

# **The Ribbon Boys' Rebellion 1830**

Jeanette Meredith Thompson

University of Technology Sydney

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### **Certificate of Original Authorship**

I certify that this work has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as a part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the creative work has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the creative work itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the work.

Jeanette M. Thompson

17 May 2014

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### **Disclaimer**

This is a work of fiction. Historical fact, names and events have not been invented, but narrative tools have been used to hypothesise about the characters’ motivations and beliefs. Some scenes are speculative and meant to make the reader question their own historical and cultural assumptions. As much as possible of the original speech and testimony of the convicts is preserved from court trials and newspaper accounts. When the beauty of heart and mind dissolve, only the bones of recorded fact remain. The melding of history and literature is perhaps our last hope of redemption.

## Table of Contents

Certificate of Original Authorship			i
Acknowledgements			ii
Abstract			iii
Table of Contents (Creative)			iv
Table of Contents (Exegesis)			v
List of Maps and Images			vi
Abstract			vii
Bone and Beauty (Creative Work)			ix
Prologue			1
Chapter 1	Bathurst Settlement,	October 20 <sup>th</sup> 1830	4
Chapter 2	Court House,	October 21 <sup>st</sup> 1830	24
Chapter 3	Bathurst Gaol,	October 22 <sup>nd</sup> 1830	54
Chapter 4	Kelso,	October 24 <sup>th</sup> 1830	86
Chapter 5	Abercrombie Ranges,	October 26 <sup>th</sup> 1830	114
Chapter 6	Court House,	October 29 <sup>th</sup> 1830	138
Chapter 7	Court House,	October 30 <sup>th</sup> 1830	170
Chapter 8	Goal Cell,	October 31 <sup>st</sup> 1830	194
Chapter 9	Gaol Cell,	November 1 <sup>st</sup> 1830	218
Chapter 10	Commissariat Stores,	November 2 <sup>nd</sup> 1830	246
Muster			257
Scholar's Notes and Titbits			261
References			318
Index			336

## Table of Contents

The Ribbon Boy's Rebellion 1830: Exegesis	341
Chapter 1: Introduction	343
1.1 The bushranger myth	344
1.2 Scope of the project	350
1.3 Methodology and sources	352
1.4 The research journey and emergent themes	353
Chapter 2: Heuristic enquiry – History and Historiography	359
2.1 Immersion – How I first encountered the story.	359
2.2 Critical analysis of how the story has been transmitted into popular history	361
2.3 New discoveries and new information	365
2.4 How has the new information changed my understanding of the story?	374
Chapter 3: Hermeneutic enquiry – Narrative and Narratology	378
3.1 Cultural representations of bushrangers in literature, film and theatre.	378
3.2 Narrative structure	386
3.3 Creation of Historical sensibility and imaginative engagement	396
3.4 Audience and positioning the reader	399
3.5 Voice	405
Chapter 4: Transformations	409
4.1 Narrative as hypothetical argument.	409
4.2 Conclusion	413
Appendices	421
Appendix A: Creative Journal	421
Appendix B: Research Process	425
Appendix C: Creative Process	431
Bibliography	434

## List of Maps and Images

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- Baker's Map of the County of Bathurst (<http://nla.map-raa8-s6> Call Number: MAP RaA8 Plate 5)
- A Map of the County Roxburgh (<http://nla.map-raa8-s18> Call Number: MAP RaA8 Plate 17)
- Map of the County of King (<http://nla.map-raa8-s13> Call Number: MAPRaA8 Plate12)
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## **Abstract**

There is a surprising silence in the historical record about Irish convict insurrection from the Castle Hill rebellion of 1804 until the emergence of Ned Kelly in 1869. Robert Hughes suggests that the Castle Hill rebellion was ‘the only concerted uprising of convicts ever to take place on the Australian mainland’ (Hughes 1987, p. 194). However, in October 1830 Governor Darling ordered Captain Walpole to lead a forced march to Bathurst to suppress a convict insurrection of reportedly over eighty government servants from twenty five farms led by a gang of Irish Ribbon Boys. The Governor deployed troops to the stations and ordered detachments to guard the iron and road gangs ‘as should these people rise, who are 1500 in number, the Consequences might prove of the most serious nature’ (Ward & Robertson 1978, p. 228). The insurrection resulted in a public execution of ten Ribbon Boys and the deaths of three mounted police, an overseer and nine convict associates. This exegesis will argue that the Bathurst insurrection has been overlooked due to the way in which the narrative was constructed and passed down. The settlers and officials who first recorded the rebellion preferred to downplay the social and political causes of insurrection and nullified the impact by attributing the revolt to a single convict ‘bushranger’ seeking revenge. No previous accounts have examined the political significance of the ribbons the leader wore in his hat, the sites of insurrection and the patterns of criminal association that flourished in lands beyond the limits of location. The archival research contests Hughes notion that, ‘scattered in threes and fours through the immense bush, living in outback isolation, political prisoners had no social resonance: they were neutralized by geography as much as by law’ (Hughes 1987, p. 194). The narrative research critiques cultural representations of ‘bushrangers’ in print and screen in order to discover ways in which narrative techniques and structures can be used to stimulate the public imagination and disrupt accepted cultural understandings of these events. The creative work is conceptualized as an historic hypothesis that engages the emotions and intellect to evoke an historic sensibility in the reader.