Words for the Heat of Deeds

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Table of Contents

Declaration..... iii

Acknowledgements..... iv

Abstract..... v

Words for the Heat of Deeds..... 1

Exegesis..... 273

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I hereby certify that the work embodied in this Thesis is the result of original research, the greater part of which was completed subsequent to admission to candidature for the degree.

Signature . . . . . Date: . . . . . .

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Abstract

Words for the Heat of Deeds is a work of creative non-fiction centred on the early nineteenth century colonial penal outstation of Newcastle. The narrative reworks and recodes the often incomplete, recorded, archival lives of criminals and gaolers who either attended, or were connected to, the outstation's martial lifetime. As a creative text, it reconfigures this past into a portrait of time and place, with particular emphasis on its squalor, violence, contradictions, resilience and grace. The project weds research and experimental literature with the music of language and disused words. It is also an imaginative, but thoroughly researched, re-enactment of the topography and the discourses of an historical period.

The project's engagement with cultural theory, historiography and genre informs and enlarges its contextual and conceptual boundaries. As the exegesis will outline, the generic, literary aims and themes informing the creative narrative are mediated by cultural theory as it relates to criminality, language, class, convictism and the writing of history. These intercept with certain fundamental readings of Australian history, particularly in relation to how convictism and true crime have been adopted and absorbed by an historical narrative of nationhood and identity. *Words for the Heat of Deeds*, in this context, is an alternative microhistory which responds creatively to usurp this singular dominant view. The exegesis describes and explains how the coherence of *Words for the Heat of Deeds* is grounded in the ways that its component parts – both the research and the writing – process and catalytically configure these influences into a creative narrative.

NOTE: Where possible, the creative text employs twenty-first century spelling. This likewise applies to the naming of places, rivers, etc, which uses The Committee for Geographical Names in Australasia: Guidelines for the Consistent Use of Place Names (Version 1.0, April 2001), http://www.icsm.gov.au/cgna/consistent_pnames.pdf. In nearly all cases, no possessive apostrophe is used, so, for example, Hunter's River is written as Hunter River.