist's tacit knowledge during the writing process, help foster an empathetic approach to adaptation which can vividly bring a character to life on the printed page.

The word limit on a practice as research project placed an obvious restriction on the scope of the research inquiry. However, further opportunities became evident at the periphery of this research:

1) The 'hierarchy of hypotexts' model has the potential to be utilised not only as a creative writing tool, but also as an analytic methodology within adaptation studies for deconstructing other adaptations of history in different genres other than film or television scripts. For example, comparative studies of outlaw / antihero mythologies as ballads, criminal histories or novels may reveal congruencies in approach and application.

2) The ways in which contemporary newspapers contributed to the formation of the Turpin myth, and the importance of victims' accounts of crime reporting of this era, appears to be a rich vein of socio-cultural knowledge that warrants further investigation. One potential research question feels particularly urgent: to what degree does an absence of the victim's voice in a criminal narrative shape the subject's evolution into myth?

3) Little is known about the practice of tattooing in England before the 19th century, though there is some tantalising evidence to suggest that markings of this kind may have been common amongst criminal fraternities during the

period Turpin was alive. A research inquiry which sought to fill this gap in knowledge may also uncover further information about other aspects of 18th century gang culture and organised violence.

4) The original scope of this research project involved the creation of a 21st century re-telling of the Turpin story as a second artefact in addition to the script which accompanies this thesis. There remains an opportunity for a new creative writing project of this kind to become part of the Turpin narrative canon.

Unfortunately, circumstances resulting from the coronavirus pandemic meant that some planned site visits were not possible during the research period; to a degree, the research (from a creative writing standpoint) warrants a concluding coda that would be satisfied by a visit to Turpin's birthplace, the Blue Bell Inn in Hempstead, Essex, once it reopens under new management.

Appendix: A – **SAMUEL GREGORY: OVERSEER OF THE NEW PAVEMENT**

Epping rain pissing on me now like Adam's ale from some old bracket-face gunpowder's madge. Pissing on ME, the dimber-damber, the arch-rogue, the captain-tom in cramp-rings, snapt in the nut crackers I am, it won't fadge. Overseer of the new pavement. With the rout jybing at me, they nettle me, stones at my gan, they twit me, blood all over my munns and my mish. Shew them blood I will. The bundle tail, the platter faced jade and her chittiface. Sowr that doxie I will. The leather-head and his black-jack. Lambaste his pratts I will. The turnip-pate rich face nigit. Lace his coat I will.

Then this one. This hector. Shite in his daddles. This shit sack. He feeds it to me. Limns my mien with it. Rumly I eat. This madge-cull. You will fee Samuel Gregory my bingo-boy. You will fee this.

There the lobsters, the Moabites, the swadkins – they rally and they rail. They rally and they rail this choir-bird smug. Maggot pates, jingle brains all. I am faggoted but do you hear me yelp, you lantern-jaw'd madge-culls. Stow you. Stubble it. Take rattle. You piss more than you drink.

The welkin. Gray as dog's soup. But now they cry beef. There is thunder and they cry beef. The hector is stopped. No more whids from the hector. Glaziers wide as moons. No more whiddle from this cup-shot cull.

They are hunting, my bully-ruffins, my cloyers, my knot - I hear them.

And now Jeremy, my olli-compolli. "How dost do, my buff," he says. "It's all rug. All is bob." Fall back, fall edge. My cronies are here and about. Jeremy, my upright-man of the black art. My ding-boy dubber. He chives the darbies.

A sudden yellow welkin, a black rum prancer. 'Tis the butcher, the shot face. Stick in hand. But first now, to my hector. The shite-cull. The whisk. White like a ewe. Panter like a drum. He tries to brush. No, my little bantling. Look at the stag.

He shites through his teeth. Casts up accounts. Now, now he fees. Yes, you couch a hogshead, my dear nug. I knock him on the costard. How he yelps. I kimbaw the cull. I culp his grinders. Gust the air-reverence, hector. Shitten luck is good luck. Now he cries cockles. His throttle thrummagemmed with shite.

Bing avast and bene darkmans. The mouth is quiet.

To Turpin, and his black grogham. Take rattle, boys. And so we squeak to the flash-ken.

Appendix: B – THE BALLAD OF THE BOY RICHARD

"Show me the boy and see the man"
     'tis only partly true,
For here's a thing of many sides
     akin to me and you
Dick Turpin, he is dead, is dead, Dick Turpin, he is dead.

In Essex he is born, this boy
     the pox he does survive,
Of all the people lost to fate
     this one does stay alive
The little boy is dead, is dead, the little boy is dead.

A butcher's son, his life begins
     in blood his hands baptised,
But idle is the apprentice,
     and work he does despise
The butcher's son is dead, is dead, the butcher's son is dead.

A taste for venison he has
     a poacher's life he chose
He leaves his wife and child behind,
     as thorns betray the rose
His marriage vows are dead, are dead, his marriage vows are dead.

A proclamation does decree
     the hunters shall be hanged,
From noble gains to robbery:
     he joins the Gregory Gang
Dick's innocence is dead, is dead, Dick's innocence is dead.

From house to house they smash and grab
     and beat the farmers' hides
They rape and plunder simple folk,
     and empathy deride
His dignity is dead, is dead, his dignity is dead.

A callow youth betrays them all
     the Judas in their midst,
And one by one their necks are stretched
     while Turpin's getting pissed
The Gregorys are dead, are dead, the Gregorys are dead.

To Rotterdam he does escape
  a coward 'cross the sea
Then England calls him back again,
  his pockets now empty
His courage, it is dead, 'tis dead, his courage, it is dead.

A highway robber he becomes
  in gentleman's attire
To Matthew King a fatal shot
  from Turpin's gun is fired
His only friend is dead, is dead, his only friend is dead.

In Yorkshire does he change his name
  and horses does he steal
His landlord's rooster then he kills
  his doom himself he seals
His freedom, it is dead, is dead, his freedom, it is dead.

His sister he a letter sends
  and begs that she assist
His mentor sees the handwriting:
  predestination's twist
His hope is dead, 'tis dead, 'tis dead, his hope, at last 'tis dead.

On Tyburn's tree in York he hangs
  his body lost and found
He lies in perpetuity,
  bones rotting underground
Richard the man is dead, is dead, Richard the man is dead.

In legends old and stories new,
  His ghost may come and go
But who Dick Turpin really was,
  no-one will ever know.
Dick Turpin's never dead, is dead, Dick Turpin's never dead.

Appendix: C – THIEVES

So there the stolen car dies, its shuddering heart of iron and grime exploding in a seizure of exhaust fumes and rank steam; a warm but dead black animal on an empty winter road.

"Fakkkkkkkkk!"

How good that feels, to unleash his fury at the stars, to hammer his palms on the steering wheel without heed to damage of plastic or flesh. "Fak. In. CANT! CANT CANT CANT CANT CANT!"[1]

Where is he. Digwsell Hill. Where the bloody hell is that supposed to be. Nearest anything = three miles, and 6% battery left on his phone.

He's got the mountain bike in the boot…

Snowing now, soft on his face while he pedals. So that's how you ride the fakking thing. Been years. Go on girl. Like Black fakking Beauty. Painted everything black, that lot, after they nicked it. Sell the bike later (or sell it on, he smiles). Yeah. Ok. Not so bad now. Easy, bruv. If they aren't still looking for him, they've cut their losses. Besides, he's sold all the K2 he liberated from their pockets as they slept, his front teeth clamped on his blanching bottom lip, soundless focus, tippy toes; then three days of pub here, pub there, and he'd finished off the rest of the puff to keep warm. Bank account emptied, but he's resourceful, a 'whipster', the boys had called him. Wiry and clever and quick. He'll work something out.

They won't be calling him that now. Much worse.

Oh yes. Have it. The Red Lion. It jumps up on the horizon like a welcome party, its windows are glowing embers, there's a spark of laughter in the night air. What must that be like, a returning hero.

Nothing to lock the bike with. He hides it in the brambles. Shhhhhhh. A fat bloke is pissing his pints away into a hedge, wheezing no-hands on his vape thing. He is anxious, hurrying; he curses as he splashes his jeans, looking around into the trees, as if hunted.

Did he see me? Didn't see me. So what if he saw me? No one knows me here.

He digs deep in his pockets again. Two pounds in change, almost three. Enough for a half of Stella. And probably some Monster Munch, the chilli ones. Get warmed up, make a plan.

"Leapfrog the dog, and brush me daddy-O!" Something tribal from the jukebox. It's busy, not heaving, but by Christ it's warm. No one looks at him. Good sign, good sign, keep your head down, nothing brash, nothing rash.

Stool at the bar. "What can I get you love?" She's got that mumsy but hard as nails thing about her, like Pat Butcher, chunky hands drying pint glasses with a throttled teatowel.

There. Is. No. Stella.

She reads his distress, purses her lips to suffocate a grin. He looks at the little pictures of men in costumes on the pumps: Wild Ale 5.2%. Sheppard's Stout 6%. Blimey. He's squinting at the board behind her, trying not to move his head as he reads the prices, keeping his head still and relaxing his focus like he's seen those posh announcers do on the news.

"You want to try one of them ones love? Or we've got Turpin back in. On special. £3.40 a pint."

That means no Monster Munch, but if he sips it he can nurse that pint for an hour, perhaps longer. Always some pickings at last orders. Wallets and car keys everywhere you look. Some change in the tray of the jonny machine. Or Pat Butcher might take him home, stuff him with Pot Noodle. She's staring.

"Can't wait all night love." Wink.

"I'll have the Turpin then. Pint." Gaze held a tiny bit longer than the recommended daily intake. Her fingers give his a little squeeze as she pushes away his money.

He can't stand bitter but this one's brawny and raw, and he lets a shudder of pleasure ride across his shoulders. A few punters come and go. Background noise. He's still got options. Some 50ps on the pool table but he doesn't like his chances with those two balding villains in their bulging polo shirts. The Vaper is pumping coinage into a fruit machine called The Fatal Tree; it spits out orange light and hunting horns and crashes of horses' hooves. He's bigger than he looked in the moonlight.

Strategize. Till? Pat Butcher unlocks it for cash, but it's mostly cashless payments. She thinks he's watching her, is encouraged. "How's the Turpin?"

She's expecting him to have made the connection by now, and she looks up and behind at the flintlock, displayed on a beam above the whiskies and brandies. Hiding in plain sight.

"You don't know the story, do you my love."

As his stare slides around the antique pistol she tells him the legend - "but let me tell you, babe, between you and me, it's all true" - and it washes over him and through him and evaporates against the bright tang of the sharp, hardening decision in his mind.

"… and he hid there, after robbing on the Great North Road. They say he comes back on nights like this, looking for something he's lost…"

She's pleased with the telling and he fakes a satisfied amusement.

"Another one of those?" she says; he drains his glass in affirmation.

"Where's the gents?"

He closes the stall door, takes a breath. Courage my boy. Looks at his phone – just a couple of minutes until chucking-out time. Get this done, just keep riding, keep going all night, sooner or later he'll find a little town with a Cash Converters.

There's a horseshoe on the stall door. It's upside-down, not in a U. Or maybe that's the lucky way round? He can't remember. I'll take that too he says, lifts it off the nail, pockets it. Need all the luck I can get.

"I'd ask you for your number, but you'll never guess what I've gone and done," he says, rolling his eyes at the door to the gents, after the Red Lion has emptied the last of its swaying regulars out into the darkness.

She roars. "I'll get me rubber gloves on." Off she goes, shaking her head.

He shrugs his best adorable shrug.

She reappears from a back room, washing gloves on, snapping them like a surgeon. Wink.

He's on the bar the second the gents' door has closed behind her. Whipster. He has to lean over the whiskies to get a hand on the flintlock; it's not hanging, it's nailed on. He wrenches, it resists. He can hear her beginning some advice about putting the phone "in a bag of rice, sometimes that does wonders, you'd be surprised how many…"

The pistol frees itself from the beam and he slams down on his back on the bar, legs kicking out for purchase. A foot catches a brandy bottle, sending it spinning to the floor like a crashing helicopter. The barmaid watches it smash; winks and cuddles

and canoodling drain from her face. Now she's after him, muscular and fast, like something in a bear pit.

He runs until his lungs are seared with cold and his clothes punctured with brambles. Did she follow? She didn't follow. He's on the other side of the hill; there's a dell, a chalk pit, below him, and he scrambles down to its safety. No-one can see him from the road. He waits for shouts, for a police siren; he waits for a dog or fox bark, but there's nothing, not even sound, outside of his own lacerated breathing.

He could wait here a while, go back for the bike; if they aren't still looking for him, they've cut their losses. He looks at this loss, his prize: the pistol is heavy in his hands, the filigree on the muzzle a beautiful mystery, the intricacies of the hammer and the mainstream and the pan – nothing to him but the ghost of an elaborate puzzle.

He feels a blow to the shoulder as the gun is torn away from his grip; it spins in the air: like a cowboy trick, he thinks. And now the gun is pointing at his head.

"I believe there is more of my property on your person, skin-flint." Its scarred face is close to his, its breath livid and rank.

He tries to piece together the sudden horror of this rapidly expanding nightmare: it's the man on the beer pump, the hat and the cloak and the boots, but in x-ray, huge, electric with menace.

A black glove; snapping fingers.

He remembers, pulls the horseshoe from his jeans' pocket, a U in the moonlight. The gloved hand snatches it, turns it 180 degrees. "This way round. They'll look at the tracks, think you're away. But you're back at them. A whipster…" A deep laugh. Leaden, like suffocation. "And you thought I was after this old barking iron?"[2] Something falls.

A flapping of the cloak, almost a rattle of bones in the wind. Then nothing but night, and the wail of a horse driven hard, and the cold weight of a flintlock in his trembling hands.

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[1]CANT = vulgar for female genitalia, as pronounced in Essex! But also the general name for 18th-century thieves' slang.
[2]Barking iron = pistol.

Appendix: D – **DICK TURPIN IS DEAD**

April 8th, 1739

The notorious highwayman "trembles" on the gallows before taking his last ride

The criminal career of Britain's most wanted criminal, the flamboyant highwayman Richard 'Dick' Turpin, came to an unglamorous end at York Tyburn yesterday when his legs buckled in terror on the gallows in front of an estimated 10,000 people. Many of the spectators had travelled from other parts of the country to catch a glimpse of the famous gangster's execution, despite the inclement weather.

The pockmarked Essex boy, 33, was convicted of horse theft last month at the York Assizes, after Judge Richard Crowle laughed away his petition for the trial to be moved to Turpin's home county.

Turpin is rumoured to have ruthlessly shot and killed servant Thomas Morris in Epping Forest in 1737, and was a member of the savage criminal syndicate The Gregory Gang, who terrorised farmhouses in the home counties between 1733 and 1735. Turpin fled to Holland when John 'wheedler' Wheeler turned informant, but returned to England when the coast was clear to embark on a chaotic spree of highway robberies around London and the South East. After being implicated in the gunning down of accomplice Matthew King, the cowardly robber was captured in the East Riding of Yorkshire in October last year for drunkenly shooting his landlord's prized rooster.

Crowle said: "Justice has been served. Richard Turpin was a dangerous, sadistic thug who showed no remorse for his crimes and no empathy towards his victims. Whenever possible, the judiciary will continue to administer the most severe penalties available in order to remove society's most violent and predatory lawbreakers from our streets."

The Duke of Newcastle, Lord Pelham-Holles, who issued a proclamation in 1737 promising a £200 reward for information leading to Turpin's capture, would not be drawn on the identities of the reward's beneficiaries, saying: "Details about the circumstances leading up to Turpin's arrest will be made fully available in due course. Of greater importance is the reminder that capital punishment remains a robust deterrent, preventing the loose and disorderly sort of people from committing similar offences. Our message to them is clear: the law is watching you, and you have nowhere to hide."

Eyewitness Thomas Kyll said an overweight Turpin appeared intoxicated as he climbed the ladder to the gallows. "He seemed to spend some time drinking with the topsman, and I think something changed hands," said Kyll. "Turpin then waved and bowed to the crowd, as if enjoying the attention. But I saw his leg shake as he was climbing the ladder, and he had to stamp his foot to stop the trembling. He was visibly shaken. He stared out at the crowd one more time - and then he jumped."

Turpin was pronounced dead yesterday evening, and his body removed to the Blue Boar Inn in York, where it will remain before his burial later today.

Courageous former maid Dorothy Street, who was raped by gang leader Samuel Gregory in 1735 in the Edgware farm where she worked, made the long journey from her home in Middlesex to watch Turpin's final moments. She said: "Turpin took part in the robbery at Earlsbury Farm where I was raped. He brutally beat my elderly employer, Joseph Lawrence, and did nothing when Gregory forced me upstairs to my garret. But he knew what was happening. I've been waiting a long time for this moment. I came here today to see him die."

Turpin is survived by a wife and child, but the philandering outlaw left his possessions to Briar Harris, a married woman in Yorkshire, according to the York Castle chaplain.

Mrs Harris was unavailable for comment.

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