

# **“Tarare”**

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## **Declaration**

I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision. The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and any approved embargo.

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## Abstract

My novella, *Tarare*, is a grotesque historical fiction set during the French Revolution. It focuses on the violent, insalubrious world of military hospital, in particular, exploring the lives of two historical figures, Professor Pierre-François Percy, a celebrated surgeon of the era, and the soldier Tarare who was, amongst other things, a glutton and a cannibal. The story is an intimate portrait of life in an 18<sup>th</sup> century rural town, as well as a celebration of science and medicine in a great age of reason. However, as revolutionary fervour seizes France, organisation at the hospice of Soultz begins to collapse.

The accompanying exegesis is divided into two parts. In the first part, I analyse my work in relation to the historical novel, in particular exploring the genre's relationship to social realism, and to 'the dialogue', using two texts as my main focus: Penelope Fitzgerald's *The Blue Flower* and Hilary Mantel's *A Place of Greater Safety*. The second part of the exegesis consists of an investigation into the grotesque, beginning with an overview of the term's history, followed by a discussion of its use in literary theory. Following on from this, there is a close analysis of two texts: the Marquis de Sade's *Justine, ou Les Malheurs de la Vertu* and Patrick Süskind's *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer*. In examining these works, I discuss how they fit into a larger body of grotesque literature, and how they have influenced my own writing.