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Villains to Heroes

Criminal Celebrities in 1960's Britain and their Subsequent Rise in Popularity

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October 2021

Declaration

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published by another person, except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis is the candidate's own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any institution.



Richard Nixon

October 2021

Abstract

This thesis sits at the intersection of history, media and cultural studies, and will undertake a study into the emergence of criminal celebrities in Britain in the 1960s and their subsequent rise in popularity. It will seek to explain the reasons for and cultural impact of this emergence and rise against an ever-changing social, cultural, political and media landscape, including changes in social and cultural attitudes. In doing so, the study will seek to establish the extent to which criminal celebrities are a product of their time.

The thesis will essentially comprise two main strands with reference to criminal celebrities, one cultural and the other commercial. The first strand will concern the emergence and rise in popularity of criminal celebrities in Britain in the 1960s and will focus on their cultural impact, not least how they became icons of popular culture. The second strand will seek to explain the rise in popularity of criminal celebrities by viewing them through the lens of crime as entertainment. Crime as entertainment, which will be one of the central themes of this study, is inextricably linked with commercial factors which place criminal celebrities in a commercially driven marketplace where they are packaged and sold as entertainment.

This study will demonstrate a nexus between the two main strands of the thesis through three case studies. The case studies will be in respect of criminals who rose to celebrity in Britain in the 1960s, namely international drug dealer Howard Marks, Great Train Robber Ronnie Biggs, and East End of London gangsters the Kray twins. This nexus will be brought into relief in identifying to varying extents the cultural shift which gave the respective case-study subjects respectability and acceptability in society, and where the motif of the good criminal which runs through this thesis, has helped cement this validation. The point of connection between what might be termed cultural acceptability and commercialism is that criminal celebrities once validated by society become, like any other celebrities, targets for commercial exploitation. Criminal celebrities thus become commodities sold in the name of entertainment to a receptive audience whose appetite for sensation itself has helped foster and indeed institutionalise a culture in respect of them.

Acknowledgements

When I have spoken with other people who have completed a PhD, a comment which cropped up from time to time is that they were glad when it was all over. However, I have to say that for me, researching and writing this thesis has been a joy from start to finish, and to this end, I think I was fortunate in identifying a fascinating topic which has sustained my interest throughout.

Let me tell you a little something about my wife Jane to whom I owe a debt of gratitude for arousing my interest in celebrity culture. Jane is one of these people who follows celebrities to the ends of the earth, to the extent of knowing who is married to whom, how many children they have from assorted relationships – and of course all the celebrity gossip which she faithfully reads in *Hello!* magazine. What were these people doing in Jane’s life, and how did they get there? In the event, sociologist Joshua Gamson asked himself these very same questions, adding that he began to tap into what he called the “weird world” of celebrity which had become “the stuff of everyday life” and that he wanted to “unlock that strangeness”.¹ I too wanted to unlock the strangeness by trying to find out why Jane was so in thrall of celebrities.

My background is in the legal profession, and I have always had a strong interest in crime which has included both prosecuting and defending criminals. Moreover, I have always had a deep-seated interest in journalism and media studies in general. I therefore decided I would combine Jane’s interest in celebrity with my interest in crime, journalism and media studies, and this is how the thesis topic arose.

My first general thank you goes to Notre Dame University. The University has a 5-star rating – and with good reason. Everyone I have encountered at the University during my PhD journey has been helpful in the extreme. Special thanks go to Dr Kate Howell who welcomed me and my application with gusto. Special thanks also go to Dr Martin Drum at Notre Dame University who pointed me in the direction of Dr Leigh Straw who was to become my Principal Supervisor.

¹ Joshua Gamson, *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America* (Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1994), 4.

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A big thank you to you Leigh for all your time and help, and particularly for your unstinting faith in my ability to do justice to this interesting topic. An equally big thank you also goes to Emeritus Professor Graham Seal who kindly agreed to be my Associate Supervisor and whose pearls of wisdom have been gratefully received. Whilst the help and guidance and experience of my supervisors has been invaluable, I could not have completed this journey without the considerable help of the wonderful staff at St. Teresa's Library at the University. I give my thanks to Jackie Stevens, Sophie Farrar and more recently Ellen Quilty, not forgetting the unsung heroes in the guise of background staff who never failed to track down what at times were the most obscure of sources.

Most importantly, I acknowledge and thank the Australian Government for funding my PhD studies under the RTP scheme.

I conclude my acknowledgements with a further thank you to my wife Jane for her forbearance, and for listening to me when I regaled her endlessly with what I at least thought were fascinating nuggets of information concerning criminal celebrities – even though in truth she would have preferred me to talk about Kim Kardashian West or the Beckhams. Thank you also to my sons Edward and William for bearing with me on this long journey and with particular thanks to William for his IT skills and for bailing me out time and time again when my computer misbehaved.

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Glossary

“*Agency*” shall be used in the sense recognised within the social sciences, that is to say, the capacity of individuals to act independently to make their own free choices.

“*Celebrity age*” shall mean the period of time corresponding with the rise of celebrity culture in Britain, and which for the purposes of this study shall include the 1960s to the present day.

“*Celebrity hero*” or “*criminal hero*” shall be used to describe either a celebrity or a criminal celebrity who has been elevated to the higher plane of a hero in the eyes of the beholder.

“*Celebrity in general*” or “*celebrities in general*” shall be used to refer respectively to celebrity in general or celebrities in general, and are needed to distinguish from a criminal celebrity.

“*Celebrity*” when used as an adjective shall mean the state of being celebrated, and when used as a noun shall mean a person who is celebrated.

“*Criminal celebrity*” or “*Criminal celebrities*” shall be used to describe criminals who have attained celebrity status.

“*Permissive Society*” for the purposes of this study shall mean changing liberal values and in general more relaxed attitudes which emerged in Britain in the 1960s, including changing attitudes to both crime and criminals.

“*Star*”, “*personality*” and “*fame*” shall be treated as synonymous with the word *celebrity* in the celebrity age.

1

Introduction

1.1 Setting the scene

The purpose of this study is to shed new light on the emergence of criminal celebrities in 1960's Britain and their subsequent rise in popularity. To this end, the study will be set against the backdrop of the socially, culturally and politically transformative period of 1960's Britain and the simultaneous rising celebrity culture witnessed in what this study refers to as the 'celebrity age' – whilst the study itself will be predicated on crime as entertainment and its commercial exploitation by the media or by or through the agency of criminal celebrities themselves.

One of the central tenets of the study will be to identify cultural shifts over time by which such criminals consequent on changing values and attitudes have been elevated to celebrity or heroic status. An observation by sociologist Paul Kooistra is particularly apposite in noting that “[O]ver time new meanings and values are given to the heroic criminal which [have] transcended the social context that initially provided meaning for his criminality.”² Moreover, Kooistra's comments are echoed by sociologist Ruth Penfold-Mounce who contends that “[A]s public meanings and values change, so does the form of criminal celebrity.”³ In this connection, illustrative case studies of Howard Marks, Ronnie Biggs and the Kray twins will chart the rise of these individual case-study subjects from villains to heroes in 1960's Britain to establish the extent to which they were a product of their time. In doing so, the case studies will identify new social and cultural meanings and values in respect of criminal celebrities. This will in part help explain not only their emergence as criminal celebrities and their subsequent rise in popularity, but also the extent of their being revered as icons of popular culture.

The emergence of criminal celebrities in Britain in the 1960s and their subsequent rise in popularity arose out of a number of disparate and yet inter-connected factors which ultimately coalesced. For the sake of clarification, it will be necessary to distinguish between factors which led to the emergence of criminal celebrities in 1960's Britain and those which led to their subsequent rise in popularity. This study will be at pains to deal with these factors separately. In this respect, the study will

² Paul Kooistra, "Criminals As Heroes: Linking Symbol to Structure," *Symbolic Interaction* 13, no. 2 (1990), 227, <https://doi.org/10.1525/si.1990.13.2.217>.

³ Ruth Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression* (England: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 103.

discuss the ever-changing form of criminal celebrity consequent on changing meanings and values to help explain the emergence of criminal celebrities in 1960's Britain. It will then separately discuss other factors which need to be taken into account to help explain their subsequent rise in popularity.

Criminal celebrities are nothing new and are certainly not exclusive to the celebrity age. Early examples are Robin Hood from medieval times and Jack Sheppard and Dick Turpin both from the early 18th century, although different labels would have been ascribed to them in their day. These early examples (to include others of their ilk) will from this point onwards be referred to in this study as *criminal celebrities of old*. The conclusion will compare the celebrity of criminal celebrities of old with the celebrity of the three proposed case-study subjects. The purpose of this comparison will be to identify constant factors which are common to both criminal celebrities of old and the individual case-study subjects, and new factors in the celebrity age which perforce did not aid the emergence or rise in popularity of criminal celebrities of old, but which will help explain the emergence of the case-study subjects as criminal celebrities in 1960's Britain and their subsequent rise in popularity.

This study begins by explaining what is meant by the term *criminal celebrity*. There are three types of criminals who might fit this term. The first is criminals who are elevated to celebrity status, of which Great Train Robber Ronnie Biggs is a prime example. The second is established celebrities who turn to crime in respect of which Penfold-Mounce ascribes the term *rogue celebrities*.⁴ Rolf Harris is an example of this type of criminal. There is also a third type or category of criminal celebrity, that is to say, criminals who court celebrity, or at least notoriety, by their actions. Mark Chapman, who murdered John Lennon in 1980 and whose actions guaranteed him world media headlines is such an example. This study is concerned solely with criminals who are elevated to celebrity or even heroic status, and who will be referred to throughout this thesis as criminal celebrities.

Ruth Penfold-Mounce identifies four categories of criminal celebrities. The first category is that of social bandits who are not criminals by choice, but who fight on behalf of an oppressed public.⁵ Howard Marks, the first of the case-study subjects most

⁴ Ruth Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression* (England: Palgrave MacMillan., 2009), 10.

⁵ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 83.

identifies with this category. The second category is criminal heroes, described as criminals who become popular for their daring, audacity, recklessness and pursuit of profit.⁶ Ronnie Biggs, the second of the case-study subjects fits into this category. The third category is that of underworld exhibitionists, described as criminals who actively manufacture a celebrity career from their past activities with the intention of financial and status profit⁷. The third case study concerning the Kray twins fits into this category. The fourth and final category is that of iniquitous criminals, described as criminals who cross a cultural line that alienates them from the public.⁸ The Moors Murderers Ian Brady and Myra Hindley are such an example. Iniquitous criminals do not achieve celebrity status in the positive sense of villain to hero within the meaning of this study, and therefore fall outside the scope of the thesis.

The study of criminal celebrities falls between two scholarly schools. In the main, scholars of celebrity do not consider criminals, just as criminologists do not consider celebrity. As such, there is a dearth of scholarship in respect of the criminal qua celebrity. Indeed, Penfold-Mounce acknowledges that the relationship between crime and celebrity remains ripe for critical dialogue.⁹ Moreover, Graeme Turner notes that whilst there is some scholarship in this field, it remains an undeveloped part of celebrity studies, not least the cultural impact of such criminals.¹⁰ Because of the dearth of scholarship within the specific field of criminal celebrities, no formal literature review will be offered. Instead, a scholarship which is relevant to this study as a whole will be woven into the fabric of the thesis as it develops.

Two rare voices in the wilderness in the study of criminal celebrities need to be mentioned. The first belongs to Ruth Penfold-Mounce, and particularly her work *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*.¹¹ In many ways, this thesis seeks to add to and complement this work. The second rare voice is that of David Schmid, who, in his study of serial killers in American culture, examines the complicity of the public in elevating such killers to celebrity status. In doing so, he creates a link between the consumption of crime and the creation of the criminal

⁶ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 84.

⁷ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 86.

⁸ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 90.

⁹ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 7.

¹⁰ Graeme Turner, *Understanding celebrity*, 2nd ed. (London: SAGE, 2014), 25-26.

¹¹ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*.

celebrity.¹² Following on from what Schmid says, it is likewise argued that the complicity of the public (and fundamentally also the media) in elevating British criminals to celebrity or heroic status creates a link between the consumption of crime and the creation of the criminal celebrity.

Whilst this thesis is concerned with criminal celebrities from 1960's Britain, and although these criminal celebrities are not necessarily (but may be) murderers, the work of Schmid has great relevance to this thesis in drawing parallels between the cultural implications both of serial killers in American culture and of the criminal celebrity the subject of this thesis. One such parallel is the glorification of crime. A further parallel is that the criminal celebrity in Britain is revered in much the same way as is the serial killer in America. A final parallel concerns not so much *murderabilia* as discussed by Schmid,¹³ but what might be better labelled as *memorabilia*, that is to say, the apparent need of some followers of criminal celebrities to collect artefacts as having a connection with the criminal celebrity or criminal hero. Within the context of a discussion on the "collecting society", Christopher Vogler refers to the impulse that caused Neolithic people to carve bone models of their favourite goddess or totem animal.¹⁴ It is this same impulse, it is argued, which explains the apparent need of some followers of criminal celebrities to own a piece of the cultural landscape – a physical object which captures something that resonates in many people vis-à-vis a particular criminal celebrity, be it a brick from the former prison cell which housed one of the Kray twins, or a T-shirt or similar memento signed by Ronnie Biggs.

The work of Orrin Klapp lies at the periphery of the thesis topic. Klapp does not deal with criminal celebrities as such but does show villains in a glamorous light. He says that we remember colourfully bad people at least as well as those who present a pure aspect of goodness. He then goes on to say in terms of the appeal of the rogue, that to reform him would be to ruin him from the standpoint of entertainment, for his piquancy comes partly from the fact that he is morally reprehensible.¹⁵

¹² David Schmid, *Natural Born Celebrities: Serial Killers in American Culture* (University of Chicago Press, 2005).

¹³ Schmid, *Natural Born Celebrities: Serial Killers in American Culture*, 1 – 3, 21.

¹⁴ Christopher Vogler, *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structures for Writers*, 3rd. ed. (Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions., 2007), 236.

¹⁵ Orrin E. Klapp, *Heroes, Villains & Fools* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2014), 147.

1.1.1 Two inter-twining stories

This study will trace the history of two intertwining stories. The first story will chart the rise of celebrity culture in general, and in doing so will trace from Court Society of the Tudor era (1485-1603) to Kim Kardashian West by way of example of a leading celebrity in the celebrity age. The second story will chart the rise of criminal celebrities from the time of Robin Hood to the proposed case-study subjects of Howard Marks, Ronnie Biggs and the Kray twins. These historical accounts will show how the divergent histories of celebrities in general, and criminal celebrities in particular, not only converge but intersect. The point of intersection, this study will argue, is the point at which media attention and levels of visibility afforded to criminal celebrities in the celebrity age reaches the same or even greater heights than is afforded to celebrities in general.

1.2 Research questions

This study identifies the following specific thesis questions which will be answered in the concluding chapter.

1. What explanation can be offered for the paradox of criminals becoming celebrities or heroes in Britain in the 1960s?
2. Are criminals who rose to celebrity status in 1960's Britain a product of their time?
3. What role did the media play in influencing the rise in popularity of criminal celebrities in 1960's Britain?
4. Has the expansion of agency afforded to criminal celebrities in the celebrity age increased their visibility and in turn their rise in popularity?
5. To what extent is the commodification of criminal celebrities in the celebrity age a factor in their rise in popularity?

1.3 Methodology

The purpose of this methodology section is to explain the methods used in designing this study, and the means by which research material was identified and then applied in addressing the thesis topic. However, and before proceeding further, the reason for choosing Britain in the 1960s as the backdrop to this study needs to be explained. This was a fertile period in social and cultural history which produced a number of criminals

who went on to achieve celebrity or even heroic status. Indeed, it is argued that this was a decade in which the criminal celebrity ‘came of age’.

In relation to design, the structure of the thesis involves a number of chapters offering a framework, building a discussion of criminal celebrities in 1960’s Britain and their subsequent rise in popularity. This framework adopts a linear approach, not least in tracing the history of crime as entertainment which is the overarching theme of this study. The framework supports the explanatory theories articulated, which is then applied in a practical setting to the three case studies which lie at the heart of this study. The case studies bring together the central themes of this study. In doing so, they demonstrate and showcase how criminal celebrities in the celebrity age are commercially packaged and sold as crime as entertainment by the media, or by or through the agency of criminal celebrities themselves.

The methodology employed in the individual case studies was similar and yet in parts different. The main similarity was to show that the individual case-study subjects all enjoyed a high media profile as criminal celebrities. The main point of difference is that the media treatment of each case study adopts a different angle. The case study of Howard Marks includes a *Daily Mirror* media review to show how he was portrayed in a picaresque fashion by the press in general, and how he was sensationalised by *t Daily Mirror* in particular; the case study of Ronnie Biggs includes a review of press articles through the lens of Biggs as a mediated hero, and the case study in respect of the Kray twins covers a chronological media review to plot their rising arc of criminal celebrity.

This is a convenient juncture at which to discuss the methodology employed in the choice of the case-study subjects, not least to explain why they all happen to be male. The field of possible candidates as proposed case-study subjects who emerged in 1960’s Britain was carefully researched. High-profile members of the Great Train Robbery such as Bruce Reynolds or Ronald ‘Buster’ Edwards are examples, but it is argued their celebrity profiles did not approach the heights of that attained by Ronnie Biggs who was ultimately chosen. A further example is that of ‘Mad’ Frankie Fraser who was a high-profile member of the Richardson gang who were arch-rivals of the Krays, but he too was discounted as not having a sufficiently high celebrity profile as compared with the Kray twins who were themselves chosen. A further name which

came to the fore in the selection process was that of 1960's high-profile gangster John McVicar who was associated at different times with both the Richardson gang and the Krays. However, it was ultimately decided that international drugs baron Howard Marks would be the third choice of case-study subject. Marks was chosen not only for his high profile as a criminal celebrity but also (as explained in his particular case study) because he is, with his Robin Hood image, seen as bridging the gap between the social bandit of old and the criminal celebrity in the celebrity age.

The three case-study subjects were ultimately selected after careful consideration as being the most relevant to the central thesis argument in relation to looking at crime through the lens of commercially packaged entertainment. It is also believed after considering other high-profile criminals who attained a certain level of celebrity, that the chosen case-study subjects are ones who most caught the public imagination and enjoyed the greatest media exposure, and who, through consideration of the case studies themselves, most effectively bring the central themes of this study into relief.

The three chosen case-study subjects were arguably the most prominent criminal celebrities who emerged in 1960's Britain. It is argued that the two foremost female criminals who emerged in 1960's Britain were Myra Hindley from the mid-1960s and Mary Bell from the late 1960s. Myra Hindley was a child-murderer and at one time regarded as the most hated woman in Britain.¹⁶ Moreover, Elisabeth Storrs says that such was her notoriety that for much of her prison sentence she was 'fixed in the public imagination as the feminine face of evil'.¹⁷

As with Myra Hindley, Mary Bell was also a child-murderer. What was unique about her crimes is that she herself concerning the two murders with which she was charged and found guilty, was only 10 years of age on the occasion of the first murder, and just 11 years old on the occasion of the second. The crimes of Mary Bell made her one of Britain's most notorious child-killers.¹⁸

¹⁶ Crime Investigation, "The Early Life of Myra Hindley: 'The Most Hated Woman in Britain'," (August 26th 2021), Crime News Article. <https://www.crimeandinvestigation.co.uk/article/the-early-life-of-myra-hindley-the-most-hated-woman-in-britain>.

¹⁷ Elisabeth Storrs, "Our Scapegoat: An Exploration of Media Representations of Myra Hindley and Rosemary West," *Theology & Sexuality* 11, no. 1 (2004): 14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/135583580401100103>.

¹⁸ Murderpedia: The Encyclopedia of Murderers. <https://murderpedia.org/female.B/b/bell-mary-flora.htm>.

Both Myra Hindley and Mary Bell fall within the iniquitous classification of criminals mooted by Penfold-Mounce.¹⁹ They were not celebrated in the positive sense of being villains to heroes within the meaning of the term used in this study, and do not, therefore, fit the aims of the study. Without wishing to labour the point, it is important to emphasise that this thesis concerns “villains to heroes”. The word *heroes* carries with it positive connotations as indeed does the term *criminal celebrities*. Conversely, the term *iniquitous criminals* carries with it negative connotations. Neither Myra Hindley nor Mary Bell achieved celebrity status within the positive and heroic sense of *villain to hero*. They certainly achieved notoriety, which also attaches to the criminal celebrity. A distinction, however, needs to be drawn between *notoriety* and *celebrity*. In this connection, it is argued that notoriety is considered pejoratively and falls short of celebrity which is viewed in a positive light. It is for this reason that Myra Hindley and Mary Bell have not been included as appropriate case-study subjects, (although Myra Hindley will be mentioned later in this study with reference to her impact on popular culture), and will offer case studies solely in relation to the social bandit Howard Marks, the criminal hero Ronnie Biggs and underworld criminals the Kray twins. This is not to deny the existence of female criminal celebrities. On the contrary, Bonnie Barrow from 1930’s America would have been included as a prime case-study subject had this study not been limited to criminal celebrities in 1960’s Britain. However, it is argued that there were no female criminal celebrities within the true meaning of this term who arose during 1960’s Britain, and who were capable of satisfactorily demonstrating and showcasing the main themes of this study.

The methodology in respect of where and how the research material was gathered for this study essentially fell into three distinct parts. The first part involved research informing the chapters on which the framework was built. The second part involved general research and the collating of information relevant to the case studies themselves, and the third part involved specific research and the collating of information in respect of relation to the case-study subjects. These will now be discussed.

¹⁹ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 90.

1.3.1 Research informing the chapters on which the framework was built

A wide array of books and articles were read as a starting point, with each book or article invariably leading either through the text or bibliography to further sources. This process was followed comprehensively until the original sources began to appear again as an indication that the research had gone ‘full circle’ and that the topic had been investigated as thoroughly as was reasonably possible. Books were either bought, or borrowed from the University or other libraries. Articles were, in the main, sourced online through the University library.

In addition to books and articles, online sources including access to the Old Bailey archives offered a rich vein of historic sources, including longstanding evidence of crime as entertainment reaching back to the 18th century. Moreover, research undertaken at The British Library likewise identified historic evidence of crime being presented as entertainment.

1.3.2 General research and the collating of information relevant to the individual case-study subjects

A wide collection of contemporary newspaper articles was needed for the purpose of the case studies. Initially, a number of visits to The British Library in London proved useful. This involved examination of a cross-section of newspapers archived on microfiche to identify articles specifically in respect to the three proposed case-study subjects. This cross-section included a number of tabloids with their propensity for sensationalism, including the *Daily Mirror*, the *Daily Mail* and *The Sun*. To show that broadsheets also cover stories of criminal celebrities and to show that the tabloid press does not have a monopoly on sensationalist reporting, the cross-section of newspapers consulted included *The Times* (formerly a broadsheet) and *The Guardian*. It was considered important that the cross-section of newspaper sources covered included a cross-section of broadsheet, tabloid, right-wing and left-wing to demonstrate the universal appeal of stories touching on criminal celebrities. Consulting a cross-section of newspapers was also useful so that articles proposed to be used in the case studies were not limited to those of one particular newspaper or one style of writing.

1.3.3 Specific research and the collating of information relevant to the individual case-study subjects

In addition to the need to identify a broad range of press reports by way of general research as above, fieldwork was undertaken specific to the individual case-study subjects. Details of this fieldwork will now be given firstly as to Howard Marks, secondly as to Ronnie Biggs and thirdly as to the Kray twins.

1.3.3.1 Howard Marks

Apart from media reports, information relating to Howard Marks was conspicuously hard to come by. This paucity of information is attributed to the fact that the drug-dealing activities of Howard Marks were necessarily of a clandestine nature. Moreover, The National Archives did not have any records of Howard Marks. The reason for this is that Marks was found guilty and sentenced by a court in West Palm Beach in Florida. As the Marks' case study makes clear, considerable attempts were made by both telephone and email to obtain access to the trial transcripts from the court in Florida, but ultimately to no avail, as given the age of the case all court records had been destroyed. Rather than relying on what would have been primary evidence, reliance had to be placed on details of the trial of Howard Marks as related in his autobiography *Mr Nice* by Howard Marks himself. It was essentially, therefore, contemporary press articles which provided the mainstay of researching Howard Marks, and this is reflected in his individual case study. Furthermore, what came to be known as the *Wootton Report*, that is to say a Home Office Report by the Advisory Committee on Drug Dependence was available online, and was a useful document in identifying the change in public attitudes to drugs, and which in many ways (as related in his case study) was in sympathy with the philosophy of Howard Marks that the law was out of step with public opinion.

1.3.3.2 Ronnie Biggs

Such was the media's interest in Ronnie Biggs that reports of him were found in abundance, both through The British Library and by online access to the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror*. Court transcripts of the trial of Ronnie Biggs heard by The High Court of Justice (Aylesbury Special Assize) in 1964 were inspected at The National Archives in London to the extent they were still available. It transpired that such of the

trial transcripts as could not be located at The National Archives had been destroyed as came to light following an email dialogue with The National Archives. This is confirmed in a footnote added to the case study of Ronnie Biggs. Time spent at The National Archives also enabled other material of Ronnie Biggs to be identified, not least his signed personal statement dated 1st February 1974 as referred to in his case study.

The image of Ronnie Biggs comprising Figure 11.1 in the thesis was found in Perth in Western Australia purely by serendipity. Enquiry of the owner revealed that the image had been bought at auction. This led to research being undertaken as to what other Biggs' memorabilia might be available. Such research identified an auction which had been carried out by Humbert & Ellis of Towcester, Northamptonshire, England on June 16th, 2015. A copy of the auction catalogue was subsequently obtained and certain lot items are referred to in the case study of Biggs.

Whilst on a field trip to England in search of material appropriate to the case studies, a visit was made to Littledean Jail in Littledean, Gloucestershire, and to the *Crime Through Time* exhibition. Littledean Jail was a one-time prison, but is now a crime museum. The exhibition revealed a cornucopia of memorabilia in respect of concerning both Ronnie Biggs and the Kray twins. It was here that a limited edition collector's card signed by Ronnie Biggs was found in which Scotland Yard was said to have dubbed Biggs as the '*Brain of the Great Train Robbery*'.

Fieldwork concerning Ronnie Biggs also included a visit to Madame Tussauds in London. The image of Biggs was nowhere to be seen. However, a subsequent email enquiry of Madame Tussauds explained that a waxwork image of Ronnie Biggs (alongside fellow Great Train Robber Charlie Wilson) had at one time, as mentioned in his case study, been displayed at the foyer of the exhibition.

1.3.3.3 Kray twins

As with Ronnie Biggs, there was no shortage of research material for the Kray twins and which proved useful for inclusion in their individual case study. In many ways, the same path was trodden as was the case in search of material concerning Ronnie Biggs. Media reports were in abundance at both The British Library and through online access to the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror*.

Attending The National Archives in London to read through the entire trial transcripts was most instructive when considering the way in which the individual case study of the Kray twins might be presented.

As mentioned above in respect of Ronnie Biggs, a visit was made to Littledean Jail which housed a great deal of memorabilia of both Biggs and the Kray twins. Memorabilia exhibited in respect of the Kray twins included an array of weaponry as referred to in their individual case study which serves to reinforce their gangster image.

Fieldwork for the Kray twins included taking part in The Kray Walking Tour which took in many of their former haunts, and which included a visit to the famed Blind Beggar Public House which was the scene of the murder of George Cornell by Ronnie Kray. A copy of an image of the public house with the Kray twins inset comprises Figure 12.3 included in the thesis. As noted in the case study, this image was supplied by Mike Brooke of the East End Advertiser after an approach was made to him for information concerning the Kray twins who had operated on his journalistic patch.

Fieldwork undertaken for the Kray twins also included a visit to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London to inspect a copy of David Bailey's Box of Pin-ups as referred to in the thesis. The Box of Pin-ups included an image of the three Kray brothers in what might be described as a menacing pose to reinforce their gangster image.

A final mention of the source-gathering process in relation to the Kray twins concerns a visit to Madame Tussauds in London. General research had indicated that images of the Kray twins had at one time been exhibited in the Chamber of Horrors, but the Chamber of Horrors is no longer there. However, email communication with Madame Tussauds after the visit revealed that images of the Kray twins had previously been exhibited in the Chamber of Horrors, but their images had been removed following threats by the Kray family. This is referenced by way of a footnote in the Kray twins' case study.

1.3.4 Media analysis

Following personal visits to The British Library to collect as much relevant data as possible, a facility was organised through the University Library in Perth, Western

Australia to gain a temporary access facility to the online archives of both the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror*. These two newspaper titles are both tabloids, with the *Daily Mail* being arguably less ‘tabloid’ in its reporting than the *Daily Mirror*. The *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror* proved to be good choices of newspaper titles in identifying a wealth of stories and articles concerning the chosen case studies. It should be added that the overall selection was based on two main criteria. The first was to try and identify articles in respect of the individual case-study subjects which would highlight the principal course theme of crime as entertainment, and the second was to identify articles which showed the entrepreneurial propensities of each of the case-study subjects in promoting their own criminal celebrity. In this respect, more than 600 articles or stories concerning the case-study subjects were identified and examined. These articles or stories, which were often reported in more than one newspaper, were then manually sifted and analysed. The analysis included several elements. The main element was to see whether there were any recurring keywords or phrases which arose and which were common to all three case-study subjects. This was not least to try and identify whether the tenor of newspaper articles or stories either expressly or by implication might embrace the notion of the *good criminal*. In this regard, it was interesting to note the name of Robin Hood was very much in evidence in respect of all three case-study subjects. It was also interesting to note that the self-same or similar keywords were applied over and over again with reference to all three case-study subjects, creating a link between their cultural acceptance and their being commodified and sold in the name of crime as entertainment.

1.3.4.1 Keywords identified

Samples of such words or phrases regarding Howard Marks were: Robin Hood, cult figure, legend, hero, folk legend, playboy, star glamour, national treasure, loveable rogue, the amazing Mr Marks, skilled raconteur, one-man show, anecdotal humour, the biggest show in town, the life and times of Howard Marks is the stuff of thrillers, entertainment, romance, victim.

Samples of words or phrases in respect of Ronnie Biggs were: Contemporary Robin Hood, romanticized as a 20th century Robin Hood, folk-hero, hero of popular mythology, legend, glamour, international celebrity, the fabulously entrepreneurial life of Ronnie Biggs, tourist attraction, Train Robber Biggs for hire, *soap opera*,

admiration, flamboyant fugitive, loveable rogue, playboy robber whose hedonistic life of booze and birds became the stuff of legend, Biggs as a National Institution, victim.

Samples of words or phrases relating to the Kray twins were: Robin Hood, celebrity, legends, cult heroes, folk heroes, myth, admiration/admirers, entertainment, glamour, showbiz gangsters, criminal performers, portrayal as victims.

1.4 Recurring themes

This thesis will include the following disparate and yet interconnecting themes which will recur throughout the study:

1.4.1 Crime as entertainment

Crime as entertainment is best encapsulated by Neal Gabler who said that it is with criminality that one can best see just how the values of human entertainment usurp other, more traditional values. Gabler said that judged by traditional values criminals are objects of reproach and scorn, but judged by the values of entertainment, which is how the media now judge everything, the perpetrator of a major or even a minor but dramatic crime is as much a celebrity as any other human entertainer.²⁰

1.4.2 The good criminal

The notion of the *good criminal* is a vestige from tales of Robin Hood who, according to the legend, stole from the rich and gave to the poor. The notion has survived and now attaches to criminal celebrities as a positive characteristic, transcending their criminality and helping to validate them in society.

1.4.3 Supply and demand

This study will argue that the law of supply and demand is one of the factors which explains the rise in popularity of the criminal celebrity. Indeed, even as far back in time as 1931 and light-years away from the celebrity age, Malcolm Logan suggested that “The supply of persons (that is to say criminals) properly qualified for our veneration does not equal the demand”.²¹ One of the questions which this thesis will

²⁰ Neal Gabler, *Life the Movie: How Entertainment Conquered Reality* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York., 1999), 181.

²¹ Malcolm Logan, "Glorifying the Criminal," *Scribner's Magazine*, 1931, 43, <http://www.unz.com/print/Scribners-1931jul-00043/>.

consider, therefore, is not so much one of supply but of the reasons for the demand, and in this connection this study argues that the media is instrumental in both creating and supplying the demand for criminal celebrities in the form of crime as entertainment for consumption by a receptive audience.

1.4.4 Commodification and consumption

The next theme, which is inextricably connected with supply and demand, concerns two inter-related factors, namely the commodification of criminal celebrities and the consumption of crime as entertainment. The study will argue that the rise in popularity of the criminal celebrity is attributed to an increased consumption of crime as a commodity. Indeed, Mike Presdee acknowledges the need for a criminology that understands crime has become a valuable consumer entertainment commodity, to be enjoyed and consumed daily through modern media and communication processes.²² To this end, this thesis sees the celebrity industry in general, and criminal celebrities in particular for the purposes of this study, as a commercial enterprise.

1.4.5 Alternative life of escapism

The notion of an alternative life of escapism is that those who follow celebrities in general and criminal celebrities in particular for the purposes of this study, enter into such a life in order to transcend their own limited personal experiences. They do so to vicariously attain the gratification of those they follow as well as a means of consuming and enjoying crime as entertainment.

1.4.6 Cultural shift

A further recurring theme identifies differing degrees of cultural shift consequent on changing attitudes and values in respect of both crime and criminals. These changing attitudes and values have not only legitimised the activities of criminal celebrities, but have fostered their acceptance in society to the extent of their being elevated to celebrity or heroic status, or even to their being venerated as icons of popular culture.

²² Mike Presdee, *Cultural Criminology and the Carnival of Crime* (London: Routledge, 2000), 11.

1.4.7 The role and influence of the media

In respect of criminal celebrities, the thesis will identify three main actors, that is to say the criminal celebrity, the audience and the media, and will discuss the symbiotic relationship between them. The role of the media is pivotal in this relationship. The study will therefore consider the role and influence of the media in some depth, not least whether in reporting news of criminal celebrities, the media simply *represents* things the way they are, or actually *make* things the way they are, thereby creating popular culture.

The study will identify a connection between the media and those entering into an alternative life of escapism. Christopher Lasch says that “The media give substance to and thus intensify the narcissistic dreams of fame and glory, encouraging the common man to identify himself with the stars, and to hate the herd and make it more and more difficult to accept the banality of everyday existence”.²³ On the premise that Lasch is correct in his observation, and if the media do indeed make it more difficult for the common person to accept the banality of everyday life, this, it is argued, is the rationale for them entering into an alternative life of escapism.

1.5 Significance of the thesis

Firstly, the thesis will identify, in different degrees, the extent of the cultural shift in terms of the acceptability of certain criminals in society as exemplified by the individual case studies. The study will show that this cultural shift is borne out of changing social values and attitudes witnessed in Britain in the 1960s as will be discussed in chapter 2, and the concomitant changing notions of crime and criminality. This self-same point is succinctly expressed by Kooistra as noted earlier in this Introduction, namely that “[O]ver time new meanings and values are given to the heroic criminal which [have] transcended the social context that initially provided meaning for his criminality.”²⁴ The comments of Kooistra are echoed by Penfold-Mounce who, as also noted above, contends that “[A]s public meanings and values

²³ Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company 1979), 21.

²⁴ Paul Kooistra, "Criminals As Heroes: Linking Symbol to Structure," *Symbolic Interaction* 13, no. 2 (1990), 227, <https://doi.org/10.1525/si.1990.13.2.217>.

change, so does the form of criminal celebrity”.²⁵ This study will apply this same rationale to criminal celebrities as well as criminal heroes.

Secondly, the study will argue that criminal celebrities are a new breed of cultural hero who have at least in part replaced the traditional hero of old, an area of discussion which will be highlighted in chapter 7.

Thirdly, the study will consider the extent to which followers of criminal celebrities participate in an alternative life of escapism and the cultural impact of their doing so.

1.6 Outside the scope of this thesis

A field of study outside the scope of this study, and which it is considered would benefit from further critical investigation, concerns an area of inquiry discussed by Heinz-Dietrich Fischer regarding what he refers to as “[S]ome of the countless forms and manifestations of mass media entertainment”²⁶. In this respect, Fischer refers to mass media entertainment as having done nothing more than adapt what he refers to as an age-old recipe, namely that of *panem et circenses*.²⁷ Fischer then continues by explaining the phrase as referring to a theory “[W]hereby a full stomach and entertainment are enough to keep the masses contented (or at least to prevent rebellion)”²⁸. Fischer notes that the proof of this theory remains somewhat arbitrary, and all that can be said with any certainty, is that some definite correlation exists between the perusal of political aims and the satisfaction of human demand for play (that is to say entertainment) as a precondition for these.²⁹ As will be mentioned in chapter 3, this is an area of discussion also documented by Chris Rojek who cautions “Those who see celebrity only in terms of harmless fun or exuberant liberation, without recognizing its immense power for codifying personality and standardizing social control, do not see celebrity at all”.³⁰ The reason this study considers this area would benefit from further critical investigation, is to identify whether any empirical evidence

²⁵ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 103.

²⁶ Heinz-Dietrich Fischer, "Entertainment-An Underestimated Central Function of Communications," in *Entertainment: A Cross-Cultural Examination*, ed. Heinz-Dietrich Fischer and Stefan Reinhard Melnik (Canada: Hastings House, NY, 1979), 10.

²⁷ Translates from Latin as “bread and games” and concerns the theory of superficial appeasement.

²⁸ Fischer, "Entertainment-An Underestimated Central Function of Communications," 9.

²⁹ Fischer, "Entertainment-An Underestimated Central Function of Communications," 10.

³⁰ Chris Rojek, *Fame Attack: The Inflation of Celebrity and its Consequences* (Bloomsbury, 2012), 185.

can be identified which will show whether the cultural impact of celebrity culture in general – and, for the purpose of this study criminal celebrities in particular in the celebrity age, – are no more than a politically motivated social diversion.

1.7 Outline of chapters

Following this Introduction, chapter 2 will discuss the social, cultural, political and historical backdrop to Britain in the 1960s to offer a context within which criminals who rose to celebrity in that period can be better understood. The chapter will discuss myriad social and cultural changes, not least changes in attitudes to crime and criminals.

As a foundation to the chapters which will follow, chapter 3 will discuss the rise of celebrity culture and the rise in popularity of the individual as a celebrity within that culture. Moreover, it will discuss the rise in popularity of the criminal celebrity.

The fascination with and interest in crime has a long history which chapter 4 will discuss. Evidence of this long history can be found by consulting a *Daily Mirror* headline from approaching one hundred years ago, which reads “Is crime made too fascinating?” The article commences “The problem of crime, particularly in a highly civilised setting, is both baffling and attractive. Whilst the law-abiding citizen is revolted by some atrocious deed, he is nonetheless fascinated”. The article later continues “Crime and criminals fascinate us because they are so much outside the routine of our everyday life. Here is something that thrills us. Virtue is praiseworthy, but virtue is sometimes dull. We see the criminal through a haze of romance that robs him of his grossness and shows only his attractive side”. The article then concludes by saying “There is a streak in us that delights in contemplating the things we would never dare to do. Love of the adventure, pity, a certain morbidness, but above all a desire to escape from the routine of our everyday lives – all these help to make crime fascinating”.³¹ As will be seen, the contents of this article have much in common with the subject matter of this thesis.

Allied to the fascination with and interest in crime is crime seen through the lens of entertainment, and this as one of the central themes of this study will be the focus of chapter 5.

³¹ F.A. McKenzie, "Is crime made too fascinating?," *Daily Mirror*, May 19 1927, 6.

Chapter 6 will make an argument that the criminal celebrity in the celebrity age can, in varying degrees be recognised as the evolutionary and cultural successor of Eric Hobsbawm's noble robber classification of the social bandit of old.³² The basis of the argument as will be shown, is that the social bandit has by virtue of a gradual process of evolutionary change and development, metamorphosed into or at least can be recognised, in the public imagination even if not in fact, in the criminal celebrity in the celebrity age.

One of the outcomes of celebrity culture is that it produces heroes in various guises. Focusing on the keywords *villain to hero*, chapter 7 will trace the villain's historical, social and cultural journey to that of a hero through the medium of celebrity culture. In doing so, it will show that criminal celebrities and criminal heroes have filled the gap left behind by the traditional hero of old and are the new cultural heroes in the celebrity age.

This study sees the role and influence of the media in respect of the portrayal of criminal celebrities as the lynchpin which connects the criminal celebrity with the audience, and this pivotal role will be discussed at length in chapter 8. It will also discuss public relations which includes publicity and promotions and their application to criminal celebrities. As an adjunct to this, the chapter will then discuss an expansion of agency of criminal celebrities in the celebrity age as a significant feature of both their promotion and in turn their rise in popularity.

Criminal celebrities must *connect* with their audience. Even the very best promotions or public relations will not succeed unless criminal celebrities resonate with their audience. Penfold-Mounce argues that resonance includes crime type, context and image,³³ and these factors will be more fully discussed in chapter 9.

Chapter 10 will offer a case study of social bandit Howard Marks who ran one of the biggest global smuggling operations from the late 1960s to the early 1980s.

Chapter 11 will offer a case study of criminal hero Ronnie Biggs, one of the members of the gang of the Great Train Robbers from 1963.

³² Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (Great Britain: Abacus, 2001), 46-62.

³³ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 97.

Chapter 12 will offer a case study of underworld exhibitionists the Kray twins, gangland bosses of London's East End from the late 1950s and throughout most of the 1960s.

Chapter 13 will comprise the conclusion and will pull together the many different strands or factors which, acting in concert, will help explain both the emergence of criminal celebrities in 1960's Britain and their subsequent rise in popularity.

2

The Social, Cultural, Political and Historical Backdrop to Britain in the 1960s

The aim of this chapter is to offer a perspective on social and cultural relations which were prevalent in 1960's Britain, not least changing liberal attitudes to both crime and criminals. In doing so, it will offer a context within which the celebrity status of the three proposed case-study subjects of Howard Marks, Ronnie Biggs and The Kray twins can be better understood. A comment by the one-time chairman of the British Conservative Party Norman Tebbit captures the mood of 1960's Britain, in relation to what this thesis will argue was a factor in the emergence of criminal celebrities in 1960's Britain as well as their rise in the popularity. Reflecting on the permissive society of 1960's Britain, and within the context of saying the *permissives* scorned traditional standards, Tebbit rued that it was a time when "criminals deserved as much sympathy as their victims".³⁴

2.1 Social and cultural relations

Decades are neat divisions of time. However, history has a tendency to be untidy, and the 1960s is no exception. It follows from this that the 1960s had no definitive beginning (or indeed ending) and that many of the social and cultural forces which manifested themselves in 1960's Britain had been bubbling under the surface in 1950's Britain.

What developed in the 1950s was a style of culture which set the young apart from their elders with the purpose of severing the present from the past. The 1950s was a period of political unrest, a period of protest against military intervention in the Suez Crisis, and a period of anti-nuclear marches which were arguably harbingers of the 1960's Cultural Revolution which lay ahead.

It will be helpful to identify the cultural status quo as it stood towards the end of the 1950s, not least as a benchmark against which the extent of the social and cultural changes which occurred in 1960's Britain can be measured. Jonathon Green says, "This was the real world of Victorian values: a world of deference, of 'knowing one's place'. It lasted well into the Fifties and to some extent remains".³⁵ Green adds "[W]hat the Sixties brought was a democratisation of such things – the end of a value system

³⁴ Norman Tebbit, *Britain's Future: A Conservative vision: The First Disraeli Lecture* (London: Conservative Political Centre, 1985), 5-6,14-16.

³⁵ Jonathon Green, *All Dressed Up: The Sixties and the Counterculture* (Great Britain: Jonathan Cape, London, 1998), xii.

which had stood in place for more than a century. It was that which created much of the hostility. In many ways the critics were right to worry; it was indeed the end of their ordered, hierarchical, deferential world”.³⁶ Green also succinctly sets out the status quo as the 1950s drew to a close, by saying:

It was still impossible to procure a legal abortion, to obtain a divorce without a grubby charade that often involved private detectives and elaborately staged “proof of adultery”; for one man to have a sexual relationship with another without fear of prosecution; to see a play without it first having been blue-pencilled by the Lord Chamberlain; to read a book if its contents were seen as contravening a century-old Act, and much more in the same vein. And still, despite a growing trend against it elsewhere, those who were convicted of premeditated murder would end their days hanging in what jails still termed ‘the topping shed’.³⁷

2.2 The Women’s Rights Movement and *Second Wave Feminism*

The Women’s Rights Movement, and in particular *Second Wave Feminism*, were key features of social and cultural change in 1960’s Britain. The debate regarding women’s rights has a long history. The thoughts of philosopher John Stuart Mill as articulated in *The Subjection of Women* were arguably at the fore of the debate of women’s rights, and instrumental in laying the foundations of the suffrage movement of the late 18th century and early 19th centuries. The first paragraph on page 1 of the book sets out the thinking of J.S. Mill in such a way that it is worth repeating verbatim. The paragraph reads:

The object of the Essay is to explain as clearly as I am able, the grounds of an opinion which I have held from the very earliest period when I had formed any opinions at all on social or political matters, and which, instead of being weakened or modified, has been constantly growing stronger by the progress of reflection and the experience of life: That the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes – the legal subordination of one sex to the other – is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.³⁸

³⁶ Green, *All Dressed Up: The Sixties and the Counterculture*, xii.

³⁷ Green, *All Dressed Up: The Sixties and the Counterculture*, 311.

³⁸ John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, 2nd ed. (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1869).

It should be noted that as at the date on which Mill's book was published, a married woman was not a separate legal entity from her husband, and any property or money to which she was entitled came under the control or rule of the husband. These shortcomings were only addressed some thirteen years later by the Married Women's Property Act 1882.³⁹

The progress of women's rights over time in Britain is typically referred to as coming in 'waves'. This chapter is only concerned from an historical perspective with the *First Wave* which ran loosely from the mid-18th century to the 1920s, and then the *Second Wave* which ran loosely from the 1960s to the 1980s. The main focus of the *First Wave* was on women's enfranchisement, that is to say, their right to vote. This involved a fight for the vote by peaceful suffragists led by Millicent Fawcett, or by militant suffragettes led by Emmeline Pankhurst. This *First Wave* was eventually successful when the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act 1928⁴⁰ gave women the same voting rights as men.

The *Second Wave* emerged slowly and sought to build on earlier feminist gains. An article by Sue Bruley examines the backdrop to the *Second Wave*. In this article, Bruley looks at the background of women of the *baby boomer* generation who became *Second Wave* feminists, and examines the contradiction between the hope and promise of late 1960s radicalism and the reality of women's continued second-class status as the catalyst for the new movement. Bruley then focuses on what she refers to as "[T]he growing sense among women during the 1960s of empowerment and a realisation that through collective action they could produce meaningful change". "Women", Bruley continues, "began to imagine new feminist identities".⁴¹

Second Wave Feminism broadened the debate to include a wider range of issues including family and the workplace. It also focused on sexism, that is to say prejudice or discrimination against women based on sex or gender and the concomitant consequences of such discrimination, necessitating a challenge to patriarchal institutions and cultural practices. Specifically in respect of family, the *Second Wave* focused on issues concerning domestic violence and marital rape, and was successful

³⁹ Citation: 45 & 46 Vict. c.75

⁴⁰ Citation: 18 & 19 Geo.5 c.12

⁴¹ Sue Bruley, "It Didn't Just Come Out of Nowhere Did It?: The Origins of the Women's Liberation Movement in 1960's Britain," Journal Article, *Oral History* 45, no. 1 (2017).

in promoting changes in matrimonial legislation, not least the Divorce Reform Act 1969.⁴² The Act removed the idea of *matrimonial offence* and introduced the notion of *irreconcilable breakdown* of marriage, enabling parties to divorce by mutual consent following two years' separation, or five years' separation if only one of the parties wanted a divorce. The Act, therefore, enabled those trapped in a bad marriage to free themselves from its shackles without moral censure and with relative ease. However, of the liberal legislative changes witnessed in Britain in the 1960s, the introduction of the Abortion Act in 1967 was arguably one of the most liberating for women, as until that time abortions in Britain were illegal and carried draconian penalties. Further liberating legislation within the above ethos of J.S. Mill spilt over into the 1970s including the passing of the Equal Pay Act 1970 (but not operative until December 29th 1975)⁴³ and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975⁴⁴. Furthermore, the Employment Protection Act also in 1975,⁴⁵ introduced maternity leave giving the opportunity for women to continue with their careers after childbirth.

By way of conclusion, in the period during which the Women's Liberation Movement flourished (and with particular reference to the period of the *Second Wave*), liberationists were successful in changing how women were perceived in their cultures, in redefining the socio-economic and the political roles of women in society, and in transforming mainstream society.⁴⁶

2.3 Cocking a snook at society

Running parallel with the need for change was a revival of comedy in the shape of satire. The satire boom of the early 1960s lampooned *The Establishment* (meaning dominant groups or the elite who hold power or authority), the Monarchy and the class system. It seemed as if no targets escaped the acid tongues of script-writing talents the likes of David Frost, Denis Norden or Keith Waterhouse. At the fore of the satire boom were Peter Cook, Dudley Moore, Alan Bennett and Jonathan Miller,

⁴² Citation: 1969 c. 55

⁴³ Citation: 1970 c. 41

⁴⁴ Citation: 1975 c. 65

⁴⁵ Citation: 1975 c.71

⁴⁶ Alan and Trombley Bullock, Stephen, ed., *The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, 3rd ed. (London: Harper Collins, 1999).pp 314-315

whose comedy stage review *Beyond the Fringe* lit the blue touchpaper which helped launch the satire boom of the 1960s.

Satire spread from the theatre to television. The satirical BBC television programme *That Was the Week That Was* (or, TW3) ran from 1962-63 and coincided in part with what became known as the Profumo affair. The Profumo affair itself was a source of considerable derision and Harold MacMillan, the serving Prime Minister from 1957-63, found himself and his government held up to public ridicule at the hands of irreverent satirists.

Satire as a new genre of popular comedy – especially in its attacks on both class and *The Establishment*, can be traced back to 1959. A piece in the August 1959 edition of *Queen Magazine* brings this into sharp relief. The piece concerned the fictional *The Establishment Chronicle* and *Nepotism Gazette* which was a satirical school newsletter based on the *Eton Chronicle*. *Queen Magazine* shows the *Gazette* as including a report of the supposed last School Debating Society meeting to discuss the motion: “All power is delightful, but absolute power is absolutely delightful.”⁴⁷

A snapshot of social and cultural relations in Britain as at the late 1950s, therefore, sees the country in a Victorian straight-jacket of staid class and staid cultural values. It was a straight-jacket which was ridiculed by the satirists of the day, and it was a straight-jacket from which Britain would seek to break free.

2.4 The Counter-Culture

Much has been written about the *Swinging Sixties*, not least the so-called Counter-Culture.⁴⁸ The Counter-Culture of 1960's Britain was in essence a millenarian vision, that is to say, a utopian belief in a future ideal society which could be achieved by revolutionary means. It was a time of buoyant modernism and genuine optimism across society, with a mood of liberal rebellion against the shackles of Victorian values. It was the rejection of the values of the dominant culture, the rejection of

⁴⁷ "The Establishment Chronicle," *Queen Magazine*, August 4, 1959, 23.

⁴⁸ See for example Jonathon Green, *All Dressed Up: The Sixties and the Counterculture*; Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had It So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (Great Britain: Abacus, 2005); Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties* (London: Abacus, 2007); Arthur Marwick, *British Society since 1945*, 4th ed. (Penguin Books, 2003); Elizabeth Nelson, *The British Counter-Culture 1966-73* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: The MacMillan Press Limited, 1989).

authority and restraint, and an insistence upon the autonomy of individuals and their freedom from stifling traditions and conventions. At bottom, the Counter-Culture sought to achieve social liberation through individual liberation. It also sought a tolerance for perceived harmless deviancy, such as the consumption of *soft* drugs.

The Counter-Culture was one of several names used to describe the protest movement which took place in the 1960s. Other names synonymous with Counter-Culture were *Alternative Society*, *Revolution* (that is to say revolution with a small ‘r’), or *The Underground*. *The Underground* was, it is suggested, something of a misnomer as there were no clandestine activities. On the contrary, *The Underground* fought publicly for its cause wherever it could, not least through its own Press in the shape of *IT (International Times)* and then through *Oz Magazine* which contained a blueprint for counter-cultural society, citing as its main influence English Diggers of the seventeenth century who had aimed to create a new and equal society.⁴⁹

2.5 Music

Apart from the underground press, it is argued that the main way the ideologies of the Counter-Culture were spread was through music – particularly rock music – as a vehicle for the expression of the revolutionary spirit. According to Ian MacDonald “All the evidence of record-buying in the Sixties as well as in the decades that followed, suggests that most young consumers ultimately judged musical acts more by the cultural and social values they projected than by the lyrical originality or musical expertise of their performances”.⁵⁰

From early on in the 1960s, groups such as the Beatles wrote their own music. This meant that instead of covering songs written or performed by other artistes, groups the likes of the Beatles were democratising music and bringing it closer to their audience. As MacDonald said, the balance of power had shifted: “From a corps of professionals – managers, song-writers, producers, publishers, record executives, radio station proprietors and record shop owners – to a body of young amateurs whose connection with the industry’s audience was as close as could be”.⁵¹

⁴⁹ "The Digger thing is your thing ... if you are really ... turned on," *Oz Magazine*, February, 1968, 7-8.

⁵⁰ Ian MacDonald, *The People's Music* (London: Vintage 2003), 71-2,197-8.

⁵¹ MacDonald, *The People's Music*, 12.

Many songs were political protest songs (for example, *Eve of Destruction* by Barry McGuire 1965 or *Universal Soldier* by Donovan, also 1965). Others were about or contained hidden messages concerning drugs – *Mr Tambourine Man* by The Byrds in 1965, *Day Tripper* by the Beatles in the same year, and *Purple Haze* by The Jimi Hendrix Experience in 1967 which was a homage to LSD. Yet other songs such as the Rolling Stones' *Beggar's Banquet* included a number of politically charged songs that became anthems for the Counter-Culture, just as Bob Dylan's 1964 song *The Times They Are a-Changin'* was an anthem of change for the time.

Many of these songs appealed to the disaffected youth who comprised members of the Counter-Culture. One such song in particular was *My Generation* by The Who, the opening line of which is "People try to put us down". This is a song (or more accurately an anthem of the younger generation) in which the ascending key changes create an atmosphere of chaos and disorder. And that, according to Toby Cresswell is the revolutionary meaning behind the song.⁵² Cresswell adds that nothing expresses the urgency and passion of youth better than the line: "Hope I die before I get old"⁵³ and goes on to say that in writing this song, Pete Townshend perfectly captured the generation gap, and in doing so, tapped into the *Zeitgeist* of the times.⁵⁴

2.6 Change

Times change, and with it, values and attitudes change. If just one word could be used to encapsulate the 1960s then that word would be *change*. The 1960s witnessed a decisive shift of power away from its traditional centres and towards people who had been historically excluded from any significant degree of control over their own lives. *Time* magazine said Britain was in the midst of a bloodless revolution, reporting that:

Those who are giving way are the old Tory-Liberal Establishment that ruled the Empire from the clubs along Pall Mall and St. James's, the still-powerful financial City of London, the Church and Oxbridge. In their stead, is rising a new and surprising leadership community; economists, professors, actors, photographers, singers, admen, TV executives and writers – a swinging meritocracy. What they have in common is that they

⁵² Toby Cresswell, *1001 Songs: The Great Songs of All Time* (United States: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2006), 407.

⁵³ Cresswell, *1001 Songs: The Great Songs of All Time*, 405.

⁵⁴ Cresswell, *1001 Songs: The Great Songs of All Time*, 406.

are mostly under 40...and come from the ranks of the British lower-middle and working-class which never before could find room at the top....A new group of people is emerging into society, creating a kind of classlessness and a verve which has not been seen before.⁵⁵

In *My Generation*, a twenties-something Michael Caine said 1950s Britain had been stable, conventional and *dull*. He added that the 1960s was the first time in British history the young working-class people like him had stood up for themselves, and emphatically said: “We are here. This is our society. And we are not going away”.⁵⁶

2.7 Inherent class structures

The 1960s was a decade of social, and political change. But most significantly the 1960s was a decade of cultural change, not least with reference to the class system where *The Establishment* was challenged.

There can be no finer example of class structures as they existed at the beginning of the 1960s than by referring to the celebrated law case concerning the book *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* by D. H. Lawrence. The case was something of a test case brought by the State against Penguin Books at the very beginning of 1960⁵⁷ following closely on the heels of the recently enacted Obscene Publications Act of 1959. On the very first day of the trial, prosecution counsel Mervyn Griffiths-Jones asked the male members of the jury (that is to say twelve good men and true intended to represent a cross-section of society) a question which will forever be associated with his name: “Is it a book that you would wish your wife or your servants to read?”

But what are the practical realities of a class system? In the view of Arthur Marwick, the word “class” suggests overlapping areas of inequality, particularly in power and authority, income and wealth, conditions of work and lifestyle and culture.⁵⁸ Marwick further suggests that “[T]o have been born into the upper class, is to be automatically a member of that reservoir from which membership of the various elites

⁵⁵ "Great Britain: You Can Walk Across It On the Grass," *TIME* 87, no. 15 (1966): 2. <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,835349-2,00.html>

⁵⁶ David Batty, *My Generation* (Sydney, NSW: Universal Sony Pictures Home Entertainment Australia, 2019), DVD.

⁵⁷ R v Penguin Books Ltd. (1961) CrimLR176

⁵⁸ Arthur Marwick, *Class: Image and Reality in Britain, France and the USA since 1930* (Great Britain: Fontana/Collins, 1980), 172.

are drawn. To have been born into the middle class means that special talent, energy and dedication will be needed to enter these elites...”, and that “[T]o be born into the working class... is to suffer from a distinct disadvantage when it comes to questions of power, influence wealth and earning opportunities.”⁵⁹

Marwick neatly sums up the dichotomy between class and inequality by saying “[W]e can show that, subjectively, classes exist, and we can prove, objectively, that inequalities exist; but it is not so easy to tie the two together.”⁶⁰ In other words, Marwick is saying that we cannot be sure that inequalities are due to class.

To the extent that inequalities are due to class, this study now briefly turns away from the tripartite class system as an abstract concept (although E. P. Thompson sees the class not as an abstract “thing”, but as a set of relationships⁶¹) and instead focuses on the occupational hierarchy within that system. Occupational hierarchy has long been employed as a medium through which to identify class structure, and, by extension, inequality. However, it is argued that this is a blunt instrument by which to determine class. Indeed, this sole determinant is challenged by Arthur Marwick who questions whether occupation is the same as class. Marwick then questions how it is decided which occupations go into which classes. Having said that, Marwick then refers to the objective approach of class stratification, based on dividing society into occupational groups and then arranging them in what is presented as a class hierarchy. And it is such a structure that enables a comparative study of individual classes to be made (for example, working-class with middle-class) to bring into relief, Marwick says “[T]he hard statistics of occupational distribution of inequality (in income, wealth and power), and of social segregation and social association (in marriage, in geography and housing, and in education [and] in leisure...)”.⁶²

Within the traditional tripartite class structure, this study will now identify with the working-class rather more than the middle or upper class, as it is a contingent of the working-classes who sought to challenge and push these class boundaries as they existed in Britain in the 1960s, and which helped to create a climate which was

⁵⁹ Marwick, *Class: Image and Reality in Britain, France and the USA since 1930*, 350.

⁶⁰ Marwick, *Class: Image and Reality in Britain, France and the USA since 1930*, 13-14.

⁶¹ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English working class* (NY: Vintage Books, 1963), 10-11.

⁶² Arthur Marwick, "Class," ed. Paul Addison, Harriet Jones, and Bernard Alford, *A companion to contemporary Britain, 1939-2000* (Blackwell Publishing, 2005). 76-77.

conducive to the creation of working-class heroes. However, before proceeding further, it is necessary to consider two opposing interpretations of class relationships.

Marwick refers to social scientists offering two opposing interpretations in class relationships. One interpretation is from a Conservative school of thought, that over time, classes have been disintegrating into a continuous gradation of status groups or strata contributing to a more harmonious society. The other interpretation is from the Marxist school of thought, which sees classes as becoming more polarised between the bourgeoisie or ruling class on the one side, and the working-class on the other, with a consequent intensification of social conflict.⁶³ It is this second school of thought which provoked much of the cultural backlash of the 1960s.

To be working-class in the 1960s according to Marwick “[M]eant performing manual work, most usually under arduous, uncongenial, or just plain boring circumstances.... When it came to ‘life chances’ members of the working class were still at a disadvantage compared with all of the rest of society.”⁶⁴ Marwick then adds that “[D]espite the occasional instance of rapid upward mobility, [to be working class] meant a ‘life sentence’ of hard manual work where, by an implicit irony, the attainment of middle-class living standards was only possible through expending, on overtime, even more excessive amounts of energy in a traditional working-class way.”⁶⁵ An example of such a life sentence is made by Marwick, in which he sets out a dialogue from a 1938 BBC Radio broadcast “Cotton People” by British Theatre Director Joan Littlewood depicting the reality of working-class life in a Lancashire cotton factory. The play identifies with a character who has worked in the mill for coming up fifty years doing the same job hour in hour out, day in day out. It likewise identifies with another character who has only ever been out of Oldham for a four-day holiday in Blackpool once in her entire lifetime.⁶⁶

The plight of working-class life in the 1960s is even expressed in a British hit record from 1966 by Cat Stevens called *Matthew & Son*. The song is about a business called *Matthew & Son*. Workers there, some of whom have been employed fifty years (just like Joan Littlewood’s above character from “Cotton People”) are on low wages, and because they are “kept in their place”, none of them dares to ask for a pay rise.

⁶³ Marwick, *Class: Image and Reality in Britain, France and the USA since 1930*, 213.

⁶⁴ Marwick, *British Society since 1945*, 25.

⁶⁵ Marwick, *British Society since 1945*, 127.

⁶⁶ Marwick, *Class: Image and Reality in Britain, France and the USA since 1930*, 163.

The relevant lines from the song say: “He’s got people who’ve been working for fifty years/No-one asks for more money ‘cause nobody dares/Even though they’re pretty low and their rent’s in arrears”.

The workers at *Matthew & Son* received few breaks in their routine, and their food is rushed. Again, the relevant line is: “There’s a five-minute break/And that’s all you take/For a cup of cold coffee and a piece of cake”.

Whilst it is useful to look at the reality of working-class life, it will be equally illuminating to consider how the 1960s looked firstly from a subjective standpoint of how the disparate classes perceived each other; secondly and again from a subjective standpoint what the working-class workers made of their own situation; and thirdly from an objective standpoint how working-class life in the 1960s was perceived by the outsider.

In relation to attitudes to class in general, the tripartite class structure of upper-class, middle-class and lower-or working-class was amusingly epitomised in a 1966 satirical skit featuring John Cleese as upper-class, Ronnie Barker as middle-class and Ronnie Corbett as lower-class or working-class. The skit highlights the respective feelings of superiority or inferiority said to be felt as between the respective classes as between themselves. In particular, Ronnie Corbett playing the part of the lower or working-class man compared with John Cleese as upper-class and Ronnie Barker as middle-class repeatedly says “I know my place”.⁶⁷ Whilst the skit was indeed amusing, there was an underlying truth which was both serious and accurate.

A three-part study in separate monographs by John Goldthorpe, David Lockwood, Frank Bechhofer and Jennifer Platt undertaken in 1962 involved questionnaires and interviews with working-class workers at three different factories based in Luton. One was Vauxhall (cars), another was Laporte (chemicals) and the third was Skefco (ball bearings). What these workers had in common was that their wages were sufficiently high to warrant the title “Affluent Worker”, and it was their thoughts on industrial attitudes and behaviour⁶⁸, political attitudes and behaviour⁶⁹ and class structure⁷⁰ of

⁶⁷ BBC, "The Class Sketch," (Posted June 6, 2011). <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00hhrwl>.

⁶⁸ John H. Goldthorpe, Lockwood, David, Bechhofer, Frank, Platt, Jennifer, *The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour*, 3 vols., vol. 1 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

⁶⁹ John H. Goldthorpe, Lockwood, David, Bechhofer, Frank, Platt, Jennifer, *The Affluent Worker: Political Attitudes and Behaviour*, 3 vols., vol. 2 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

⁷⁰ John H. Goldthorpe, Lockwood, David, Bechhofer, Frank, Platt, Jennifer, *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure*, 3 vols., vol. 3 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

these so-labelled affluent workers which the study sought to establish. The central plank of this tripartite research was to test the hypothesis of embourgeoisement, that is to say, as manual workers achieved higher incomes and in consequence higher living standards, did they assume a way of life more characteristic of the middle-classes and did they thus become progressively assimilated into middle-class society?

Jon Lawrence wrote a paper in 2013 which looks back on and focuses on what he refers to as Goldthorpe and Lockwood's "Famous Luton study of 1962-4".⁷¹ Lawrence gives specific examples of survey questions, responses and field notes. As the interviewees had been anonymised, interviewers were only identified by number and gender (for example, "M7") and the places where the interviews took place were identified as either "LHI" for "Luton Home Interview", or "LN-MHI" for "Luton Non-Manual Home Interview". Lawrence says both interviewer and interviewee could feel socially awkward as they sought to work out the etiquette for negotiating unfamiliar cross-class encounters. One golden nugget which showed the great class divide, was when the wife of a man being interviewed joking said that in their house, they didn't go in for refinement of manners or six-course meals where you have to decide which fork to use. (LN-MHI 543, Interviewer F1). And another golden nugget which brought a difference in class between the Cambridge interviewer and the interviewee into sharp relief, was where the interviewer was made to "feel above" her respondents and recorded "Tea and cake immediately and a great fuss made about giving me a plate, cake fork and napkin, and wife got flustered saying "We're not used to this" (LHI5, Interviewer F2).⁷²

Goldthorpe et al summarise their findings of their three-part study by saying: "Increases in earnings, improvements in working conditions, more enlightened and liberal employment policies and so on do not in themselves alter the class situation of the industrial worker in present-day society. Despite these changes, he remains a man who gains his livelihood through placing his labour at the disposal of an employer in return for wages, usually paid by the piece, hour or day".⁷³

⁷¹ Jon Lawrence, "Social-Science Encounters and the Negotiation of Differences in early 1960s England," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 77 (2013): 216, <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbt030>. The interview transcripts are deposited at Essex University.

⁷² Lawrence, "Social-Science Encounters and the Negotiation of Differences in early 1960s England," 225.

⁷³ Goldthorpe, *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure*, 3, 157.

It should be noted at this point, that the object of the study by Goldthorpe et al was to disprove any suggestion that increased affluence of working-classes showed signs of embourgeoisement, that is to say, a new middle-class mindset against the backdrop of greater affluence. The study shows that any suggestion was indeed disproved. However, it is argued that this outcome in itself is evidence of the extent to which the working-classes were entrenched in the class structure which prevailed in the 1960s. It also shows that in real life, the above lower-class or working-class character played by Ronnie Corbett did indeed *know his place*.

Harold MacMillan addressed a crowd of people in a Bedford marketplace on July 20, 1957, and said “Let’s be frank about it: Most of our people have never had it so good”⁷⁴ On the face of it, in the late 1950s according to Mark Donnelly, Britain did indeed witness “A booming economy, soaring stock market values, low unemployment, a wealth of accessible consumer choice and improved welfare services”⁷⁵ which were “[T]he defining features of a new age of affluence”⁷⁶. The reference to “most people” in MacMillan’s political rhetoric, may have included Goldthorpe and Lockwood’s above “Affluent Workers”, but it arguably excluded the traditional working classes. It was left to Richard Hoggart (whose book *The Uses of Literacy* it should be noted was first published in 1957, the same year as MacMillan’s “Never had it so good” speech) to portray working-class life as it really was,⁷⁷ rather than in the words of Marwick as “a figment of upper-class intellectual imagination”.⁷⁸ Marwick adds that more graphically than it had ever been done before, Hoggart brought home the physical reality, the geography, of class.⁷⁹ Hoggart himself describes housing conditions and a typical day in the life of a member of the working-class thus:

The houses are fitted into the dark and lowering canyons between giant factories and the services which attend them...The goods-lines pass on embankments in and around, level with many of the bedroom windows, carrying the products of the men’s work to South Africa, Nigeria,

⁷⁴ “More Production The Only Answer To Inflation,” *The Times*, July 22 1957, 4, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/9sEnnX>, Gale, The Times Digital Archive.

⁷⁵ Mark Donnelly, *Sixties Britain: Culture, Society and Politics* (Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2005), 23.

⁷⁶ Donnelly, *Sixties Britain: Culture, Society and Politics*, 23.

⁷⁷ Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (Middlesex, England: Penguin 1962), 59.

⁷⁸ Marwick, *British Society since 1945*, 101.

⁷⁹ Marwick, *British Society since 1945*, 101.

Australia. The viaducts interweave with the railway lines and with the canals below; the gas works fit into a space somewhere between them all, and the pubs and graceless Methodist chapels stick up at intervals throughout. The green stuff of the region forces its way where it can – and that is almost everywhere – in stunted patches. Rough sooty grass pushes through the cobbles; dock and nettle insist on a defiant life in the rough and trampled earth-heaps at the corners of the waste-pieces, undeterred by ‘dog-muck’, cigarette packets, old ashes; rank elder, dirty privet, and rosebay willow-herb take hold in some of the ‘backs’ or in the walled-off space behind the Corporation Baths. All day and all night the noises and smells of the district remind you that life is a matter of shifts and clocking in and out. The children look improperly fed, inappropriately clothed, and as though they could do with more sunlight and green fields.⁸⁰

2.8 Returning to class structures

Hoggart has much to say about class structures. He argues of such structures that the world is divided into “Them” and “Us”. “Them”, he says, are “the people at the top”, “the higher-ups”... “who talk posh” and “treat y’ like muck”. Conversely, the word “Us” has working-class connotations. “The workers” are on one side of the great social divide, and *The Establishment* on the other.⁸¹

Challenges to these class structures were already underway in the late 1950s which led to a relaxation of class boundaries in the 1960s. A new breed of actors the likes of Michael Caine, Alan Bates, Albert Finney and Terence Stamp were culled from the working-class industrial towns of Britain. They starred in a new genre of realism plays and films which ripped apart the extant staid, middle-class British film industry with *kitchen sink* classics such as *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and *A Kind of Loving*.

Arguably, a watershed moment in relation to changing class structures in the 1950s was seen in 1956 when John Osborne’s anti-Establishment play *Look Back in Anger* was staged. Osborne was one of several playwrights labelled *Angry Young Men* as their plays railed against the continued survival of the Victorian value system in a post-war Britain that was supposed to be meritocratic. Part of this censure sought to break down social and cultural barriers hitherto denied to lower classes because of how

⁸⁰ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 59.

⁸¹ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 72-3.

they spoke or where they came from. The effect of the play was to give a voice to the working classes which had been denied until then. A further effect of *Look Back in Anger* is that it helped change the cultural landscape of Britain by taking the fight to *The Establishment* and paving the way for the *Swinging Sixties*.

To the extent that theatre sought to mimic real life, *Drawing Room* comedy plays by the likes of Noel Coward and Terrence Rattigan had been the staple diet before John Osborne exploded onto the scene. *Drawing Room* plays typically featured characters from polite society and were written to appeal to a middle-class audience. However, the so-labelled *kitchen sink* dramas of John Osborne and other *Angry Young Men* such as Alan Sillitoe and Kingsley Amis put paid to that. *Kitchen sink drama* is a term which was applied in the 1950s to the plays of writers such as John Osborne who portrayed working-class or lower-middle-class life with an emphasis on domestic realism. These plays were written in part as a reaction against the *Drawing Room* comedies and middle-class dramas of Coward and Rattigan. Actors with “working class” accents were chosen for such dramas. In respect of *Look Back in Anger* itself, Kenneth Haigh initially played the part of the hero Jimmy Porter. In doing so, he symbolised the angst of the youth of the day. Such youth could identify themselves and resonate with such actors, as life as portrayed by the actors, mirrored their own lives.

A paragraph from Robert Sellers’ book *Don’t Let the Bastards Grind You Down: How One Generation of British Actors Changed the World* captures the public mood of the day. Reflecting on plays and movies of the late 1950s such as *Look Back in Anger*, or Alan Sillitoe’s *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*, Sellers argues they have stood the test of time because there is something universal and eternal about their anti-establishment stance.⁸² Sellers adds that to enjoy a movie, we have to care about the characters. “We go to the cinema” Sellers notes, “and identify with the people we see on the screen.” He further notes David McCallum as saying “Back then, you were going to see Albert Finney or Alan Bates, all these people that audiences identified with, and they’d go to see those movies because what was happening to Albert Finney was happening to them”.⁸³

⁸² Robert Sellers, *Don’t Let the Bastards Grind You Down: How One Generation of British Actors Changed the World* (London: Arrow books, 2012), xiii.

⁸³ Sellers, *Don’t Let the Bastards Grind You Down: How One Generation of British Actors Changed the World*, xiii.

Moving into the 1960s, supermodel Lesley Hornby “The Face of 1966”, and better known as *Twiggy*, offers an example of flexibility in class structures of the new decade. The new decade also witnessed a new attitude or social acceptance of the upwardly mobile. An article in the *Daily Telegraph* in 1967 simply called *Twiggy* by Ann Steele is worthy of note. The article refers to it being the idea of *Twiggy*’s then-manager Nigel Davies to change to her name because he saw her as “The new mini-queen of a new social aristocracy”.⁸⁴

As an aside, and to take his place in this new social aristocracy, Davies changed his own name to Justin de Villeneuve, of Chelsea. Justin de Villeneuve is quoted in Steele’s article as saying of *Twiggy* (who spoke with a distinct cockney accent) that “A few years ago, unless you came from the right social background, you were out. Now, it is a disadvantage to have a high-class accent”.⁸⁵

Dominic Sandbrook adds to the discussion. He refers to the writer Margaret Forster, whose novel *Georgy Girl* was adapted into a film starring Alan Bates and Lynn Redgrave. Sandbrook refers to Forster admitting in 1966 that she was: “Terribly pleased to be working-class because it’s the most swinging thing to be now...a tremendous status symbol really”. She was “very conscious of it” she added, “[B]ecause I know it’s a good thing, and it makes me seem all the brighter and cleverer and more super to have come from the muck of the North. People are such comic inverted snobs nowadays”.⁸⁶

The winds of class change also spread to sporting events, not least to cricket. Jack Williams argues that since Victorian times, cricket had been a metaphor for traditional authority in England, emphasising the class distinctions and snobbery of English society.⁸⁷ Prior to 1963, a number of first-class matches were played in England between players divided into two distinct social groups: Amateurs (the Gentlemen) and Professionals (the Players). The difference between them was defined by class, with the Gentlemen coming from the ranks of the educated middle and upper-class, and the

⁸⁴ Ann Steele, "Twiggy," *The Daily Telegraph* (London), January 4 1967, 11.

⁸⁵ Steele, "Twiggy," 11.

⁸⁶ Jonathan Aitken, *The Young Meteors* (London, 1967), 264 quoted in Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties*, 270.

⁸⁷ Jack Williams, "Fiery Fred: Fred Trueman and cricket celebrity in the 1950s and early 1960s," *Sport in Society* 12, no. 4/5, May-June 2009 (2009): 505-92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430430802702772>.

Players from the ranks of the working-class. The division went further, in that in matches between the Gentlemen and The Players, the professional and the amateur used separate dressing rooms and made their own way on to and off the cricket field through separate gates. It was such an arrangement as sustained the stereotype of the British as obsessed with class. However, this class distinction, notes Donnelly, “[W]as scrapped in 1963”⁸⁸ when the last match between Gentlemen and Players was played at Lord’s – further evidence of the barometer of change within British society in the 1960s.

Arthur Marwick argues that the foundations of the British class system didn’t really change: On the one hand there had always been a long-established working-class population thoroughly steeped in its own traditions, and on the other hand a continuing upper-class, adept at socialising new recruits into attitudes and traditions equally long-established.⁸⁹ Whilst the Sixties, therefore, witnessed a degree of social mobility, (for example, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Michael Caine, David Bailey and *Twiggy* – all from ordinary or working-class backgrounds who joined the new social aristocracy), attitudes by *Them* to *Us* remained resolute. And yet *Twiggy* who came from an ordinary background, and who, within Hogart’s above classification of *Them* and *Us* was an *Us* from the wrong side of the great social divide, was awarded a Damehood in the UK’s 2019 New Year’s Honours for services to fashion, the arts and charity. This is evidence – if evidence be needed – that the social and cultural impact of changing class structures from the 1960s for some, if not for others, cast a long shadow.

2.9 It’s a mixed-up, muddled-up, shook-up world

It’s a mixed-up, muddled-up, shook-up world is a line from a British hit record by the Kinks from 1970. Such a line, it is suggested, could well have referred to changing class structures of the 1960s, in that certain criminals hitherto alienated by society became part of the new order. Specifically, East End gangsters the Kray twins were welcomed into this new order with open arms. It is difficult to identify with any degree of accuracy the point at which the Krays crossed the divide from *Us* to *Them*. It may be that they only ever straddled the boundary line between *Us* and *Them*, and that part of their attraction was that they appealed to and resonated with both camps as *one of*

⁸⁸ Donnelly, *Sixties Britain: Culture, Society and Politics*, 29.

⁸⁹ Marwick, *British Society since 1945*, 275.

us. The rise of the Kray twins from their working-class background will be discussed more fully in their case study.

David Bailey was one of the leading society photographers of the 1960s. He himself came from working-class stock, but soon achieved celebrity akin to the subjects he photographed. A single example will serve to illustrate how the celebrity profiles of both David Bailey and Krays twins were similarly enhanced. Green⁹⁰ relates the story of David Bailey compiling *The Box of Pin-ups* in 1965.⁹¹ The aim of the box, according to the introduction written by Bailey's friend Francis Wyndham, and which accompanies each Box, was to capture the "ephemeral glamour" of the era "on the wing". The box (of which there were a number retailed for sale) comprised thirty-six stiff sheets of card, each with a black and white photograph on one side and a short caption on the other. The subjects who comprised the "New Aristocracy" based on the selection by Bailey, included John Lennon, Paul McCartney, Mick Jagger, Michael Caine and Rudolf Nureyev. But what made the Box of Pin-ups controversial according to Sandbrook,⁹² was the inclusion of two particular photographs. The first was of Lord Snowdon, and the second was a group photograph of East End gangsters Charlie, Reggie and Ronnie Kray. The photograph of the Krays was accompanied by a note written by Wyndham. Wyndham's note introduces the portrait of the Krays with the words "The Kray brothers are an East End legend". Later in his introduction, Wyndham says of the Krays "To be with them is to enter the atmosphere (laconic, lavish, dangerous) of an early Bogart movie, where life is reduced to its simplest terms and yet remains ambiguous", and later adds "The Kray clan is large, with connections throughout the sporting and show-business world" and "Their various haunts reveal a fascinating cross-section of the London entertainment scene".⁹³ Dominic Sandbrook points out the juxtaposition of the Queen's brother-in-law with a gang of East End thugs did not go down well with many critics.⁹⁴ In consequence, Lord Snowdon withdrew permission for Bailey to use his image. Significantly according to Sandbrook, by

⁹⁰ Green, *All Dressed Up: The Sixties and the Counterculture*, 74-75.

⁹¹ David Bailey, *David Bailey's Box of Pin-Ups*, 1965. Photographic portraits, 32x37cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

⁹² Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties*, 269-70.

⁹³ Bailey David, *David Bailey's Box of Pin-Ups*, 1965. Photographic portraits, 32x37cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

⁹⁴ Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties*, 269-70.

including the Krays in his Box of Pin-ups, Bailey was implicitly comparing them with glamorous stars like the Beatles.⁹⁵

Identifying links between The Krays and 1960s London and class-structures, Sandbrook says:

The association between East End gangsters and Swinging London reflected a much broader enthusiasm for working-class culture that was rooted in the intellectual climate of the early sixties. Reacting against the Macmillan government and the alleged corruption of the Establishment, many commentators had embraced working-class culture as simple, honest and invigorating. And by the middle of the sixties, this rather patronising vision of working-class life had evolved to a point where it was fashionable, even 'swinging' to have proletarian roots.⁹⁶

The point to be made here is that the good, the bad and the ugly as it were, all fused into one in Britain in the 1960s. It is argued, inter alia, that it was this social and cultural backdrop which created a cultural space for the likes of the Kray twins and other criminal celebrities to fit into; a cultural space which helped foster a new social and cultural acceptance of those who had previously been treated as "outsiders".⁹⁷

2.10 Changing liberal attitudes of the so-called 'permissive society'

Class structures were only one part of a new broom which swept through Britain in the 1960s. As already mentioned, the Sixties was an era of change. Green sums up the 1960s rather succinctly by saying "The great legacy of the Sixties is the huge expansion of personal choice. Rejecting the stifling institutions of traditional society, the Counter-Culture pushed for new freedoms in the arts, in personal expression, in the concept of family, and above all in sexuality".⁹⁸

This study pauses here to take a brief overview of a society steeped in Victorian values as it existed in 1959 through the eyes of Roy Jenkins, who ultimately served as Home Secretary from 1965-67 under a Labour Government. Jenkins was the architect of much of the 1960's liberalising (and indeed liberating) social legislation of the

⁹⁵ Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties*, 270.

⁹⁶ Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties*, 270.

⁹⁷ Becker, Howard S. *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. NY: The Free Press., 1973.

⁹⁸ Green, *All Dressed Up: The Sixties and the Counterculture*, 446.

1960s. In one of a series of short essays on the state of the nation, Jenkins asked the question “Is Britain civilised?” explaining that:

There are three aspects to the discussion. Firstly, there is the need for the State to do less to restrict personal freedom. Secondly, there is the need for the State to do more to encourage the arts...Thirdly, there is the need, independently of the State, to create a climate of opinion which is favourable to gaiety, tolerance, and beauty, and unfavourable to puritanical restriction, to petty-minded disapproval, to hypocrisy, and to a dreary, ugly pattern of life. A determined drive in these three directions would do as much to promote human happiness as all the ‘political’ legislation which any government is likely to introduce.⁹⁹

Specifically, Jenkins deplored “the ghastly apparatus of the gallows”.¹⁰⁰ Among gross restrictions on individual liberty, Jenkins referred to the “brutal and unfair” laws on homosexuality and to the Lord Chamberlain’s absolute power of censorship of the theatre. Furthermore, the need for reforms in divorces and the “harsh and archaic” abortion laws were also targeted for future social reforms.¹⁰¹

Jenkins concludes his above essay (which is akin to a political manifesto) by saying “Let us be on the side of those who want people to be free to live their own lives, to make their own mistakes, and to decide, in an adult way and provided they do not infringe the rights of others, the code by which they wish to live...”.¹⁰²

The impact of Jenkins in influencing changes in social legislation in the 1960s cannot be over-emphasised. It is debatable whether the influence of the Counter-Culture helped hasten some of these changes, or whether they would have happened in any event given the elasticity of a capitalist society and its ability to adapt to changing times, values and attitudes.

It will be useful to briefly comment on some of the legislative or proposed legislative changes of the 1960s which demonstrated the new liberal climate of the times. In their turn, these changes led to greater tolerance in society, which reflected changing attitudes and values of the times. These will be discussed immediately below.

⁹⁹ Roy Jenkins, *The Labour Case* (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1959), 135.

¹⁰⁰ Jenkins, *The Labour Case*, 136.

¹⁰¹ Jenkins, *The Labour Case*, 136-7.

¹⁰² Jenkins, *The Labour Case*, 146.

2.11 Drugs

A reference to cannabis, in particular, deserves special mention, as arguably the changing social attitudes to this drug was a bellwether concerning many liberating changes in social legislation of the late 1950s and the 1960s.

Cannabis, otherwise known (inter alia) as *marijuana*, *grass*, *pot*, *dope* or *weed*, was the drug most associated with the Counter-Culture of the 1960s and its use was seen as a badge or symbol of the Counter-Culture.

Cannabis as a *soft* drug much more than *hard* drugs such as LSD was singled out as a bone of contention between *The Establishment* and the Counter-Culture. The reason for this, it is argued, is that cannabis was essentially a young person's drug, and it was the restless youth of the day in the eyes of *The Establishment* who were the problem. Prosecutions for possession and or use of cannabis were on the increase. According to statistics mentioned by Green, there were rarely more than 100 convictions for cannabis per year between 1945 and 1959. From 1960 (235) the graph, says Green, jerks upwards. In 1966 convictions topped one thousand for the first time (1,119), while in 1967 the police moved in on 2,393 people, more than double the numbers of the previous year.¹⁰³ Green ventures to suggest there is no single reason why cannabis had moved from a relatively minor pleasure to the symbol of a generation's rebellion, adding that it was less the drug's intrinsic charms than the official reaction to cannabis that gilded its image for the youth of the day.¹⁰⁴

Concerns about the use of cannabis were seen as out of step both with what society was doing and what society wanted. Such was the pressure for change, that *The Times* newspaper, typically the mouthpiece of *The Establishment* printed a large advertisement in the form of a copy of a petition in July 1967 headed: "The law against marijuana is immoral in principle and unworkable in practice".¹⁰⁵

The advertisement listed a number of prominent people of the time who had signed the petition, not least each of the four Beatles and their manager Brian Epstein. The article commenced with a quotation from Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza saying:

¹⁰³ Green, *All Dressed Up: The Sixties and the Counterculture*, 175.

¹⁰⁴ Green, *All Dressed Up: The Sixties and the Counterculture*, 175.

¹⁰⁵ "The law against marijuana is immoral in principle and unworkable in practice," Display Advertising, *The Times* (London, England), July 24 1967, 5, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/9wkeS3>

All laws which can be violated without doing anyone any injury are laughed at. Nay, so far are they from doing anything to control the desires and passions of man that, on the contrary, they direct and incite men's thoughts toward those very objects; for we always strive towards what is forbidden and desire the things we are not allowed to have. And men of leisure are never deficient in the ingenuity needed to enable them to outwit laws framed to regulate things which cannot be entirely forbidden.... He who tries to determine everything by law will foment crime rather than lessen it.

Several eminent medics endorsed the article by offering their opinions as to the relatively harmless effects of the drug. One such opinion from Dr Anthony Storr suggested that cannabis is far less harmful than alcohol or tobacco, whilst another lifted from Guy's Hospital Gazette of February 17, 1965, suggested: "The available evidence shows that marijuana is not a drug of addiction and has no harmful effects... The problem of marijuana has been created by an ill-informed society rather than the drug itself".¹⁰⁶ And yet it was not until 1969 that a Sub-Committee chaired by Lady Wootton (The Baroness Wootton of Abinger) was commissioned to investigate cannabis and report their findings to the Advisory Committee on Drug Dependence. It will be time well spent to dwell on certain paragraphs of what became known as *The Wootton Report*.¹⁰⁷

Paragraph 14 of *The Wootton Report* under the subheading of "Philosophy of Control" is significant, in that it offers a blueprint for much of the social legislation of the late 1950s and the 1960s. This blueprint in 1969 was rather late in being expressly articulated, but it serves to question the philosophy of control and effectively endorses the "live and let live" philosophies of both J. S Mill and Baruch Spinoza.

Paragraph 14 questions how far it is justifiable for the law to restrict a man's freedom in what is presumed to be his own interest. On that issue, the Report says "There is considerable support today for J. S. Mill's dictum that the only purpose for which power can rightly be exercised over any member of a civilised community

¹⁰⁶ "The law against marijuana is immoral in principle and unworkable in practice," 5.

¹⁰⁷ *Cannabis: Report by the Advisory Committee on Drug Dependence* (London, 1968), <https://peopleofstort.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/woottonreport1969.pdf>.

against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant”. Paragraph 14 continues:

It was indeed, on this very ground that the *Wolfenden Committee* put forward a recommendation, which Parliament subsequently accepted, that homosexual acts committed in private between two consenting adults should no longer be criminal; and it can be argued that by similar reasoning the use or sale of drugs in general, and of cannabis in particular, ought not to be the subject of criminal proceedings. Adult men and women, it is said, ought to be free to make their own decisions, in accordance with their personal tastes, and their own moral judgments, as to what substances they think it proper to consume. Added weight is, moreover, given to this argument by the multiplicity of restrictions on individual liberty which in any complex modern society are incontestably necessary for the common good. The greater the number and variety of unavoidable limitations on personal freedom, the more pressing, it may be said, is the urgency of preserving freedom of choice in what are matters of purely individual concern.

Paragraph 17 is also worthy of specific note. It said that: “Interest in mood-altering drugs has much increased in the past few years”, and in this context, the paragraph opens by saying account must be taken of public attitudes. Paragraph 18 then expands this point by saying “Laws which seek to control the personal consumption of individuals are notoriously hard to enforce. We have to recognise that there comes a point at which public pressures becomes so powerful that it is idle to keep up attempts to resist them, the classic example in this context being the American prohibition of the consumption of alcohol...”

A summary of *The Wootton Report* in relation to cannabis is to be found in paragraph 29, and this paragraph is sufficiently important to merit it being set out verbatim as saying “Having reviewed all the material available to us, we find ourselves in agreement with the conclusion reached by the Indian Hemp Drugs Commission appointed by the Government of India (1891-1894) and the New York Mayor’s Committee on Marihuana [sic] (1944) that the long-term consumption of cannabis in moderate doses has no harmful effects”.

A final reference to *The Wootton Report* concerns paragraph 67, which concludes by saying: “In spite of the threat of severe penalties and considerable effort at

enforcement, the use of cannabis in the United Kingdom does not appear to be diminishing. There is a body of opinion that criticises the present legislative treatment of cannabis on the grounds that it exaggerates the dangers of the drug, and needlessly interferes with civil liberty”.

Notwithstanding the above findings and conclusion and recommendations of *The Wootton Report*, the then Home Secretary James Callaghan debating the Report in the House of Commons on January 23, 1969, denounced it. In doing so, he said:

[I]n our opinion, to reduce penalties for possession, sale or supply of cannabis would be bound to lead people to think that the Government take a less serious view of the effects of drug-taking. This is not so. It would be entirely contrary to Government policy to allow this impression to spread, nor would such a view accord with the resolution of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs which the Government accepted last year, recommending that all countries concerned increase their efforts to eradicate the abuse and illicit traffic of cannabis. Accordingly, it is not the Government’s intention to legislate to reduce existing penalties.¹⁰⁸

In the event, most of the provisions desired by the powerful and influential Establishment pro-cannabis lobby who were behind the above-mentioned advertisement in *The Times* of July 24, 1967,¹⁰⁹ were incorporated by Callaghan in a planned Misuse of Drugs Bill 1970. The Bill was not pursued as the 1970 General Election saw a Conservative victory. The new Conservative Government were quick to revive the Bill which subsequently became the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. This thesis will return to this discussion of drugs when addressing the case study of international drug baron Dennis Howard Marks.

2.12 Other legislative reforms

During his tenure as Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins was able to push through a liberalising agenda including decriminalising homosexuality and abortion, relaxing censorship in the arts and making divorce easier. But the most significant legislation for the purposes of this chapter was the abolition of the death penalty. Until 1965,

¹⁰⁸ UK Parliament, *Cannabis (Advisory Committee's Report)*, House of Commons (Hansard, 1969), <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1969/jan/23/cannabis-advisory-committees-report>.

¹⁰⁹ "The law against marijuana is immoral in principle and unworkable in practice," 5.

murderers in the United Kingdom could be hanged. However, this was suspended and subsequently abolished by The Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act 1965.¹¹⁰

The 1965 Act, it is argued, had unforeseen consequences. Following the passing of the 1965 Act, murderers, instead of being hanged, were sentenced to sometimes inordinately long prison sentences. In the case of criminal celebrities, this gave the potential for their celebrity to be extended for the remainder of their natural lives. One such example is that of the Kray twins who were sentenced in 1969 to life imprisonment with a non-parole period of thirty years and whose celebrity actually increased during their years in prison.

2.13 Looking back on the Counter-Culture of the 1960s

According to Elizabeth Nelson the Counter-Culture never really took off.¹¹¹ Peter Buckman speaking about the Counter-Culture in the present tense subscribed to the same view, by saying *the Underground* is less of a Movement than a way of life and adding:

It will probably never achieve any status as a mass movement, or gain the freedom to try out its idealized society, in our lifetime..... Its concrete proposals may never be realised. But because it is constantly evolving new ideas and practices, because it demonstrates the possibilities of a totally different way of living that is secretly attractive to many, and likely to grow more so as social life grows more intolerable because above all, it is overwhelmingly a movement of youth whose growth cannot be denied; it has a Phoenix-like quality that will permanently challenge the imagination of organised society.¹¹²

For his part, John Lennon described not so much a Cultural Revolution as its *absence*. In this connection, he said:

The people who are in control and in power and the class system and the whole bullshit bourgeois scene is exactly the same, except that there is [sic] a lot of middle-class kids with long hair walking around London in trendy clothes and Kenneth Tynan's making a fortune out of the word "fuck". The same bastards are in control, the same people are runnin' everything, it's

¹¹⁰ Citation: 1965 c.71

¹¹¹ Elizabeth Nelson, *The British Counter-Culture 1966-73*, 142-43.

¹¹² Peter Buckman. *The Limits of Protest*. United States: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1970, 255.

exactly the same. They hyped the kids and the generation. We've grown up a little, all of us, and there has been a change and we are a bit freer and all that, but it's the same game, nothing really changed... Nothing happening except that we grew up; we did our thing just like they were telling us. Most of the so-called "Now Generation" are getting jobs and all of that. We're a minority, you know, people like us always were.¹¹³

And so, the Counter-Culture of 1960's Britain was in hindsight in many ways more rebellious than revolutionary. However, it did make its mark in giving voice to and supporting the need for a relaxation of the Victorian moral code. One of the main legacies, as argued by Green was the huge expansion in personal choice. This was manifested in social attitudes and a more tolerant society which found expression in a series of legislative reforms covering abortion, censorship, homosexuality and divorce.¹¹⁴

2.14 Conclusion

Given that the main focus of this thesis concerns the emergence and rise of the criminal celebrity in 1960's Britain, this chapter has been important in considering the prevailing social and cultural backdrop to help understand such emergence and rise in an historical context. Britain in the 1960s witnessed considerable changes, and this chapter has attempted to precis these changes which sought to achieve a new egalitarian society. Each of these changes by degrees chipped away at *The Establishment*. There were changes in attitudes to class, changes in attitudes to drugs, changes from Victorian attitudes to those more in keeping with the new liberal values of the permissive society including changing attitudes to women and their role in society. Moreover, there were liberalising and indeed liberating legislative changes which included changes in attitudes to crime and criminals. These changes saw crime glorified and glamorised, thereby creating a new cultural space for criminals such as Howard Marks, Ronnie Biggs and the Kray twins to achieve not only social acceptance as *one of us*, but also celebrity status.

¹¹³ Jann Wenner, ed., *Lennon Remembers: Rolling Stone Interviews* (Harmondsworth, 1972), quoted in introduction to Moore-Gilbert and Seed, eds, *Cultural Revolution*, pp3-4, cited in Sandbrook, *Never Had It So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles*, xxiii.

¹¹⁴ Green, *All Dressed Up: The Sixties and the Counterculture*, 446.

3

The Rise of the Individual Celebrity within Celebrity Culture

It is argued that criminal celebrities have in part been borne out of and influenced by celebrity culture itself, and not least the rise in celebrity culture in the celebrity age. It is further argued that celebrity culture has, in turn, helped to provide the platform for their rise in popularity. This chapter therefore will be divided into two parts. The first part will discuss the rise of celebrity culture and the rise in popularity of celebrities within that culture, and the second part will discuss the rise in popularity of criminal celebrities. As already noted, this study identifies the point at which the divergent histories of celebrities in general and criminal celebrities not only converge but intersect. This point of intersection which lies at the heart of this thesis, and which supports the argument that the criminal celebrity has in part been borne out of and influenced by celebrity culture itself, is when media attention and levels of visibility afforded to criminal celebrities in the celebrity age reach the same or even greater heights than is afforded to celebrities in general. Given this nexus between the celebrity in general and the criminal celebrity, there will necessarily be an overlap between the first part of this chapter discussing the rise of celebrity culture and the rise in popularity of celebrities within that culture, and the second part discussing the rise in popularity of criminal celebrities.

Sociologist Joshua Gamson says he became interested in exploring the peculiarities of celebrity culture through his evening encounters with *Entertainment Tonight*, a television programme he says can generously be called “lightweight”. “What were these people doing in my life?” he asked himself, “and how had they gotten [sic] there?”. “And why”, he went on to ask himself, “was I lapping it up, so thrilled by the details?”. Gamson goes on to say he was an established cynic and an academic, and questions why if even he was so enthralled by the trivia, how varied might the population of celebrity watchers be, and how diverse their activities. Gamson adds that he began to tap into what he called the “weird world” of celebrity which had become “the stuff of everyday life” and concludes by saying he wanted to “unlock that strangeness”.¹¹⁵

So, what were those people doing in his life, and indeed what are those people doing in the lives of the public in general? Gamson’s thoughts reflect the state of celebrity culture in the celebrity age. A brief historical theory of the beginnings and

¹¹⁵ Gamson, *Claims to Fame*, 4.

development of celebrity will be helpful to explain the phenomenon of the ever-burgeoning celebrity industry, and how it reached the magnitude which became evident to Gamson.

3.1 The rise of celebrity culture and the rise in popularity of celebrities within that culture

There is a mixed bag of thoughts on how it all started. In respect of the historical development of celebrity, Elizabeth Barry sees the engines of fame – royal recognition, state honours, religious canonization and the laurels of artistic achievement – operate side by side the engines of celebrity which include the *popular press* and the circulation of printed images.¹¹⁶ Fred Inglis sees the rise of celebrity as evolutionary. Covering time from 18th century London to Hollywood, Inglis argues that the business of renown and celebrity has been in the making for two and a half centuries.¹¹⁷ Leo Braudy also traces the historical evolution of celebrity, but more from the standpoint of the evolving definition of fame. In this connection, he says: “As each new medium of fame appears, the human image it conveys is intensified and the number of individuals celebrated expands”.¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, Rojek offers a different tack and sees the emergence of celebrity as the result of three inter-related historical processes, namely, the democratisation of society, the decline of organised religion and the commodification of everyday life.¹¹⁹

Two aphorisms by Andy Warhol are worthy of note at this point by way of an overarching introduction to a discussion concerning celebrity culture in the celebrity age. The first is from 1968 in which Warhol said: “In the future, everybody will be world-famous for fifteen minutes”.¹²⁰ Warhol’s use of hyperbole, according to Riley, pointed out “[T]he hold that celebrity has on modern culture, a condition in which mass-mediated fame creates such a need for celebrity that a great many normally private people flash brightly onto the public screen, then – poof – are just as quickly

¹¹⁶ Elizabeth Barry, "Celebrity, Cultural Production and Public Life," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 11, no. 3 (2008): 252, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877908092583>.

¹¹⁷ Fred Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity* (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2010), 3.

¹¹⁸ Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and its History* (New York.: Oxford University Press, 1986), 4.

¹¹⁹ Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (Reaktion Books, 2001), 13.

¹²⁰ "Star Struck: An Encyclopedia of Celebrity Culture," ed. Sam G. Riley (California, U.S. : Greenwood Press, 2010), 294.

returned to privacy”.¹²¹ The second hyperbolic and arguably even more prescient aphorism by Warhol in 1979, and which coincided with the advent of both the internet and the World Wide Web that year, was “In fifteen minutes everyone will be famous”.¹²² This second aphorism, it is argued, bears witness not only to the ubiquity of the media but also to its intensity, immediacy and global reach.

The term *demotic turn*¹²³ was coined by Turner as referring to increased visibility of the ordinary person in today’s media,¹²⁴ and recognises that celebrity is now potentially open to all-comers who might want their fifteen minutes of fame. This study sees the *demotic turn* as a significant point in the historical development of celebrity culture, namely the dawning of the point at which celebrity culture was transformed into a commercial enterprise.

Turner’s view of celebrity (or at least in the celebrity age) is that it is essentially manufactured. He comments that celebrity is a commodity, one that is produced, traded and marketed by the media and publicity industries and that in this context, its primary function is commercial and promotional.¹²⁵ Daniel Boorstin likewise sees celebrity (but in referring to “fame”) as manufactured¹²⁶. He notes “[W]e have filled our world with artificial fame”,¹²⁷ and sees celebrities as “made to order”¹²⁸. Meanwhile, Gamson walks a tightrope in seeing celebrity as following two intertwining stories – one that the deserving rise to the top, and the other that celebrities are manufactured.¹²⁹ It should be noted that Richard deCordova qualified the use of the word “manufacture” in saying:

The star system does not produce stars the way that a factory produces goods. The system is rationalized, but it is not geared towards producing a standardized product in the usual sense of the word. It produces a product that is in fact highly individualized – the individual star. Images of

¹²¹ "Star Struck: An Encyclopedia of Celebrity Culture," 294.

¹²² Robert Van Krieken, *Celebrity Society* (Routledge, 2012), 13.

¹²³ Etymological note. Greek demos = people. Demotic = of or relating to the common people.

¹²⁴ Turner, *Understanding celebrity*, 92.

¹²⁵ Turner, *Understanding celebrity*, 10.

¹²⁶ Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image : A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (Vintage Books, New York, 1972), 47.

¹²⁷ Boorstin, *The Image : A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 47.

¹²⁸ Boorstin, *The Image : A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 74.

¹²⁹ Joshua Gamson, "The assembly line of greatness: Celebrity in twentieth-century America," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 9, no. 1 (1992): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295039209366812>.

machinery and the production line when applied to the star system may in some ways be appropriate, but they risk oversimplifying the processes that work to produce the star as an individual entity.¹³⁰

In a similar vein, this study argues that when the media craft the image of a criminal celebrity they are at pains to use a different cloth each time in the interests of novelty, colour and entertainment.

In relation to the manufacture of celebrities and heroes in general, an observation by Klapp is highly relevant. Klapp says, “In the age of mass communications, heroes can be more arbitrarily manufactured and more quickly and widely diffused once a formula for making heroes is found”.¹³¹ This quick and wide diffusion, it is argued, stokes the fires of celebrity by its ability to supply the demands of the marketplace for celebrities in all their guises – which in turn adds to the rise of celebrity as an industry.

With reference to the celebrity age, Gamson looks at celebrity as a business, taking a behind-the-scenes look at the “nuts and bolts” of celebrity-making as an established commercial enterprise.¹³² He notes celebrity-making as an established commercial enterprise is made up of highly developed and institutionally linked professions and sub-industries, including public relations, celebrity journalism and photography.¹³³ Gamson adds in respect of the sub-industries that they are not simply distant links in a production chain, and emphasises that “The obvious shared interest in attracting consumers via celebrities is the most general basis for connections between various sub-industries”. Gamson further adds that “[T]he representation and publicity industries are tightly linked both to each other (to produce and sell celebrities) and to the entertainment and entertainment-news industries (who buy and distribute their products).”¹³⁴ Furthermore, Irving Rein, Philip Kotler and Martin Stoller also consider celebrity in a commercial light. In this respect, they take a scientific look at celebrity with a behind-the-scenes account of the making and marketing of celebrities.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Richard deCordova, *Picture Personalities: the Emergence of the Star System in America* (University of Illinois Press., 2001), 9.

¹³¹ Orrin E. Klapp, "The Creation of Popular Heroes," *American Journal of Sociology* 54, no. 2 (1948): 139, <https://doi.org/10.1086/220292>.

¹³² Gamson, *Claims to Fame*, 64 and Chapter 3 generally.

¹³³ Gamson, *Claims to Fame*, 64.

¹³⁴ Gamson, *Claims to Fame*, 65.

¹³⁵ Irving Rein, Philip Kotler, and Martin Stoller, *High Visibility: The Making and Marketing of Professionals into Celebrities* (NTC Business Books, 1997), Chapters 3 and 4.

3.1.1 Rojek's classification of celebrities

Rojek classifies celebrities into three categories, namely “ascribed” “achieved” and “attributed”. “Ascribed” celebrity, says Rojek, concerns lineage. In this respect, he gives an example of members of the Royal Family whose celebrity is predetermined and stems from their descent. “Achieved” celebrity according to Rojek, is celebrity which derives from perceived accomplishment. Such celebrity is therefore usually earned by dint of talent or skill. Finally, “attributed” celebrity is celebrity which is not necessarily an attribute of celebrities themselves, (although it may be) but is celebrity which is the product of the involvement of cultural intermediaries.¹³⁶ As will be seen, it is the “attributed” classification which is most pertinent to celebrities in general, and for the purposes of this study to criminal celebrities or criminal heroes in particular.

Celebrity, in general, is often seen in two very different lights, one frivolous and the other serious. According to John Carroll, a person who is a celebrity will often be referred to in tones of sneering condescension. “There is something empty or frivolous about them”, says Carroll. “Their life is lived superficially, carried along on a froth of glitz and gold, a whirl of expensive clothes, Hollywood villas, and Gatsby-esque parties. They flash smiles to adoring fans as they speed by in fast cars, or glide along red carpets”.¹³⁷ Boorstin adds to this attack by alluding to the celebrity in the celebrity age as a “New category of human emptiness”.¹³⁸ Boorstin goes yet further by suggesting we now suffer from what he terms “social narcissism”. He adds that we have fallen in love with our own image, with images of our making which turn out to be images of ourselves.¹³⁹ Moreover, Boorstin says the celebrity embodies superficiality that has come to dominate the public sphere in the United States (and by geographical extension, it is argued, Britain as well). The celebrity’s visibility stands in for, Boorstin believes, a chilling lack of substance symptomatic of a culture that has come to prize image over reality.¹⁴⁰ David Schmid makes much the same argument which is relevant to the criminal celebrity in saying “When the essential factor about stars is whether they

¹³⁶ Rojek, *Celebrity*, 17-18.

¹³⁷ John Carroll, "The Tragicomedy of Celebrity," *Society* 47, no. 6 (2010): 489-92, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-010-9366-7>.

¹³⁸ Boorstin, *The Image : A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 49.

¹³⁹ Boorstin, *The Image : A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 257.

¹⁴⁰ Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: What Happened to the American Dream* (New York: Athenium, 1962), 57-58.

are broadly known, the way is open for notoriety to fill the gap left open by the disappearance of merit in definitions of fame”¹⁴¹. Schmid sees what he terms the “celebrity making machinery” capitalising on the disappearance of merit in the definition of fame, to the extent that, according to Gitlin, values dissolve in “an acid bath of fame”¹⁴² “Under these circumstances”, Schmid notes, “[C]rime is no longer a bar to celebrity; indeed, it is as close to a guarantee of celebrity as one can find”.¹⁴³

At the other end of the spectrum is Rojek who cautions that we should take celebrity culture seriously as its effects, he says, permeate deep into our subconscious. Rojek argues that the “invisible government” of business and political interests and “people skills” professionals are pulling the strings behind celebrity culture, and that they are acutely conscious of its seductive power and potential for exerting social control.¹⁴⁴ Rojek warns that only outwardly is celebrity culture about selling things and that at the heart of the matter is a battle for the mind. Moreover, and as mentioned in the Introduction, Rojek adds a disturbing note by saying “Those who see celebrity only in terms of harmless fun or exuberant liberation, without recognizing its immense power for codifying personality and standardizing social control, do not see celebrity at all”.¹⁴⁵ As further mentioned in the Introduction, Rojek’s comments are outside the scope of this thesis in that this study takes a middle line between frivolity and seriousness in seeing celebrity in general and including the criminal celebrity or hero, as a vehicle of cultural diversion and entertainment.

3.1.2 Developmental stages

This chapter has already discussed the historical backdrop of celebrity culture. A distinction needs to be made between celebrity culture and individual celebrities who make up that culture. To offer a context for later discussions and arguments specific to criminal celebrities, this chapter will therefore look at the historical development and rise of the celebrity as an individual within celebrity culture. It will do so through the practical lens of cumulative developmental stages.

¹⁴¹ Schmid, *Natural Born Celebrities: Serial Killers in American Culture*, 9.

¹⁴² Todd Gitlin, "The Culture of Celebrity," *Dissent* 45, no. 3 (1998): 81-83.

¹⁴³ Schmid, *Natural Born Celebrities: Serial Killers in American Culture*, 10.

¹⁴⁴ Rojek, *Fame Attack: The Inflation of Celebrity and its Consequences*, 185.

¹⁴⁵ Rojek, *Fame Attack: The Inflation of Celebrity and its Consequences*, 185.

The arbitrary starting date of this history will be circa 1750. The historical journey will follow the development of celebrity from Court Society through to high-profile celebrities in the celebrity age. Kim Kardashian West is an example of such a high-profile celebrity. It is perhaps a measure of how far celebrity culture has developed from the days of Court Society to celebrity culture in the celebrity age, to note that the first image encountered when visiting Madame Tussaud's exhibition in London is not that of Albert Einstein or Winston Churchill or Charles Dickens or Oscar Wilde, but of Kim Kardashian West herself, who squarely fits into Rojek's above classification of attributed celebrity,¹⁴⁶ as well as identifying with Boorstin's dictum that a celebrity is a person who is known for their well-knownness.¹⁴⁷

By way of preface, a quotation from Georg Simmel is appropriate within the context of the developmental stages to be discussed. According to Simmel "Each cultural form, once it is created, is gnawed at varying rates by the forces of life. As soon as one is fully developed, the next begins to form; and after a struggle, long or short, it will eventually succeed its predecessor".¹⁴⁸ Technology drives change, and each of the developmental stages discussed as follows can be seen as a new cultural form, each with its own impact on social and cultural behaviour.

The first developmental stage to be discussed concerns Court Society circa 1750 and beyond. The term "Court Society" was definitively coined by Norbert Elias who said: "At a certain stage in the development of European societies, individuals are bound together in the form of courts, and thereby given a specific stamp".¹⁴⁹ With reference to Court Society, it will be instructive to refer to the seminal work of Elias. Elias refers to Court Society and how social formation was extended over time. He explains "[T]his extended Court Society, in which aristocratic and bourgeois elements intermingled, and which had no distinct boundaries barring entry from below, must be envisaged as a whole. It comprised the hierarchically structured elite of the country. The compulsion to penetrate, or at least to imitate it, became stronger and stronger

¹⁴⁶ Rojek, *Celebrity*, 17-18.

¹⁴⁷ Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (United States: Vintage Books, 2012), vii-viii.

¹⁴⁸ Georg Simmel, *Individuality and Social Form* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 376.

¹⁴⁹ Wolfgang Schmale, "Court Society," in *Encyclopedia of Early Modern History Online*, ed. Graeme Dunphy and Andrew Gow (2015). <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/encyclopedia-of-early-modern-history-online/alpha/c?s.rows=50&s.start=100>.

with the growing interdependence and prosperity of broader strata”.¹⁵⁰ Andrew Linklater and Stephen Mennell echo the thoughts of Elias by emphasising the interwoven developments that societies undergo over long-term horizons, whether decades or centuries and the need to understand the complex interactions among social-structural changes.¹⁵¹ On a wider geographical note, Elias explains that “[F]rom about the middle of the eighteenth century, earlier in one country and somewhat later in another, but always in conjunction with the rise of the middle-classes, the gradual displacement of the social and political centre of gravity from the court to various national bourgeois societies, the ties between the courtly aristocratic societies of different nations were slowly loosening, even if they were never broken”.¹⁵²

Members of the Court Society were arguably the forerunners of the modern celebrity. These royal celebrities gained their positions in society as an accident of birth and fell (and continue to fall) within Rojek’s classification of “ascribed celebrity”.¹⁵³ By degrees, and as the first move in the direction of the democratisation of celebrity, renowned figures of Court Society were replaced, or at least complemented, by the feted individual of the day. The formation of the Literary Club is but one example. The Club was founded in London in 1764 by the artist Joshua Reynolds, the essayist Samuel Johnson and the philosopher Edmund Burke. Inglis argues that these founding members and later members – all men of high achievement – were treated as celebrities of their day. Inglis makes the point that the rationale for the formation of the Literary Club was specifically to seek fame and public recognition, which he identifies as the first formula of celebrity.¹⁵⁴

It is a central tenet of this thesis in the context of the historical development of the phenomenon of celebrity that by degrees celebrity status attached to the *individual* and not the *office*. It was not always thus. By way of historical explanation, Inglis, in referring to historic people of renown, says “[H]onour was brought to the office, not the individual, and public recognition was not so much of the man himself as of the

¹⁵⁰ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (Blackwell Publishing, USA, 2000), 88.

¹⁵¹ Andrew Linklater and Stephen Mennell, "Norbert Elias, The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations-An Overview and Assessment," *History and Theory* 49, no. 3 (2010): 410, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2303.2010.00550.x>.

¹⁵² Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* 190.

¹⁵³ Rojek, *Celebrity*, 17.

¹⁵⁴ Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity*, 52.

significance of his actions for society”.¹⁵⁵ This position has changed over time as recognised by Jessica Evans and David Hesmondhalgh who define a celebrity as “A person whose image circulates without being attached to their initial professional role, whether this be actor, presenter, criminal, politician, and so on”.¹⁵⁶ The *office* can therefore be seen as a launching pad to individual celebrity. This, it is argued, may help explain why, in the case of criminal celebrities, the public seem prepared to forgive the underlying crimes of criminal celebrities and concentrate only on their lives as celebrities.

In summary, the purpose of this first developmental stage is to offer an understanding of the hierarchical nature of historic Court Society, and the way in which it was diluted over time by admitting a broader stratum of society members into its ranks. The above comments also serve to explain the fission of the holder of an office, and recognition of a person as an individual in their own right as a feature and indeed a consequence of the individualisation of fame.

The next developmental stage which falls for discussion concerns the Theatre from circa 1750 onwards. The leading actors and actresses of the theatre became celebrities. Inglis cites accomplished actor-playwright and producer David Garrick, celebrated Shakespearean actor Edmund Kean and renowned actress Sarah Bernhardt as pointing the way to Hollywood.¹⁵⁷ As with members of the Literary Club, the talents of these actors and actresses gave rise to their public recognition. Because of their new celebrity, they and such like them were, according to Inglis, “Popularly acknowledged, familiarly recognised, selected as a topic of gossip, speculation, envy, groundless affection or dislike”.¹⁵⁸

The invention of photography in circa 1840 was part of what Boorstin refers to as the *Graphic Revolution*, by which he means “Man’s ability to make, preserve, transmit and disseminate precise images”.¹⁵⁹ In other words, the *Graphic Revolution* is the name given to the rise in mass-produced images from such media as television and the

¹⁵⁵ Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity*, 4.

¹⁵⁶ Jessica Evans and David Hesmondhalgh *Understanding Media: Inside Celebrity* (Open University Press, 2005), 4.

¹⁵⁷ Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity*, 8.

¹⁵⁸ Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity*, 57.

¹⁵⁹ Boorstin, *The Image : A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 13.

movies. Certainly, as Riley notes, the two biggest factors in the growth of celebrity culture have been television and the movies, and where Riley emphasises that without pictures, still or moving, celebrity culture could not have burgeoned.¹⁶⁰

Robert van Krieken makes the point that the introduction and spread of photography from 1840 onwards had an instrumental impact on the democratisation of the production of celebrity. Van Krieken acknowledges that the photograph made it possible for the aspiring celebrity to establish a far more intimate relationship with their audience – spontaneous, adaptable and with the aura of reality. “The very idea of being able to see what a celebrity *really* looked like, and at a much lower price than a painting, print or drawing was,” says van Krieken, “intoxicating”.¹⁶¹

A key developmental stage featuring in the rise of the celebrity as an individual within celebrity culture concerns the rise of mass-circulation newspapers in the mid-to-late 19th century, and the subsequent rise of the tabloid press. Several factors acting in concert explain the advent of mass circulation, not least rising literacy, improvements in public health (more readers were living to a greater age), technological improvements, improved communication links for distribution of newspapers, and the growth of printing presses.

The milestone in the march towards the modern tabloid came in 1896 when Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe) launched the *Daily Mail*.¹⁶² Rather than the *straight* reporting of news to be found in the broadsheets, the tabloid press shadowed (and still shadows) the style of *yellow journalism* which arose in New York late in the nineteenth century, by concentrating more on celebrity fare and sensationalism. Whilst quality papers do cover celebrity news, this study argues it is the rise of the tabloid press fuelled by the demands of the audience which has in part created the ever-increasing demand for celebrity content, and which has, in turn, fuelled the rise in popularity of the celebrity in general and the rise in popularity of the criminal celebrity in particular.

¹⁶⁰ "Star Struck: An Encyclopedia of Celebrity Culture," xvi.

¹⁶¹ Van Krieken, *Celebrity Society*, 41.

¹⁶² Dr Richard Rooney, *Think Stuff Unwanted: A History of Tabloid Newspapers in England, 1999*, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/26869993/History-of-Tabloid-Newspapers-in-England>.

A discussion of the film industry in the early part of the twentieth century is pivotal in understanding the rise of the individualisation of fame. In the early years of Hollywood, MPPC (Motion Pictures Patents Company) had a monopoly on the film industry. It held this monopoly by refusing to give actors on-screen credits. The reason for their refusal was they did not want their leading actors and actresses to gain public celebrity status and thus be able to command higher salaries. It remained for one of the independents, Carl Laemmle, to break the monopoly. He did this, according to the account of Arthur Knight, by luring the then popular actress Florence Lawrence (*The Biograph Girl*) away from the Biograph Studio, not so much for more money, but on a promise to feature her under her own name.¹⁶³ This marked the beginning of stars no longer being *owned* by film studios but becoming stars in their own right. It also marked the beginning of the star system. In the words of Knight, "A star was born. And with the star, the star system".¹⁶⁴ As with the theatre where the leading performers became celebrities of their day, prominent actors and actresses who were now liberated from the earlier studio monopoly became known as *film stars*.

Just as members of Court Society were, by degrees, recognised as individuals of note in their own right as distinct from their calling, actors similarly became stars in their own right. The individualisation of celebrity as already touched on above in respect of Court Society is, therefore, the point at which the individual became recognised as a person in their own right, distinct from their professional role as actor or entertainer. It is the point at which the image of the private individual took on a different life from the image of the *public* actor or entertainer in the performance of those roles. This separation, it is argued, marked the beginning of celebrity, where both the public and the private lives of individual actors become public property. Today's *Hello!* magazine, *OK*, *Heat* and myriad other glossy magazines are proof of this, with their staple diet of celebrity news and gossip.

In relation to the fuller background to the emergence of the film star, Frank E. Woods argued that public curiosity was the force that created the star system.¹⁶⁵ Woods went on to say it was the public who wanted to know the names of the figures

¹⁶³ Arthur Knight, *The Liveliest Art: A Panoramic History of the Movies*, Rev. ed. (New York and Ontario: New American Library, 1979), 38.

¹⁶⁴ Knight, *The Liveliest Art: A Panoramic History of the Movies*, 38.

¹⁶⁵ Frank E Woods, "Why Is a Star?," *Photoplay*, November 1919, 70.

they had seen on the screen, but the filmmakers wanted to “avoid the troubles of the theatrical managers – big salaries to stars and players – by rigidly concealing the names of the actors and actresses”.¹⁶⁶ Woods continues “They would play up only the names of the manufacturing companies, and the public would never be the wiser. But the public thought differently. They picked out their favourites and insisted on demanding them”.¹⁶⁷

Richard deCordova adds to the history of the individualisation of fame by identifying the promotion of *picture personalities* as a means of promoting the performances of individuals once their names began to appear on the cast list.¹⁶⁸ However, he explains that promotion of individual actors by way of *picture personalities* was short-lived, and that by 1914 and with the increasing emergence of the film star, his or her private lives were now becoming as much the focus of the public’s attention as their public (or screen) persona.¹⁶⁹ This was a turning point in what one might argue was the beginning of the celebrity goldfish bowl. Indeed, Turner, in the context of media interest in the star (or celebrity) says: “We can map the precise moment a public figure becomes a celebrity. It occurs at the point at which media interest in their activities is transferred from reporting on their public role to investigating the details of their private lives.”¹⁷⁰ Richard Dyer explains this wider interest by the public in the new film star by saying:

The star phenomenon consists of everything that is publicly available about stars. A film star’s image is not just his or her films, but the promotion of those films and of the star through pin-ups, public appearances and studio hand-outs as well as interviews, biographies and coverage in the press of the star’s doings and “private life”. Further, a star’s image is also what people say or write about him or her, as critics or commentators, the way the image is used in other contexts such as advertisements, novels, pop songs, and finally the way the star can become part of the coinage of everyday speech.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁶ Woods, "Why Is a Star?," 72.

¹⁶⁷ Woods, "Why Is a Star?," 72.

¹⁶⁸ deCordova, *Picture Personalities*, 50-98 generally.

¹⁶⁹ deCordova, *Picture Personalities*, 98.

¹⁷⁰ Turner, *Understanding celebrity*, 8.

¹⁷¹ Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (USA: St. Martin's Press, New York, 1986), 2-3.

The invention of the radio in circa 1920 as a new medium for the transmission of news, spawned a number of *personalities* (yet another word as a forerunner of the word “celebrity”). Not least of these was that of the British traitor James Joyce (otherwise known as Lord Haw-Haw) who, in the early days of the Second World War, broadcast from Radio Hamburg propaganda against Britain. A radio personality of a different type was President Franklin Roosevelt who, following his inauguration in 1933 used radio for his *Fireside Chats* with the American people. Radio witnessed not only the rise of radio personalities but some of the newsreaders themselves, not least Edward Murrow in America, Charles Collingwood in London, Eric Sevareid in Paris and William Shirer in Berlin, who all became comforting voices when broadcasting during the Second World War. Mitchell Stephens notes “Radio listeners were residents of an ethereal community, populated by familiar, if unreachable presences, whose voices were accessible anywhere in the nation”.¹⁷² Stephens adds that “In the 1950s, radio’s stars, including many of its star newscasters, left for television, and radio surrendered its position as the nation’s central gathering place”.¹⁷³

Just as the radio gave a voice to the printed word, the invention of television in the 1920s gave a face to the radio. Television viewers live in a world of mediated reality. Without so much as leaving their living rooms, viewers can see the world at large in close-up. They can see shows which luxuriate in crime and in celebrity gossip. They can watch the news dressed up as *infotainment*, or they can sit back and watch tabloid television programmes at will. Here is a place where viewers can see celebrities and criminal celebrities all, who come to life before their very eyes.

One last developmental stage to be discussed in relation to the rise of the celebrity as an individual within celebrity culture concerns the advent and rise of new media. A preliminary point needs to be made. Whilst this thesis focuses on 1960’s Britain and whilst new media considerably post-dates that decade, new media is relevant to both the developing lives and afterlives of the subjects of the case studies, even though those celebrity lives arose in the 1960s.

The year 1979 was a key date in the advent of new media. This was the year in which the internet was first regularly used. It is also the year in which Tim Berners-Lee

¹⁷² Mitchell Stephens, *A History of News*, 3rd ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 273.

¹⁷³ Stephens, *A History of News*, 273.

invented the World Wide Web. On a basic point of distinction, the internet is a global network of networks, whilst the World Wide Web comprises a collection of information which is accessed via the internet. Ray Surette defines new media as “Digital interactive media exemplified by the Internet, electronic games, and smartphones. New media are characterised by interactive social media and the looping of multimedia content. New media employ digital information that is easily shared and can take the form of print, sound, moving or still images and all of their combinations”.¹⁷⁴

A brief history of new media is relevant when identifying the change from passive consumer to active consumer. According to Surette, the single most important change between old and new media lies in the relationship found between the creators of media content and the consumers of the content. Surette explains that what might be termed “old media” (that is to say media including physical newspapers, physical books, radio and television) was created and distributed by distant others – the media industry – to be delivered to distant isolated consumers to have whatever social impact it was destined to have.¹⁷⁵ Surette adds that the content creation process flowed nearly exclusively in a top-down direction, and continues by saying new media in contrast have an inherently different creator/consumption relationship.¹⁷⁶ In effect, the difference between old media and new media is that with old media news was distributed on the basis of one to many, but with new media, it is now distributed on the basis of many to many. The impact of new media has been and continues to be significant in terms of increased creation of content (there is no paper limitation of space as with old media) and to the access and distribution of such content. This has created greater exposure of the celebrity which this study contends is a factor in the rise in popularity of the celebrities in general, and the rise in popularity of criminal celebrities in particular.

If the above developmental stages were to be considered together, would it be possible to recognise the celebrity in the celebrity age? Not quite. What the developmental stages give (on the premise that Turner,¹⁷⁷ Boorstin¹⁷⁸ and Gamson¹⁷⁹ are

¹⁷⁴ Ray Surette, *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice*, 5th ed. USA: Cengage Learning, 2015, 272.

¹⁷⁵ Surette, *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice*, 44 and 47.

¹⁷⁶ Surette, *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice*, 47.

¹⁷⁷ Turner, *Understanding celebrity*, 10.

¹⁷⁸ Boorstin, *The Image : A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 47.

¹⁷⁹ Gamson, "The assembly line of greatness: Celebrity in twentieth-century America," 1.

correct in their view that the celebrity is manufactured) is the recipe from which the celebrity is manufactured. However, and continuing with the analogy in respect of cooking, other ingredients need to be added to the mix in the making of the celebrity. A whole raft of what might be termed infrastructure industries have developed alongside celebrity culture. In this connection, Rein, Kotler and Stoller identify no fewer than eight such industries which contribute to the production (that is to say manufacture) of celebrity.¹⁸⁰ Indeed, Turner notes an argument by Schickel that the development of these industries made celebrity a necessary invention¹⁸¹. One of the industries is that of public relations which will be specifically discussed in chapter 8.

The cumulative effect of the above developmental stages, not least technological innovations such as cinema, the *popular press*, television and above all new media, shows the development of communication in all its forms, and not least for the purposes of this study the dissemination of celebrity content, as reaching an ever-wide audience and at an ever-increasing speed, whilst forever narrowing the distance between the celebrity and the audience. These stages, it is argued, have facilitated the rise of celebrity culture in general. Moreover, they have created conditions conducive to an ever-increasing cycle for demand and supply of both celebrities in general and criminal celebrities in particular in turning them into objects of both mass consumption and mass entertainment.

3.2 The rise in popularity of the criminal celebrity

Based on the above argument that the criminal celebrity has in part been borne out of and influenced by celebrity culture itself, it follows that factors which brought about the rise in popularity of the individual celebrity within that culture, are equally relevant to the rise in popularity of the criminal celebrity. However, these are not the only factors, and a further overriding factor relevant to the rise in popularity of both celebrities in general and criminal celebrities in particular needs to be taken into account, namely that of visibility. On the premise of an argument that the greater the visibility the greater the celebrity, there is a causal link between visibility, celebrity and popularity. In many ways, visibility has superseded factors giving rise to the popularity

¹⁸⁰ Rein, Kotler, and Stoller, *High Visibility: The Making and Marketing of Professionals into Celebrities*, 42-58.

¹⁸¹ Turner, *Understanding celebrity*, 12.

of celebrities in general and criminal celebrities in particular as stemming from celebrity culture itself. As already noted above, the celebrity's visibility in the celebrity age stands in for a chilling lack of substance symptomatic of a culture that has come to prize image over reality.¹⁸² This is an observation, as also noted above, which is endorsed by Schmid as germane to criminal celebrities in saying that "[W]hen the essential factor about stars is whether they are broadly known, the way is open for notoriety to fill the gap left open by the disappearance of merit in definitions of fame".¹⁸³ This study sees the collapse of the distinction between fame and notoriety as a fundamental watershed, and argues that circumstances whereby visibility and prominence are now the sole arbiters of who is defined as a celebrity have, in the celebrity age, opened the floodgates for the rise in popularity of criminal celebrities.

One final and essential factor needs to be discussed which is peculiar to the rise in popularity of the criminal celebrity in 1960's Britain and beyond. This factor, which is not immediately apparent, concerns the Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act 1965¹⁸⁴ (the 1965 Act) by which hanging was abolished for murder. The relevance of the abolition of hanging to the rise in popularity of the criminal celebrity is twofold. Firstly, had the criminal been hanged, that would have in every sense cut short his or her celebrity. Based simply on the laws of supply and demand, there are now necessarily more criminal celebrities to satisfy demand, which allays the concerns of Logan that "[T]he supply of persons properly qualified for our veneration does not equal the demand".¹⁸⁵ The prolonged life of the criminal celebrity is, therefore, a contributory factor in the potential rise in popularity of the criminal celebrity, who has the opportunity of feeding and feeding off media exposure whilst in prison and after release. It follows from this that the criminal celebrity who spends many years in prison instead of being hanged (had this been the alternative), is able to buy more celebrity time. In doing so, criminal celebrities are given the opportunity of further enhancing their celebrity profile, thereby allowing their mythologisation to grow. This is certainly true of the Kray twins who would most likely have been hanged had their convictions for murder pre-dated the operative date of the 1965 Act.

¹⁸² Boorstin, *The Image: What Happened to the American Dream*, 57-58.

¹⁸³ Schmid, *Natural Born Celebrities: Serial Killers in American Culture*, 9.

¹⁸⁴ Citation: 1965 c.71

¹⁸⁵ Logan, "Glorifying the Criminal," 43.

The second point of relevance concerning the abolition of hanging and the rise in popularity of the criminal celebrity and which is a consequence of the abolition of hanging concerns the length of prison sentences. Section 1(3) of the 1965 Act replaced the death penalty with a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment. But life did not necessarily mean life, and in practice, according to a BBC news article dated June 16, 2006 by Finlo Rohrer, murderers serve an average of fourteen years.¹⁸⁶ It is against this backdrop that the thirty-year prison sentences handed down to Ronnie Biggs and certain other Great Train Robbers, and likewise to the Kray twins, caused a public stir in certain quarters. This was particularly so with the Great Train Robbers who did not murder anyone. Theirs was a crime essentially against property, and yet incurred a greater penalty than that of many a murderer. A consequence of these thirty-year prison sentences was to turn criminals into *Prison Prima Donnas* – or so suggested the headline of an article by Jonathan Steele in *The Guardian* of March 6, 1969 published the day after the Kray twins were sentenced.¹⁸⁷ The article opens by saying “How do you prevent them from becoming the aristocrats of the prison system?” Steele then continues by saying “[T]he phrase was used last November by James Callaghan the Home Secretary, to describe the dangers of glamorising the most rebellious of Britain’s top security prisoners”. Steele then adds “The end of the Kray trial has now dumped nine more of society’s toughest nuts on to the prison service. The nature of their criminal records, the length of their sentence and the publicity which will inevitably linger are bound to make them potential prima donnas”.¹⁸⁸ Whilst the sentiment of Steele’s article may be correct, a closer analysis of the article shows the comments to be no more than conjecture tinged with sensationalism. The true position can be seen by studying the text of a House of Commons debate on Prison, Borstal and Detention Centres (Estimates Committee’s Reports) dated November 14, 1968.¹⁸⁹ That part of the Report to which Steele refers in the opening of his article, namely “How do you prevent them from becoming the aristocrats of the prison system”, was nothing to do with the Krays twins or any other criminals in particular. The context in which

¹⁸⁶ Finlo Rohrer, "The history of life," *BBC News Magazine*, June 16, 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/5086978.stm.

¹⁸⁷ Jonathan Steele, "Problem of the prison prima donnas," *The Guardian*, March 6 1969.

¹⁸⁸ Steele, "Problem of the prison prima donnas," 5.

¹⁸⁹ UK Parliament, *Prisons, Borstals and Detention Centres (Estimates Committee's Reports)*, November 14 1968, col 633 (James Callaghan), [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1968-11-14/debates/0e7785d7-732f-45fd-ae78-41a97132b7a1/PrisonsBorstalsAndDetentionCentres\(EstimatesCommitteeSReports\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1968-11-14/debates/0e7785d7-732f-45fd-ae78-41a97132b7a1/PrisonsBorstalsAndDetentionCentres(EstimatesCommitteeSReports))

Callaghan spoke was whether Category A prisoners should be isolated or dispersed with other non-Category A prisoners. Callahan favoured dispersal, saying:

That will mean that the men concerned will be with other prisoners in conditions of great security but nevertheless, not isolated on their own in the conditions in which they live at present. I think that will help – although only time will tell – to break down the anti-hero complex which some of them seem to have. When they pick themselves out, public attention is focused on them and they become the aristocrats of the prison system. I see no reason why there should not be a democracy in the prison system as well as everywhere else. I hope that that will be the result of putting these men in absolutely secure conditions but in prisons in which they will be mixing with a great many other people and in which they will not be picked out as a special group.¹⁹⁰

Steele's article, although written out of context, (the true context being the House of Commons debate concerning the isolation or dispersal of Category A prisoners) highlights three points relevant to the rise in popularity of the criminal celebrity. The first is the possibility of high-profile prisoners serving inordinately long prison sentences being glamorised no matter what the pretext. The particular pretext which gave rise to the House of Commons debate was the conditions of long-term prisoners in the words of the speaker Renee Short "Both in terms of security, the work they do, and also of maintaining family relationships and the prevention of the deterioration in personality which inevitably occurs when men are incarcerated for very long periods"¹⁹¹ Callaghan refers to these conditions later in the report in saying "I am sorry to say that a number of people in these top security wings are extremely skilled and adept at drawing public attention to their so-called grievances, not sometimes because the grievances are very profound, but as a means of destroying authority in the prisons. The manner in which these are sometimes picked up gives the public an impression which is not borne out by conditions in these wings...." The particular pretext does necessarily add to the glamour of criminal celebrities. The pretext may be an application for parole or even a well-publicised petition for their release. At all events, the pretext will do nothing to harm or even enhance the profile of the criminal celebrity. Pretext is a significant word to which this study will return when discussing the case studies. As will be seen, almost any pretext and in almost any instance gives the media an

¹⁹⁰ UK Parliament, *Prisons, Borstals and Detention Centres (Estimates Committee's Reports)*, 11.

¹⁹¹ UK Parliament, *Prisons, Borstals and Detention Centres (Estimates Committee's Reports)*, 2.

opportunity of running a story in respect of criminal celebrities whether inside prison or out, to keep them in the limelight.

The second point of relevance arising out of the above article of Steele is the publicity which will inevitably attach to inordinately long prison sentences. A case in point which identifies both the glamour and the publicity is the lead story in the *Daily Mail* of April 17, 1964 reporting on a cumulative total of 307 years in prison being handed down to the Great Train Robbers the previous day by Mr Justice Edmund Davies. It is somewhat ironic that in speaking of the judge's hatred of violence, the thirty-year sentences signalled his "[D]etermination to strip crime of any glamour".¹⁹² The irony, of course, is that the emerging criminal celebrity culture of 1960's Britain had totally the opposite effect, with Ronnie Biggs above all other train robbers becoming a criminal celebrity whose life was glamorised up to the time of his death and continued into his afterlife. The third and final point of relevance of Steele's above *Guardian* article, even though Callaghan's comments were taken out of context, is that draconian prison sentences had the effect not only of engendering public sympathy (and arguably support) for those sentenced, but also of making martyrs of such criminals – and with it adding to the resonance between criminal and public and in the process fuelling the criminal's growing celebrity profile.

This study will return to and identify the practical manifestations of the above factors which account for the rise in popularity of the criminal celebrity when considering the case studies of Howard Marks, Ronnie Biggs and the Kray twins.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter argued that the criminal celebrity has in part been borne out of and influenced by celebrity culture itself. To this end, the chapter firstly discussed the rise of celebrity culture and the rise in popularity of celebrities within that culture, and secondly the rise in popularity of criminal celebrities. In doing so, the chapter identified that these divergent histories not only converge but intersect, and that the point of intersection is when media attention and levels of visibility afforded to the criminal celebrity reach the same or greater levels than that afforded to celebrities in general.

¹⁹² Gilbert Lewthwaite, "Final Share-Out," *Daily Mail*, April 17 1964, 1.

The chapter considered the history of celebrity culture from Court Society of circa 1750 to Kim Kardashian West as an example of a high-profile celebrity in the celebrity age, and charted this history by reference to many developmental stages spanning this same period, which have both facilitated and influenced the rise of celebrity culture. The chapter showed that the cumulative effect of these developmental stages, not least innovative technological changes regarding mediums of communication, provided the means by which celebrity news can be disseminated to an ever-widening audience at an ever-increasing speed, and thus providing a platform for the rise in popularity of celebrities as individuals within celebrity culture. The chapter then continued by saying that the same criteria as is applicable to the rise of celebrity culture and the rise in popularity of individuals within that culture, is equally relevant to the rise in popularity of the criminal celebrity, not least the “one size fits all” effect of visibility. On a point of differentiation, the chapter concluded by identifying a fundamental factor which relates solely to the rise in popularity of criminal celebrities, that is to say, the consequences of the abolition of hanging in Britain following the 1965 Act.

4

The Fascination with and Interest in Crime

“The basic interests of the human race are not in music, politics and philosophy, but in things like food and football, money and sex, and crime – especially crime”.

Larry Lamb: Editorial Director,
The Sun and The News of the World, 1975.¹⁹³

The opening paragraph of an article headed “Blood” from an 1842 edition of *Punch* magazine reads “Of all the short cuts to notoriety in England, murder is the shortest. Let a man shed blood, let him commit some ruthless act of homicide, and he instantly becomes a most interesting object of art”. The article later continues by saying of the murderer “The miscreant sleeps but is he left in solitude? Oh, no! for the Press – a harridan gossip – sits at the pallet of the man of blood, and counts his throes, his groans; marks his convulsed limbs and the sweat of agony from his Cain-branded brow – and straightaway vends her babble to all buyers”. And yet a third extract from the article is worthy of verbatim repeat, viz.,

A less refined, less civilised people than ourselves would start with vulgar horror from a murderer; we would do justice on the malefactor with due, yet brief solemnity. We are wiser. We show a murderer “as men show an ape”. We rake together all the outlying incidents of his life – we retail his conversations... we leave no vile task undone – no loathsome path untrod to feed the appetite we create – a morbid, wolfish craving for all that’s foul and hideous in humanity. We familiarise the social mind with the blood-shedder – we make him so much a part of the daily concerns of life for the time being, that we insensibly merge our horror in our curiosity...¹⁹⁴

The public’s fascination with and interest in crime has the enticement of forbidden fruit as the above extracts in respect of murder well-illustrate. This fascination can no doubt be traced back to the beginning of time itself and continues unabated to the present day. But is this fascination with the *crime* or the *criminal* – or both? And how can it be best explained? This study will consider such fascination with and interest in crime through the lens of historic public hangings. In doing so, it will seek to bring the

¹⁹³ Larry Lamb, Editorial Director of The Sun and *The News of the World* 1975, quoted in Steve Chibnall, *Law-and-Order News: An analysis of crime reporting in the British Press* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1977), ix.

¹⁹⁴ Punch, “Blood,” *Punch, or The London Charivari*, January-June, 1842, 190.

gruesome theatre and carnival-esque atmosphere to life in order to exemplify the public fascination with both crime and criminals.

Public hangings can be seen from opposite perspectives. The purpose of public hangings from the perspective of the law according to Michel Foucault, (whose comments mainly related to public hangings in France) “[W]as to make an example, not only by making people aware that the slightest offence was likely to be punished, but by arousing feelings of terror by the spectacle of power, letting its anger fall upon the guilty person”.¹⁹⁵ Foucault further comments that “Not only must people know, they must see with their own eyes”.¹⁹⁶ But from the perspective of the public and especially in reference to the scaffold crowd, Foucault acknowledges that whilst public executions ought to show the terrorising power of the law, “[T]here was a whole aspect of the carnival, in which rules were inverted, authority mocked and criminals were transformed in heroes”.¹⁹⁷ David Brandon and Alan Brooke go a step further than Foucault by suggesting that if the purpose of the gruesome spectacle of hanging was deterrence, then the exercise largely failed. Executions, they say, may well have served the function of summoning people to witness the might and power of the Monarch or the State, but the crowds all too often responded by displaying irreverence and mockery of that power.¹⁹⁸

This study will delve into the history of public hangings from 1675 until 1868 to explain how and why public hangings held such manifest appeal. These dates are chosen for a reason: 1675 is the year in which the first Ordinary of Newgate Prison (Samuel Smith) was appointed, and it is the Office of Ordinary and his Accounts of the lives of the condemned which will form part of the discussion on Street Literature (oftentimes referred to as Gallows Literature), and 1868 was the year in which hangings ceased to be carried out in public.¹⁹⁹ However, before delving into this history, the study will turn the clock back even further to medieval times.

Medieval accounts of punishment focused on the crime (or more accurately, on the body of the criminal as representing the crime) and not the actual criminal. Punishment of the criminal in medieval times, (for example, whippings, burning at the

¹⁹⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 58.

¹⁹⁶ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 58.

¹⁹⁷ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 61.

¹⁹⁸ David Brandon and Alan Brooke, *London The Executioner's City* (United Kingdom: Sutton Publishing 2006), 5.

¹⁹⁹ The Capital Punishment Amendment Act 1868 (31 & 32 Vict.c24).

stake and hangings) took place in public. With reference to a discussion concerning traitors, Eva McVitty notes in her thesis "*False Knights and True Blood: Reading the Traitor's Body in Medieval England*", that the audience in respect of a traitor's body witnessed a highly theatrical and public punishment which was intended to send a message about hegemonic power, particularly the King's power, over the bodies and lives of his subjects.²⁰⁰ By way of example, *The Chronicles of Lanercost 1272-1346* describe how David of Wales was publicly "[F]irst drawn as a traitor, then hanged as a thief; thirdly he was beheaded alive and his entrails burnt as an incendiary and homicide [sic]; fourthly his limbs were cut into four parts as the penalty of a rebel and exposed in four of the ceremonial places in England as a spectacle..."²⁰¹ Katherine Royer notes that in such texts, "[E]ach cut had a purpose, as the punishment commemorated the crime".²⁰² Further, Royer identifies a shift in focus from medieval narratives of crime focusing on the *body*, to narratives after 1600 where the focus of interest was more on the *actual criminal* – not least their behaviour at the scaffold before their public execution and their "last dying speeches" in appropriate cases.²⁰³ This shift in focus from a ritualistic (but still public) interest in the body of the condemned as representing the crime, to the fascination with and interest in the condemned as a person is, it is argued, at the root of the public's fascination with criminals themselves.

4.1 The "Bloody Code" and the theatre of hanging

This study now returns to the above dates of 1675-1868 which cover the period of the "Bloody Code". The Bloody Code was the retrospective name given to laws introduced in England between the late seventeenth century and the early nineteenth century which dictated that those convicted of specified crimes should receive the death penalty. The Bloody Code increased the number of offences punishable by

²⁰⁰ Eva A. McVitty, "False Knights and True Blood: Reading the Traitor's Body in Medieval England" (Master of Arts Massey University, Manawatu, New Zealand, 2011), (iii), https://mro.massey.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10179/3415/02_whole.pdf

²⁰¹ Sir Herbert Maxwell, *The Chronicles of Lanercost, 1272-1346* (Glasgow: James Maclehose & Sons, 1913), 35.

²⁰² Katherine Royer, "Dead Men Talking: Truth, Texts and the Scaffold in Early Modern England" in *Penal Practice and Culture, 1500-1900: Punishing the English*, ed. Simon Devereaux and Paul Griffiths (England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 69.

²⁰³ Royer, "Dead Men Talking: Truth, Texts and the Scaffold in Early Modern England" 71.

death from fifty in 1688 to 220 by the end of that century,²⁰⁴ increasing yet further according to Andrew Pepper,²⁰⁵ to more than 350 following the introduction of the Black Act in 1723.²⁰⁶ The practical effect of this increase was to increase the number of public hangings.

Evidence of the fascination with and interest in crime through the lens of historic public hangings will be considered in two parts. The first part will concern the theatre of hanging and the scaffold crowd, and the second part will consider the varieties of street literature on offer to feed the fascination and curiosity of the scaffold crowd in relation to the condemned criminal.

Public hangings assumed the appearance of a theatre, and those condemned to hang were the principal actors in that theatre. Custom had long entitled those facing the gallows to address the crowd as they pleased, thus adding to the theatre of the occasion. These last dying speeches fuelled the appetite of the public for spectacle and entertainment, and oftentimes (as acknowledged by Foucault as above) fashioned the criminal into a hero in the eyes of the scaffold crowd.²⁰⁷

The set-piece execution, according to James Sharpe was a dramatic performance in a milieu,²⁰⁸ and where Penry Williams commenting on public hangings in the sixteenth century says “[T]he notion of the world as a stage and men as actors performing their roles upon it gained a stronghold upon the imagination”.²⁰⁹ This theatrical setting, according to V.A.C. Gatrell attracted large and excited crowds with audiences of up to 100,000 people.²¹⁰ Paul Griffiths puts the size of the scaffold crowd into a modern-day perspective by recounting in what he describes as the “cold-hearted centuries” that “A gallows crowd could have filled one of our football grounds today,

²⁰⁴ Stephen Wade, *Britain's Most Notorious Hangmen* (Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Books, 2009), 9.

²⁰⁵ Andrew Pepper, "Early crime writing and the state: Jonathan Wild, Daniel Defoe and Bernard Mandeville in 1720s London," *Textual Practice* 25, no. 3 (2011): 473, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2010.495527>.

²⁰⁶ Black Act 1723 9 Geo.1c.22. Pepper erroneously refers in his above article to the Black Act 1724 instead of 1723.

²⁰⁷ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 61.

²⁰⁸ James A. Sharpe, "Last Dying Speeches": Religion, Ideology and Public Execution in Seventeenth-Century England," *Past & Present*, no. 107 (1985): 162.

²⁰⁹ Penry Williams, *The Tudor Regime* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1979), 360.

²¹⁰ V.A.C. Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People 1770-1868*. (Oxford University Press, New York., 1994), 7.

and still left people outside on the streets trying to get in”.²¹¹ Gatrell adds that the Tyburn crowd was the biggest, most frequent and most sensational of London crowds, assembling eight times a year to witness the spectacle of hanging.²¹² An article in *The Times* newspaper from 1828 describes the eagerness of the gallows crowd to secure their place thus: “Ere, the break of day, persons of all classes began to hurry to the scene of death, and many, as was observed on the execution of Fauntleroy, took their places at the windows and upon the roofs of the houses opposite the spot which they had previously engaged and paid for, whilst the immense space in the Old Bailey surrounding the fatal scaffold was crowded by men and women to suffocation...”²¹³

Sarah Redmond adds to the discussion by describing public executions as “[E]laborately staged and exquisitely paced rituals seething with suspense, tension, crisis, reversals and revelations”. Redmond further adds to this description by saying that at Tyburn hawkers sold fruit pies and spectators could buy a pamphlet or ballad that recounted the various crimes and depraved lives of the criminals being hanged, evoking comparisons with the theater [sic].²¹⁴ And yet further, Thomas Laqueur adds to the analogy of the scaffold stage being likened to theatre, by referring to the scaffold crowd as “carnival-esque”²¹⁵ in the Rabelaisian sense as described by Mikhail Bakhtin,²¹⁶ and that from the perspective of the audience executions were “[A] species of comedy or light entertainment”.²¹⁷ Such a carnival-esque scaffold crowd is captured in William Hogarth’s 1747 satirical print “The Idle ‘Prentice Executed at Tyburn”.²¹⁸ Reflecting the competition the Ordinary of Newgate faced from other publishers who rushed to sell their own accounts, Hogarth’s print shows in the foreground and just

²¹¹ Paul Griffiths, "Introduction: Punishing the English," in *Penal Practice and Culture, 1500-1900: Punishing the English*, ed. Simon Devereaux and Paul Griffiths (England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 17.

²¹² Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People 1770-1868.*, 56.

²¹³ The Times, "Execution," *The Times* (London), December 9, 1828, 3, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/ACAyW0>.

²¹⁴ Sarah N. Redmond, "Staging Executions: The Theater of Punishment in Early Modern England" (Master of Arts Florida State University, 2007), 1, <https://diginole.lib.fsu.edu/islandora/object/fsu:176386/datastream/PDF/view>.

²¹⁵ Thomas W Laqueur, "Crowds, carnival and the state in English executions, 1604-1868," in *The first modern society: Essays in English History in Honour of Lawrence Stone*, ed. A. L. Beier, David Cannadine, and James M. Rosenheim (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 309.

²¹⁶ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his world*, 10.

²¹⁷ Laqueur, "Crowds, carnival and the state in English executions, 1604-1868," 323.

²¹⁸ Industry and Idleness series, Plate 11. Exhibited at British Museum London, British Museum number 1868,0822.1582

below of the image of the Idle 'Prentice, a woman who is already selling his "Last Dying Speech" before he has even reached the scaffold.

At the heart of the British execution, Laqueur sees not the State nor even the condemned, but the people themselves "[G]athered in a carnival-esque moment of political generativity. From Mandeville to Dickens, accounts of the procession to Tyburn or of the crowds before Newgate and other venues portray, in breathless prose, a festive, buoyant, holiday crowd wholly unconcerned with serious state theatre and unaffected by its efforts".²¹⁹

In a letter from Charles Dickens published in the *Daily News* on February 23, 1846, Dickens gives a first-hand account of the behaviour of the scaffold crowd following his attendance in person at a public hanging. "There is about it", he said "a horrible fascination, which, in the minds not of evil-disposed persons, but of good and virtuous and well-conducted people, supersedes the horror legitimately attaching to crime itself, and causes every word and action of a criminal under sentence of death to be the subject of a morbid interest and curiosity". Dickens later relates in the letter that:

He did not see one token in all the immense crowd; at the windows, in the streets, on the house-tops, anywhere; of anyone emotion suitable to the occasion. No sorrow, no salutary terror, no abhorrence, and no seriousness; nothing but ribaldry, debauchery, levity, drunkenness and flaunting vice in fifty different shapes". "I should have deemed it impossible", Dickens continued, "that I could have ever felt any large assemblage of my fellow-creatures to be so odious. I hoped for an instant, that there was some sense of Death and Eternity in the cry of "Hats Off!" when the miserable wretch appeared, but I found next moment that they only raised it as they would at a Play – to see the Stage the better in the final scene."²²⁰

A further letter by Dickens was published in *The Times* on November 14, 1849, in which he gave his observations in relation to the hangings of husband and wife couple Fred and Maria Manning. Dickens had attended the hanging not so much to watch the execution as to observe the crowd watching it. In this letter, he comments "When the day dawned, thieves, low prostitutes, ruffians and vagabonds of every kind flocked on to the ground, with every variety of offensive and foul behaviour. Fightings,

²¹⁹Laqueur, "Crowds, carnival and the state in English executions, 1604-1868," 332.

²²⁰ Charles Dickens, "Letters on Social Questions. Capital Punishment," *Daily News* (London), February 23 1846.

faintings, whistlings, imitations of Punch, brutal jokes, tumultuous demonstrations of indecent delight when swooning women were dragged out of the crowd by the police with their dresses disordered, gave a new zest to the general entertainment".²²¹

Yet a further first-hand account was that of William Makepeace Thackeray who described the scaffold crowd's demeanour after attending the public hanging of valet Francois Courvoisier who had murdered his master, Lord William Russell. Thackeray writes that "Forty thousand persons (say the Sheriffs), of all ranks and degrees – mechanics, gentlemen, pickpockets, members of both Houses of Parliament, street-walkers, newspaper-writers, gather together before Newgate at a very early hour; the most part of them give up their natural quiet night's rest in order to partake in this hideous debauchery, which is more exciting than sleep, or than wine, or the last new ballet, or any other amusement they can have". It is interesting to note Thackeray observing in respect of the condemned that "The mob seemed to have no sort of ill-will against him, but sympathy and admiration."²²²

One final account of the behaviour of the scaffold crowd will complete the picture, by referring to Quaker J.J. Gurney describing in 1816 his reaction to the execution of three men. He reported seeing "vast flocks of people" of all ages crowding along the streets towards the execution. He was pained at the thought that they seemed to possess "feelings of a pleasurable nature" for an event he found to be "the most dreadful and melancholy". To Gurney, the most frightening aspect of this response was the eclipse of human sympathy by "a feeling of pleasure in the excitement itself".²²³

The description of the behaviour of the scaffold crowd helps to explain how public hangings held such wide appeal. But the real question to be addressed is not how public hanging held such wide appeal, but why? Gatrell mentions that contemporary analysis of the scaffold crowd would often agree that the crowd was hungry for catharsis in or escape from routine-bound deprived or resentful lives, and that in such conditions there was a release in the very business of collecting together.²²⁴

²²¹ Charles Dickens, "To The Editor Of The Times," *The Times*, November 14 1849, 4, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/AJ2A58>.

²²² William M. Thackeray, "Going to see a man hanged," *Fraser's Magazine* no. 22 (July-December, 1840 1840), accessed December 4, 2019, <http://www.exclassics.com/newgate/courv.htm>

²²³ Martin J. Wiener, *Reconstructing the Criminal: Culture, Law and Policy in England, 1830-1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 95.

²²⁴ Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People 1770-1868.*, 73.

Before leaving the behaviour of the scaffold crowd, Gatrell notes that the taste for spectacle and sensation applied before the hanging as well as at the hanging. Gatrell relates that “[P]eople could apply to attend condemned sermons and gawp at the about-to-be-hanged in their segregated pew, a coffin placed meaningfully in front of them”.²²⁵ This practice was only stopped after a plea was made by letter dated May 23, 1845 by Whitworth Russell, an evangelical prison inspector to the Home Office. An extract from the letter reads: “[I]n order to prevent prisoners under sentence of death being made a shew of ... the attention of the Justices should be directed to that part of the Rule which provides that no persons, except the authorities and officers of the prison, shall have access to such prisoners”.²²⁶

4.2 Street literature

A variety of Street Literature was on offer in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with publishers and hawkers all competing in the same gruesome market of public hangings. Foremost were the Sessions Papers of the Old Bailey and their sister publication known as the Accounts of the Ordinary of Newgate. These publications were sold alongside chapbooks, broadsheets, ballads, last dying speeches and a miscellany of other gallows literature.

4.2.1 Session Papers of the Old Bailey and a comparison with The Ordinary’s Accounts

Old Bailey Trials, as with hangings which often followed, were well-attended public spectacles. Reports recounting the trials from each session on which the Old Bailey sat were formally named *The Proceedings on the King’s Commission of the Peace, Oyer and Terminer, and Gaol-Delivery of Newgate, held for the City of London and County of Middlesex, at Justice Hall, in the Old Bailey*, but often referred to as *Session Papers*, *The Proceedings*, *Old Bailey Session Papers* or simply *OBSP*. The *OBSP* contained a record of trials in the form of pamphlets. These pamphlets were available for sale to the public to help sate their voracious appetite for details of those condemned to hang. The *OBSP* were not intended to be produced in the name of

²²⁵ Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People 1770-1868.*, 83.

²²⁶ Whitworth Russell, May 23 1845, Manuscript letter to the Home Inspector of Prisons at the Home Office. This is also referred to in Gatrell, V.A.C, *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People 1770-1868*, 83.

entertainment. Indeed, in a case heard in 1727 when a witness with a stammer was reported verbatim, a notice was added at the end of the case that “The reasons for writing this trial directly as it was spoke [sic], is that others may provide terms of speech before they appear at a Court of Judicature, and not to please the vulgar part of the town with buffoonery, this not being a Paper in Entertainment”.²²⁷ Conversely, the *Ordinary's Accounts* discussed below allowed some licence for entertainment, although this appeared to be at the will of the individual Ordinary from time to time. Extracts from two contrasting Accounts will make the point. The first is a note from an Account dated August 1, 1746, in which Ordinary Samuel Rossell said:

It has been too often the custom of writers to foist on the publick [sic] stories which may appear diverting or surprising, in order to amuse or entertain their readers without any regard either to truth or justice which I here declare once and for all shall never be my method; and tho' some of the following relations may appear dry and insipid, yet they will appear true, and as they were actually taken from the mouths of the persons themselves, who (as dying men) could have no interest in declaring falsehoods; I shall give them as near as possible in the manner they were related, and in the order of time they were committed.²²⁸

The second extract is from a different Ordinary (Stephen Roe) who, in his *Account* dated May 1, 1758, acknowledged the opportunity the *Accounts* offered in respect of entertainment. Ordinary Roe noted:

As they must be of an odd complexion who go to a tragedy to laugh, so are they no less who take up this paper with view to meet [sic] an entertaining novel or merry tale. The calamities inflicted on our fellow creatures for their crimes by way of punishment to themselves, and examples to deter others from offending, seem to be a very untoward subject for mirth and laughter; nor should readers expect to find it here; and yet this subject should not be supposed void of rational entertainment or profitable improvement.²²⁹

²²⁷ "The Proceedings of the Old Bailey," *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, July 5 1727, https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t17270705-14&div=t17270705-14&terms=john_hutton#highlight.

²²⁸ Samuel Rossell, "Ordinary of Newgate's Account," *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, August 1, 1746, <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=OA17460801&div=OA17460801&terms=curiosity3highlight>.

²²⁹ Stephen Roe, "Ordinary of Newgate's Account," *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, May 1, 1758, <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?div=OA17580501>.

However, it appears the above dictum of Ordinary Roe was an understatement, as a further Account of Ordinary Joseph Moore written by Thomas Gurney relating to murderess Elizabeth Brownrigg (albeit nine years later in 1767) was written in a most sensational style.²³⁰

4.2.2 The Ordinary's Accounts

The Ordinary was the Chaplain of Newgate prison. One of the benefits of his position was the right to publish for his own financial benefit what were known as Accounts of the lives, confessions and dying speeches of those who had been condemned to death at the Old Bailey and sentenced to be hanged at Tyburn. Accounts were published in the form of a small pamphlet or broadsheet, and this cheap form of literature was in great demand at the hands of the “scaffold crowd”.

Accounts typically contained a brief account of the life of a condemned person, as well as their “Last Dying Speech” and behaviour on the scaffold. Michael Harris comments that “Public curiosity about the circumstances of a convict’s life and the events surrounding his final exit was apparently insatiable.”²³¹ Harris adds that “In the period between conviction and execution, the condemned prisoner became a very hot literary property indeed and, as those sentenced at the Old Bailey sessions were confined in Newgate, the Ordinary was in an excellent position to exploit a range on terminal contacts”.²³² For her part, Andrea McKenzie notes that the condemned were not merely celebrities, but also commodities where clergymen and enterprising pamphleteers vied for exclusive possession of the “life”, “confessions” and “last dying words” of the most famous criminals of the day.²³³ In conclusion, Harris writes that the *Ordinary's Account* in tandem with the *Proceedings* became a regular and important feature of the sub-literary scene from the late seventeenth century.²³⁴

²³⁰ Thomas Gurney, "Ordinary of Newgate's Account," *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, September 14, 1767, https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=OA17670914&div=OA17670914&terms=Elizabeth_Brownrigg#highlight.

²³¹ Robin Myers, and Michael Harris, eds. *Trials and Criminal Biographies*, Sale and Distribution of Books From 1700: Oxford Polytech Press, 1982, 15.

²³² Myers and Harris, eds. *Trials and Criminal Biographies*, 15-16.

²³³ Andrea McKenzie, "The Real Macheath: Social Satire, Appropriation, and Eighteenth-Century Criminal Biography," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 69, no. 4 (2006): 590, <https://doi.org/10.1525/hlq.2006.69.4.581>.

²³⁴ Myers and Harris, eds. *Trials and Criminal Biographies*, 16.

As well as *OBSP* and the *Ordinary's Accounts*, the appetite of the scaffold crowd was further fed by the sale of other material in the form of chapbooks, broadsheets or pamphlets. These publications often gave a brief biography of the life of the condemned. They were touted by hawkers selling the stories of doomed criminals and encouraged identification and interaction with such criminals.

Whilst *OBSP* and the *Ordinary's Accounts* had some standing, Frank Chandler questions the reliability of some of the material which circulated.²³⁵ In respect of the supply of criminal tracts generally, Chandler is critical of the veracity of what he refers to as “criminal pamphlets”, suggesting that “[O]f a multitude of such tracts that flourished during the 17th and 18th centuries, few fall within the pale of art”. They were, says Chandler,

[W]ritten by the unliterary who, thinking to take advantage of public attention bestowed for nine days of wonder upon some luckless thief or murderer, issued accounts of his life and latest exploit to be hawked at his execution or immediately thereafter. Corresponding to the criminal columns of the modern newspaper, and feeding the same tastes, these productions aimed and claimed to be veracious, but where fact failed, fancy stepped into the breach, and many a jest-book anecdote or pleasing invention of the authors own came to be fathered upon hanged reprobates.²³⁶

John Langbein notes chapbooks, in particular, took the form of “[S]ensational-mongering pamphlets written by non-lawyers, usually anonymously, for the sale to the general public, each pamphlet recounting the detail of one or more freshly committed or freshly prosecuted crimes”.²³⁷ Chapbooks and the other wealth of street literature exploited the notoriety of the condemned criminal for commercial gain, and the public’s eager fascination with and interest in the lives of the condemned provided a ready market. Those condemned to be hanged thus became commodities at the hands of those who produced street literature, and the diverse accounts of the lives of those condemned including their confessions and last dying words elevated some of

²³⁵ Frank Chandler, *The Literature of Roguery*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Boston and New York: The Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1907), 139.

²³⁶ Chandler, *The Literature of Roguery*, 1, 139.

²³⁷ John H. Langbein, “The Criminal Trial before the Lawyers,” *The University of Chicago Law Review* 45, no. 2 (1978): 267-8.

them to ephemeral celebrity, “their death” in the words of Redmond “A culmination of a life made famous by the pamphlet accounts hurriedly printed and sold, sometimes sold the very day of the person’s execution”²³⁸

4.2.3 The evolution of Street Literature

The popularity of both the Ordinary’s Accounts and the OBSP diminished under pressure from newspapers by the late 1770s when newspapers started to publish reasonably detailed accounts of sensational cases from the Old Bailey. In this connection, Devereux notes that newspapers had been growing at a phenomenal rate in the years before 1781, and that crime was one of the staples provided to its consumers.²³⁹ Moreover, Foucault argues that the eventual disappearance of the broadsheet was replaced by a whole new genre of literature in which crime was glorified, whilst newspapers took over the task of reporting everyday crime and punishment.²⁴⁰ *The Ordinary’s Accounts and OBSP* were similarly affected by commercial pressures as new markets from both the press and other sources developed for criminal biographies of notorious criminals. Andrea McKenzie writes that by the early eighteenth century, the public’s seemingly insatiable appetite for stories of sin and suffering and repentance and redemption on the one hand, and for picaresque accounts of criminals on the other, was fed not only by regular serial publications reporting on the trials of the Old Bailey, or the Last Dying Confessions of malefactors at Tyburn but by longer pamphlets and compilations explicitly devoted to criminals whose “lives” were being touted as particularly “remarkable” or “notorious”.²⁴¹

These compilations were many and varied, but leading examples (most of which boasted over-blown titles to add to the spice or sensationalism of the publication) include *A Select and Impartial Account of the lives, behaviour and dying words of the most remarkable Convicts, from the year 1700 down to the present time, 2nd ed.3 vols.*

²³⁸ Redmond, "Staging Executions: The Theater of Punishment in Early Modern England," 14.

²³⁹ S. P. R. Devereaux, "The fall of the sessions paper: The criminal trial and the popular press in late eighteenth-century London," *Criminal Justice History* 18 (2003): 66-67.

²⁴⁰ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 68.

²⁴¹ Andrea K. McKenzie, "Lives of the most notorious criminals: Popular Literature of crime in England, 1675-1775" (University of Toronto, 1999), 2, https://www.google.com/search?q=lives+of+the+most+notorious+criminals+McKenzie&rlz=1C1CHZL_enAU679AU679&oq=lives+of+the+m.

(*J. Appleby, for Charles Marsh, 1745*²⁴²; *Select Trials for murder, robberies rape, sodomy, coining, frauds and other offences at the Sessions-House in the Old Bailey – to which are added genuine accounts of the lives, behaviour, confessions and dying speeches of the most eminent convicts.* 2 vols. J. Wilford (1734-5)²⁴³ *The Tyburn Chronicle, or Villainy displayed in all its branches. Containing an authentic account of the lives, adventures, Tryal [sic], executions, and last dying speeches of the most notorious malefactors of all denominations, who have suffered for bigamy, forgeries, highway-robberies, house-breaking, murders, perjury, piracy, rapes, riots, sodomy, starving, treason, and other the most enormous crimes: The whole being the most faithful narrative ever published in England, Scotland and Ireland. From the year 1700 to the present time.* J. Cook, London, 1768;²⁴⁴ and *Celebrated Trials and remarkable cases of criminal jurisprudence, from the earliest records to the year 1825*²⁴⁵.

Yet a further example of criminal biographies is to be found in any number of Newgate Calendars first published in 1773, which gave repackaged and often sensational biographical accounts of notorious criminals. A solitary case from an edition of *The New Newgate Calendar* from 1886 will give a flavour of the sensational content of such biographies. The title of the particular publication is “*The Chronicles of crime; or, The New Newgate Calendar, being a series of Memoirs and Anecdotes of Notorious Characters who have Outraged the Laws of Great Britain from the earliest period to the present time*”.²⁴⁶ The solitary case is that of murderer William Burke introduced thus: “The unparalleled atrocities of which this diabolical murderer was guilty with his associates, can scarcely ever be obliterated from the recollection of man. Devoid of all sense of humanity – a butcher of the human race – he was guilty of almost innumerable murders, for which his only reward was the miserable amount to be paid him for the bodies of his victims in order that they might be submitted to the knife of the anatomist”.

²⁴² British Library Shelfmark: General Reference Collection DRT Digital Store RB.23.a.7875, UIN:BLL01018439621

²⁴³ British Library Shelfmark: 6495.aaa.14

²⁴⁴ British Library Shelfmark 6496.g.1

²⁴⁵ In six volumes. British Library Shelfmark W16/0331-0336 DSC

²⁴⁶ Camden Pelham, *The Chronicles of Crime, or The New Newgate Calendar*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (1886), 166. British Library Shelfmark 1560/672 and 1609/3709.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the fascination with and interest in crime through the lens of public hangings and the associated Street Literature. Public hangings were seen by the scaffold crowd largely as a form of theatrical entertainment, and the choice of public hangings to illuminate the fascination with and interest in crime is consistent with one of the main themes of this thesis, namely crime as entertainment. The spectacle of the public hanging is evidence of the public's fascination with and interest in crime which has continued unabated. This fascination and interest manifests itself in the celebrity age in the guise of the public's fascination with and interest in the criminal celebrity, just as the spice or sensationalism found in the historic Street Literature can be recognised in today's media in relation to the criminal celebrity and particularly in the tabloid press. There is a close nexus between this fascination and interest and with crime as entertainment, and it is crime as entertainment to which the next thesis chapter will now turn.

5

Crime as Entertainment

5.1 Crime as entertainment

An overarching theme of the thesis is to consider criminal celebrities and their rise in popularity through the lens of entertainment. But what is entertainment? John Hartley offers a general albeit somewhat unhelpful definition as “[A] regime of universally intelligible mainstream output from the leisure and content industries”.²⁴⁷ More helpfully, Hartley then adds that entertainment is based on the commercial imperatives of supply and demand of the consumer and that at bottom entertainment reflects what is wanted.²⁴⁸

A different perspective on the word entertainment is offered by Dyer. Dyer suggests entertainment comprises elements of both escapism and wish-fulfilment which he argues are the central thrust of utopianism. Dyer sees entertainment as offering “something better” to escape into which our daily lives do not offer. He then considers wish-fulfilment which he sees in the light of alternatives, hopes and wishes. Dyer refers to these alternatives, hopes and wishes as “the stuff of utopia”, by which he means that things could be better; that something other than what is, can be imagined and maybe realised. He refers to utopianism in an abstract sense, that is to say the feelings it embodies, and sees utopianism working at a level of sensibility which he refers to as an “affective code”.²⁴⁹

Reference by Hartley to “supply and demand” is relevant in identifying market forces for the supply and demand of entertainment, and by extension, celebrities in general. It is also relevant for the purposes of this thesis in identifying market forces which help explain the rise in popularity of criminal celebrities. Moreover, Dyer’s analysis of the word “entertainment” is relevant in identifying elements of both escapism and wish-fulfilment concerning those entering into what this study refers to as an *alternative life of escapism*.

As mentioned in the Introduction, Gabler suggests in respect of crime as entertainment, it is with criminality that one can best see just how the values of human entertainment usurp other, more traditional values. Gabler says that judged by

²⁴⁷ John Hartley, *Communication, Cultural and Media Studies: The Key Concepts*, 3rd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 83.

²⁴⁸ Hartley, *Communication, Cultural and Media Studies: The Key Concepts*, 83.

²⁴⁹ Richard Dyer, *Only entertainment*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 20.

traditional values, criminals are objects of reproach and scorn. But judged by the values of entertainment, which is how the media now judge everything, the perpetrator of a major or even a minor but dramatic crime, is as much a celebrity as any other human entertainer.²⁵⁰

Surette endorses Gabler's argument by saying that in general, the image of the criminal propagated by the news media is similar to that found in the entertainment media.²⁵¹ Evidence of this proposition can be found in an article in *The Times* from June 1962 (marking the early part of 1960's Britain - the initial focus period of this study) which reports on the contents of an Annual Report of H. M. Inspectors of Constabulary published the previous day. The Inspectors, according to *The Times*, said the portrayal of crime: "Plays a disproportionate part in the entertainment of the public and, in consequence, much objective anti-crime propaganda is dissipated by the glamour with which crime and criminals are exploited for the amusement of the public".²⁵² Indeed, the glamour with which crime and criminals are exploited for the amusement or entertainment of the public has long been thus, as an example from *Select Trials 1741-1764* shows.²⁵³ (*Select Trials* being one of several "Collections of Crimes" from the eighteenth century). In the preface of that particular collection, the editor of Volume 1 wrote "We have only to add, that the little histories will afford the curious peruser not only instruction, but an agreeable amusement. Every story opens a new scene of action, and a variety of incidents are continually arising to the eye and gradually moving to the final catastrophe; so this may be considered as a collection of dramatical pieces, some of which are of the mixed or tragi-comic kind, but, for the most part are entirely tragical".²⁵⁴

The argument of crime as a form of entertainment is further supported by Surette by reference to "infotainment". Infotainment is a portmanteau word defined by Surette as "The marketing of edited, highly formatted information about the world in entertainment media vehicles".²⁵⁵ Surette continues by saying that crime perfectly fits

²⁵⁰ Gabler, *Life the Movie: How Entertainment Conquered Reality*, 181.

²⁵¹ Surette, *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice*, 59.

²⁵² "More 'Amateurs' In Crime: Rise in Offences Continues," *The Times* (London), June 29, 1962, 7.

²⁵³ *Select Trials for Murder, Robbery, Burglary, Rapes, Sodomy, Coining, Forgery, Piracy and other Offences and Misdemeanours at the Sessions House in the Old Bailey*, vol. 1 (London, UK: J. Wilkie, 1741-1764).

²⁵⁴ *Select Trials 1741-1764*, 1.

²⁵⁵ Surette, *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice*, 19.

infotainment demands for content about real events that can be delivered in an entertaining fashion.²⁵⁶ Whilst infotainment is a relatively recent word, Surette notes that infotainment content based on crime and justice has existed for centuries. In this respect, he refers to crime pamphlets and gallows' sermons as two early examples. Moreover, he goes so far as to suggest that early street literature was the forerunner of today's crime and justice infotainment media.²⁵⁷

Surette continues discussing infotainment by posing the question "Why did the amount of infotainment content take off in the late twentieth century?"²⁵⁸ The basic answer, he argues, "[I]s that as the media, led first by television, became more visible, intrusive and technologically capable, the viewing audience simultaneously became more voyeuristic and entertainment conscious". He continues further by saying "The ability of satellites to instantaneously beam information around the world, allowed the public to watch riots, wars, and other events as they happened, heightening the dramatic entertainment value of what previously would have been reported as after-the-fact news stories, or not reported at all".²⁵⁹

Surette makes the point that whilst improved technology increased the potential amount of infotainment content, the popularity of infotainment is due to a different factor. He postulates that the popularity of infotainment programming is tied to what caused news and entertainment to blur. With expanded hours, more networks and new media competing for audience attention, he says that more content was needed, and the addition of entertainment elements to news content was embraced as a solution. Significantly, he adds that from the 1980s, modern crime-related infotainment programmes began to appear on television, and the line between crime-and-justice news and entertainment dissolved. Surette concludes by saying that today, a clear demarcation between news and entertainment no longer exists, and that media consumers are hard-pressed to differentiate between crime-and-justice news from crime-and justice entertainment.²⁶⁰ This inability to differentiate is also clouded by the way in which crime news is presented. In 1963, Frank, the then executive producer of

²⁵⁶ Surette, *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice*, 20.

²⁵⁷ Surette, *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice*, 20.

²⁵⁸ Surette, *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice*, 20.

²⁵⁹ Surette, *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice*, 20.

²⁶⁰ Surette, *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice*, 20.

American NBC's nightly programmes, sent a memorandum to his staff intended as a guiding principle to them when writing news stories. The memorandum reads "Every news story should without any sacrifice or probity or responsibility, display the attributes of fiction, of drama. It should have structure and conflict, problem and denouement, rising action and falling action, a beginning, a middle and an end. These are not only the essentials of drama; they are the essentials of narrative."²⁶¹ Whilst Frank did not specifically refer to crime news as such, it is argued that news in respect of crime and the way it is reported identifies with the spirit of his memorandum.

A collection of broadsides and newspaper cuttings containing accounts in prose and verse of murders and executions from as long ago as 1764 (1764 –1860) housed at The British Library offer an historical example of the entertaining and often sensational way in which murders and executions were reported in the style of what might now be regarded as infotainment, combining drama and narrative within the above brief of Frank. Newspaper headlines to catch the eye included:

"The Most Horrid Murder".

"Barbarous Murder".

"A true and particular account of a cruel and mysterious murder".

"An account of a shocking occurrence".

"The most dreadful murder".

"A faithful account of the atrocious murder" (of Mr John Richardson).²⁶²

From the same source as above, a single example of verse composed telling the story of murder, shows how the account of a crime was couched as an early form of infotainment, that is to say, verse which both informed and entertained. The example is in respect "A true and particular account of a crude and inhuman murder committed on the body of Sarah Burton by John Baker, her fellow-servant by whom she was pregnant".

²⁶¹ Edward J. Epstein, *News from Nowhere*, Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 4-5.

²⁶² "A collection of broadsides and newspaper cuttings containing accounts in prose and verse of murders and executions," (London, UK: British Library, 1794-1860), UIN:BLL01002587293.

The verse reads:

Within this dreary cell I lie
Lamenting my sad destiny,
And much I dread the dreadful day,
When I my guilty life must pay.
My fellow-servant, a blooming maid,
I slyly courted, and then betrayed,
By my false tongue, she was beguiled,
Until at length she prov'd with child,
I promised her I would her wed,
But all my love of her soon fled,
And for to hide my guilt and shame,
I murder'd her most sad to name,
Her corpse was found – and I was blam'd,
And fast in prison now am chain'd,
My guilty heart will quake with fear,
When at the bar I must appear.²⁶³

One final overarching reference to entertainment is worthy of note. In this regard, Gabler cites sociologist Park as saying (within the context of the reason we have newspapers, but the principle is extended for the purposes of this thesis to include all forms of media in general and crime news in particular) “The common man would rather be entertained than edified”.²⁶⁴ In the light of what Gabler, Surette and Park say, it is fitting to consider crime and the phenomenon of the criminal celebrity through the lens of entertainment.

5.2 The glorification or glamorisation of criminals

Akin to crime as entertainment is the glorification or glamorisation of criminals. This is nothing new; Logan wrote about it as long ago as 1931 in an article *Glorifying the Criminal*. Logan refers to Jesse James, Robin Hood and Billy the Kid as all being hero-worshipped glamorous criminals.²⁶⁵ Of interest within the context of discussing crime as entertainment and as already noted, Logan argues “[T]he supply of persons properly qualified for our veneration does not equal the demand”, adding that “As soon as a

²⁶³ "A collection of Broad-sides."

²⁶⁴ Gabler, *Life the Movie: How Entertainment Conquered Reality*, 59.

²⁶⁵ Logan, "Glorifying the Criminal," 43.

criminal is arrested, he is something less than a superman, and it becomes necessary to inflate him artificially to heroic stature".²⁶⁶

What is it about criminals which leads them to be glamorised? There are certainly no shortage of sources which discuss crime and glamour in the same breath. Within the context of the Krays as gangsters, a *Daily Mail* article in April 2000 by writer and criminologist Geoffrey Wansell headed "Why do we glamorise gangsters?" says that whilst gangsters may be heartless, evil villains, there also seems to be something glamorous, seductive, even sexy about them. The article comments that by the time the *Swinging Sixties* began, the Krays had become icons to fashionable London, with leading names such as Judy Garland, Joan Collins and Muhammad Ali finding their way to the Krays' table. The article continues by saying the rich and famous drank the twins' champagne and smiled for the cameras of the gossip columns of their day. Wansell adds that the glamour of the Kray brothers has never disappeared, and that they somehow appeal to something deep in our subconscious – something so deep that we seem to be able to divorce them from their crimes. He continues by saying part of us sees them as modern-day Robin Hoods, even though, in reality, they are (were) wicked, violent and amoral men. Within the context of seeing gangsters as mythic figures, Wansell concludes by saying this leads to a confusion of fiction with fact.²⁶⁷ Further, an article by Chris Jenks and Justin Lorentzen adds:

Just as the American gangsters of the 1920s and 1930s had provided a constant source of entertainment for the British cinema-going public, (and a set of role models for the Krays) the home-bred gangster was now becoming domesticated, at least in the popular imagination. Villains were assuming the status of pop stars and the hyperbole of their behaviour was similarly becoming a source of wonderment to people in general. Style and appearance were paramount, and the new glamour quite successfully masked the violence and extortion from which the phenomenon took birth.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁶ Logan, "Glorifying the Criminal," 43.

²⁶⁷ Geoffrey Wansell, "Why do we glamorise gangsters?," *Daily Mail*, April 6, 2000, 12, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5kVSV4>

²⁶⁸ Chris Jenks and Justin J. Lorentzen, "The Kray Fascination," *Theory, Culture & Society* 14, no. 3 (1997): 100, <https://doi.org/10.1177/026327697014003004>.

The case study of Ronnie and Reggie Kray will expand on these comments by Jenks and Lorentzen. An article by filmmaker and criminologist Roger Graef in the *Daily Mail* in May 2001 adds colour to the debate about why we glamorise certain criminals, and why such criminals have become icons of popular culture. The article headed in bold *Why do we glamorise gangsters?* (The very same headline as used by Wansell in his above *Daily Mail* article²⁶⁹) was written against the backdrop of Ronnie Biggs being treated to a hero's welcome on his return from Rio de Janeiro to Britain. The article says that "Everyone wants to be 'cool', and make no mistake, the way we deify the likes of Biggs, the way popular culture glamorises cruelty and violence, sends the signal that a certain kind of crime is indeed 'cool'". A final extract from Graef's article nicely sums up the debate as to why we glamorise criminals. In this connection, Graef says "Of course, bandits as folk-heroes have an ancient pedigree. From Robin Hood, Dick Turpin, Fagin and more cosmopolitan rogues such as Thomas Crown, we have always been attracted by the notion of charming people beating the system".²⁷⁰

5.3 Criminal celebrities from the past

Just as crime as entertainment and the glamorisation or glorification of criminals are nothing new, nor is the criminal celebrity. Whilst the focus of this thesis is to address criminal celebrities in 1960's Britain and their subsequent rise in popularity, it is an interesting exercise to turn back the clock of time and to identify criminal celebrities from the past. Robin Hood himself (or at least the myth of Robin Hood) perhaps gave rise to the first criminal celebrity, albeit he was more accurately classified as a social bandit of his time. Fast-forward to Britain in the 1880s and the name of Jack the Ripper was on everyone's lips. Fast-forward again to 1960's Britain, which proved to be a fertile period for criminal celebrities, not least international drugs' baron Howard Marks, Ronnie Biggs and the Kray twins. But in many ways, it is argued, it was the notorious thief and jail-breaker Jack Sheppard whose name stands out in history as the foremost criminal celebrity. It is further argued that Jack Sheppard offers a template on which the modern criminal celebrity is based, and to this end it is fitting that his

²⁶⁹ Wansell, "Why do we glamorise gangsters?," 12.

²⁷⁰ Roger Graef, "Why do we glamorise gangsters?," *Daily Mail*, May 8, 2001, 10, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5krjJX>

case is discussed, but with no intention of deflecting from or seeking to usurp the proposed case studies of Howard Marks, Ronnie Biggs and the Kray twins.

Jack Sheppard achieved his celebrity status not as a thief, but for his prison-breaking escapades which appeared to rival that of Houdini himself. Matthew Buckley writes of Sheppard's last prison escape, [F]rom the very depths of Newgate, was an astonishing feat of sustained ingenuity, instrumental skill and gymnastic capability". Buckley continues that Sheppard had:

[S]queezed his wrists from their irons, twisted and snapped the fetters from his legs, scraped loose the bricks covering his cell's barred flue, worked loose the iron bar blocking ascent, and climbed up the narrow chimney passage to the prison's 'Red Room', a cell long reserved for aristocratic prisoners and long empty. Once there, he broke – with the help of the heavy flue bar – the massive lock of its ironbound door, gaining entrance to the prison chapel just off the prison's rooftop court. After several more hours of gruelling effort, he broke through the seemingly impenetrable exterior door of the prison, climbed the courtyard's sheer wall to the highest leads of Newgate, and vaulted off over the rooftops of the City.²⁷¹

Jack Sheppard was hanged in 1724 at the young age of twenty-one, and yet in his short life, he became a household name. Jack Sheppard's influence spread far and wide, as did his life as a source of entertainment. An example of the extent to which the life of Jack Sheppard entertained is recorded in Volume 1 of *Select Trials* for the years 1720-1724. Writing in the first person, the author commenting on the life of Jack Sheppard said: "I don't remember any Felon in this Kingdom whose Adventures have made so much Noise as Sheppard's. He was for a considerable Time the common Subject of Conversation". The account of Sheppard's life continues by the author saying "Sheppard was even thought a proper Subject for the Stage. Mr Thurmond contrived a Pantomime Entertainment call'd *Harlequin Sheppard: A Night Scene in Grotesque Characters*... Then a Farce of three Acts was printed under the Title of *The Prison Breaker, or, the Adventures of John Sheppard*.... and acted at Bartholomew

²⁷¹ Matthew S. Buckley, "Sensations of Celebrity: Jack Sheppard and the Mass Audience," *Victorian Studies* 44, no. 3 (2002): 429-30, <https://doi.org/10.1353/vic.2002.0050>.

Fair, by the Name of 'The Quaker's Opera'. And what is yet more, Jack's Adventures have been spiritualized in the Pulpit".²⁷²

Jack Sheppard was not just a celebrated criminal; he was also considered a hero of his time. In this connection, the same account of the life of Jack Sheppard to be found in *Select Trials* as above, also sets out an imagined dialogue between Julius Caesar as an ancient hero and Jack Sheppard as a then-modern hero in the professed name of "Entertainment"²⁷³

Even more than one hundred years after his death, Jack Sheppard was the inspiration for Harrison Ainsworth's story *Jack Sheppard: A Romance*, serialised in weekly instalments between 1839 and 1840. Buckley notes that "From the very start of its serial publication in the summer of 1839, *Jack Sheppard* had enjoyed extraordinary, seemingly inexplicable popularity; by autumn, Ainsworth's tale of the famous criminal's life was outselling even Dicken's *Oliver Twist* (1837-38), marking a new height in England's growing appetite for crime stories",²⁷⁴ whilst Elizabeth Stearns notes that Sheppard's popularity before he was hanged was "echoed and amplified" upon publication of Ainsworth's novel more than a century after his death.²⁷⁵

Ainsworth's novel was a work of fiction, although the character of Jack Sheppard was based on the man himself and was ostensibly true to his actual life. The novel spawned numerous theatrical portrayals which, according to Stearns "[C]aused the most stir, because the theatricalizations were perceived as glamorising Sheppard, rendering his actions appealing to susceptible lower-class audiences".²⁷⁶ Further, and playing yet again on the class theme, Stearns says the ignorance of the lower-classes was such that their following the story or theatrical production concerning Jack Sheppard enabled a "paltry thief" to become "a great romantic hero".²⁷⁷

As well as inspiring Ainsworth's novel, Jack Sheppard was believed to have been the inspiration for the character MacHeath (Mack the Knife), the hero of John Gay's

²⁷² *Select Trials for Murders, Robberies, Rapes, Sodomy, Coining, Frauds and other Offences: At the Sessions House of the Old Bailey* vol. 1 (London, UK: J. Wilford, 1720-1724).

²⁷³ *Select Trials 1720-1724*, 1.

²⁷⁴ Buckley, "Sensations of Celebrity: Jack Sheppard and the Mass Audience," 426.

²⁷⁵ Elizabeth Stearns, "A 'Darling of the Mob': The Antidisciplinarity of the Jack Sheppard Texts," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 41, no. 3 (2013): 435, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150313000041>.

²⁷⁶ Stearns, "A 'Darling of the Mob': The Antidisciplinarity of the Jack Sheppard Texts," 438.

²⁷⁷ Stearns, "A 'Darling of the Mob': The Antidisciplinarity of the Jack Sheppard Texts," 442.

satirical musical play first performed in 1728, and four years after Sheppard's death in 1724. Furthermore, Jack Sheppard was an inspiration for Hogarth who is widely believed to have modelled his above-mentioned artwork *The Idle 'Prentice* on Jack Sheppard as showing the final reward of idleness.²⁷⁸

Of the diverse ways in which crime is portrayed in the name of entertainment, it is argued it is in the field of literature that crime as entertainment is most abundant. As a vehicle for trying to better understand the phenomenon of the criminal celebrity as a source of entertainment, and by way of contrast with the discussion on real-life criminal celebrity Jack Sheppard, this part of the chapter will call on an article by Eloise Moss in respect of fictional criminal celebrity Raffles, the creation of Ernest William Hornung (1886-1921).²⁷⁹ The purpose in doing so, from the perspective of crime as entertainment, will be to compare the real-life Jack Sheppard and the fictional life of Raffles. This will in turn focus in particular on the way in which the boundaries between fact and fiction have become blurred, in much the same way as already mentioned, that the boundaries between fact and fiction have become blurred in the name of infotainment.

Moss describes Raffles as an “[E]legant gentleman of leisure and cricketing legend by day and expert burglar by night”.²⁸⁰ This glamorous description of the character of Raffles by Moss is quite deliberate, as she then continues by asserting that stories glamorising criminals have a long literary tradition in Britain.²⁸¹ In relation to the character of Raffles, Moss states that as newspapers labelled real-life burglars “Raffles”, both criminologists and criminals around the globe appropriated this title to refashion burglars as glamorous celebrity personae through academic texts and autobiographies.²⁸² A story in *The Scotsman* from January 3, 1924 under the heading

²⁷⁸ William Hogarth. *The Idle 'Prentice Executed at Tyburn, 1747*. Plate 11 (of 12) of *Industry and Idleness* series. British Museum, London.

²⁷⁹ Eloise Moss, "How I Had Liked This Villain! How I Had Admired Him!": A. J. Raffles and the Burglar as British Icon, 1898-1939," *Journal of British Studies* 53, no. 1 (2014).

²⁸⁰ Moss, "How I Had Liked This Villain! How I Had Admired Him!": A. J. Raffles and the Burglar as British Icon, 1898-1939," 136.

²⁸¹ Moss, "How I Had Liked This Villain! How I Had Admired Him!": A. J. Raffles and the Burglar as British Icon, 1898-1939," 140.

²⁸² Moss, "How I Had Liked This Villain! How I Had Admired Him!": A. J. Raffles and the Burglar as British Icon, 1898-1939," 136.

Hotel Thief Sentenced, bears witness to the assertion by Moss in referring to “The extraordinary career of a ‘Modern Raffles’.”²⁸³

It is not difficult to see how the character of Raffles had and continues to have an alluring appeal. Moss cites author Hornung as identifying the philosophy of Raffles in the following words: “Why should I work when I could steal? Why settle down to some humdrum uncongenial billet when excitement, romance, danger and a decent living are all going begging together? Of course, it’s very wrong, but we can’t all be moralists, and the distribution of wealth is very wrong to begin with”.²⁸⁴

It is based on this seductive philosophy that, according to Moss, the potential arises for such a characterisation to transcend the boundaries of fiction. In so doing, according to Moss, it “[I]nfiltrate[s] readers’ perceptions of the reality of crime to an extent that would not only romanticise popular discourse of crime but also correspondingly denigrate the law.”²⁸⁵ This blurring of boundaries between fact and fiction (which is akin to infotainment as above blurring the boundaries between crime and justice as news and crime and justice as entertainment) it is argued, helps explain how criminal celebrities balance the paradoxical image of being both criminals and heroes. Penfold-Mounce adds that the public perception of criminal celebrities can be manipulated by the combination of fact and fiction, allowing resonance and subsequently celebrity status for the criminal.²⁸⁶ Penfold-Mounce then continues by saying: “The blurring of image is aided by shifting mass-media boundaries enabling the criminal celebrity the advantage of crossing fiction into fact by using sensational factual news coverage and also media products that are designed to entertain, thrill and titillate. Effectively, a criminal’s actions, despite often being for personal gain alone, can become an exciting adventure of an individual working against the system and winning, which appeals to the public’s resonance with elements of a good story”.²⁸⁷

²⁸³ "Raffles: Hotel Thief Sentenced," *The Scotsman*, January 3, 1924, 7, Proquest Historical Newspapers: The Scotsman.

²⁸⁴ Moss, "How I Had Liked This Villain! How I Had Admired Him!": A. J. Raffles and the Burglar as British Icon, 1898-1939," 146.

²⁸⁵ Moss, "How I Had Liked This Villain! How I Had Admired Him!": A. J. Raffles and the Burglar as British Icon, 1898-1939," 147.

²⁸⁶ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 107.

²⁸⁷ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 107.

It can therefore be seen how Raffles or a character of his ilk can capture the imagination of the public, and how that imagination might cross the boundary from fiction to fact in terms of the public recognising equivalent real-life characters as criminal celebrities. The consequence of this blurring, it is argued, is that those who follow criminal celebrities who do not draw the distinction between romance and reality, thus see criminal celebrities in the name of entertainment as no more than actors in a reality play. It can also be seen upon consideration of a character such as Raffles, that the criminal celebrity of real-life as a source of entertainment has, at least in part, been influenced by crime fiction. Indeed and to add a further dimension to this discussion. The Hatton Garden Heist which will be discussed in chapter 6 was, according to an article in *The Times*, itself inspired by the plot of the crime novel *The Black Echo* by American crime novelist Michael Connelly, where there were distinct parallels between the Hatton Garden Heist and the novel plot.²⁸⁸

Real-life criminal celebrity Jack Sheppard and fictional criminal celebrity Raffles have much in common. Both the real-life Jack Sheppard and Raffles spawned theatrical and film/television productions; both glamorised crime; both involved triumph over society and the law; both entwined the possibility of romance and excitement with crime; both celebrated criminal enterprise and both invited the follower (in respect of Jack Sheppard) or the reader (in respect of Raffles) to suspend their moral and legal scruples in rooting for the criminal. Last but not least, stories such as that of the real-life Jack Sheppard and the fictional Raffles illustrate how real-life characters can be the inspiration for fictional characters and vice-versa. Based on these considerations, this paper claims it is not difficult to see how the boundaries between fact and fiction can become blurred, and how a criminal celebrity might assume the romantic, dashing or other qualities of a fictional character in the eyes of the follower.

5.4 The impact of crime and criminals on popular culture

This chapter now casts the net somewhat wider to consider the impact on popular culture of criminals, and in particular criminal celebrities when viewed through the lens of crime as entertainment. As already noted, books of both fiction and non-fiction are written about crime and criminals. *Great British Fictional Villains* by Russell

²⁸⁸ Fiona and O'Neill Hamilton, Sean, "Hatton Garden heist inspired by plot of a novel.," *The Times Digital Archive*, April 14 2015, 5.

James offers a veritable cornucopia of fictional villains from all walks of life, from Shakespeare's heinous villain *Iago* to Charles Dickens' *Bill Sykes*, through to television villains of the modern-day. Many fictional criminals have been based on those from real-life, including *Catherine*, a short novel by William Makepeace Thackeray based on the real-life villain Catherine Hayes, and *Rookwood* based on real-life villain Dick Turpin.²⁸⁹ There is also a plethora of books in relation to criminals themselves, not least criminal biographies offered in the name of entertainment.

Plays are written about criminals, of which *Sweeney Todd* is an example. Musicals are made about them as with *Oliver!* Films, often inspired by books, are made about criminals of both fiction and non-fiction. Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock* is based on his fictional villain *Pinkie Brown* and Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* are well-known examples of the former, whilst the film *Buster* (1988) concerning the life of "Buster" Edwards as one of Great Train Robbers, and *The Krays* (1990) and *Legend* (2015) concerning the Kray twins are germane examples of the latter.

Songs are written and performed featuring notorious or celebrated criminals including those from 1960's Britain. The macabre song *Very Friendly* (1975) by the group Throbbing Gristle describes in detail the Moors murders by Ian Brady and Myra Hindley. Myra Hindley has also been celebrated in art by Marcus Harvey's controversial monochrome portrait shown as part of the Sensation exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1997. And yet further, Hindley has been immortalised in *The Devil's Wife*, a poem by one-time British Poet Laureate by Carol Ann Duffy.

Television documentaries have featured and continue to feature the lives of criminals, for example, the lives of serial murderers Fred and Rosemary West of the "House of Horrors" fame. And if this wasn't enough, in *Executioner's City* Brandon and Brooke note that "For those with a taste for the grisly and the macabre, the White Tower (of the Tower of London) contains a collection of executioner's and torturer's tools. An executioner's block can be seen and at least one headsman's axe. A gibbet is a prominent feature. Various torture instruments also catch the eye, including thumbscrews..."²⁹⁰ Indeed, artefacts and other items of memorabilia themselves form part of the rich canon of crime as entertainment for those who seek tangible souvenirs

²⁸⁹ Russell James, *Great British Fictional Villains* (Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Books Ltd, 2009), 39-40.

²⁹⁰ Brandon and Brooke, *London The Executioner's City* 32.

of criminal celebrities. Moreover, the collection of crime memorabilia enables followers of criminal celebrities to experience a material connection with both the criminal, and vicariously through it, the underlying crime. According to Lindsay Steenburg, this is an example of the intersection with the kinds of fan practices normally associated with more socially sanctioned forms of celebrity, for example, collecting autographs, and evidence that the criminal celebrity is not merely an adjunct to celebrity culture, but an integral part it.²⁹¹

5.5 Memorabilia

In *Natural Born Celebrities: Serial Killers in American Culture*, Schmid refers to a burgeoning trade in what he refers to as the *murderabilia industry*,²⁹² including such items as a lock of Charles Manson's hair,²⁹³ or a nail clipping from some other serial murderer.²⁹⁴ Schmid adds that the sale of *murderabilia* is just a small part of the huge serial killer industry that has become a defining feature of American popular culture since the 1970s.²⁹⁵ And so it is in Britain, but more in respect of what might be termed not so much a *murderabilia* industry as a criminal celebrity industry.

Certainly, memorabilia in relation to the Kray twins has always had a ready market. Three examples are given. The first is in respect of an auction by Dominic Winter held in April 2002. It is interesting to note the auction advertising "Important Historical Documents, Printed Ephemera and Celebrity Autographs including original papers of the Spanish Inquisition, a near-contemporary pedigree of George Washington from the reign of King Stephen to the 19th century, an [sic] important Kray twins archive, etc."²⁹⁶ It is not known whether it was by accident or design that reference to the Kray twins was juxtaposed with a reference to George Washington and King Stephen. However, whether intended or not, this is not dissimilar to Bailey's iconic images from 1965, where the Krays brothers were originally juxtaposed with

²⁹¹ Lindsay Steenburg, "Crime and Celebrity," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 13.
<http://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.013.26>.

²⁹² Schmid, *Natural Born Celebrities: Serial Killers in American Culture*, 1.

²⁹³ Schmid, *Natural Born Celebrities: Serial Killers in American Culture*, 1.

²⁹⁴ Schmid, *Natural Born Celebrities: Serial Killers in American Culture*, 3.

²⁹⁵ Schmid, *Natural Born Celebrities: Serial Killers in American Culture*, 1.

²⁹⁶ "Dominic Winter Book Auctions," *The Times Literary Supplement*, April 5, 2002, 34,
<http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5n6TyX>

royalty²⁹⁷. The second example of Kray memorabilia – again with reference to an auction, is that as recently as 2014, and nineteen years after his death, the residual contents of the estate of Ronnie Kray were auctioned for sale with such items as a facsimile birth certificate (Lot 1), a gold-plated watch (Lot 29), an Italian tie (Lot 30), a gold bracelet (Lot 40), a colour print “Down but not out” signed by both twins (Lot 50), Reginald’s (not Ronnie) Kray’s green towel as supplied by H. M. Prison Service and bearing the inscription “058111 Kray” (Lot 106) and Ronnie Kray’s “mutt gun” (Lot 147). The final example comprises an array of Kray memorabilia on public display at Littledean Jail, as will be detailed in their case study. A sign at the entrance to the museum boasts “Dark tourism is here in the UK... A brief taste of the Kray twins, The Firm, other gangster memorabilia, *murderabilia*, *maimerabilia* and beyond. It’s all here at the Crime through time collection at Littledean Jail”.²⁹⁸

Memorabilia in respect of the proposed case study Ronnie Biggs is also manifold. By way of example, no fewer than 428 lots were offered for sale at an auction held by Humbert and Ellis Auctioneers on June 16, 2015.²⁹⁹ The lots included five of the business cards signed by Biggs which he had printed for use during his time in Rio de Janeiro (Lot 82), various items connected with the robbery itself – including mounted on a wooden plaque the vehicle number plate BPA 260 from the lorry used in the getaway signed by both Bruce Reynolds and Ronnie Biggs, (Lot 400), a Metropolitan Police “Wanted” Poster for all the Great Train Robbers – signed by Bruce Reynolds and Ronnie Biggs, (Lot 32) and even a brick signed by Reynolds and Biggs from the now-demolished hideout at Leatherslade Farm (Lot 191).

Such is the social and cultural impact of certain criminal celebrities, it is important to note this is about much more than just memorabilia and entertainment; it is about owning a piece of British social history, as an article in the *Buckingham and Winslow Advertiser* dated June 14, 2015 testifies. In this connection, the newspaper quotes Jonathan Humbert, Managing Director of J. P. Humbert Auctioneers Ltd saying of the above impending auction of Great Train Robbery

²⁹⁷ David Bailey, David Bailey’s Box of Pin-Ups, 1965. Photographic portraits, 32x37cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

²⁹⁸ "Littledean Jail Unlocked: Crime through time," accessed October 4, 2019, <https://www.littledeanjail.com/> (Advertisement).

²⁹⁹ Humbert & Ellis Auctioneers, *The Great Train Robbery and Ronnie Biggs* (Northamptonshire, United Kingdom: Humbert & Ellis Auctioneers, 2015), Auction catalogue.

memorabilia, that “Since the catalogue was published last week, the enquiries have been coming thick and fast, with interest from America, Canada, Japan, Australia, Brazil and elsewhere. Such is the enduring appeal of this most audacious crime, even 52 years on. People have an unrepeatable opportunity to bid on and buy some important pieces of British social history...”³⁰⁰

The list concerning crime as entertainment is endless, including in the case of criminal celebrities, the opportunity for aficionados of the Krays twins to walk in their footsteps by taking part in an East End of London “*The Kray Twins Gangster Oxford Tour*” which includes a stop at *The Blind Beggar Pub*, the scene of the murder of George Cornell by Ronnie Kray on March 9, 1966.³⁰¹ A similar tour is available for those who want to walk in the footsteps of Jack the Ripper³⁰² Meanwhile, in relation to Ronnie Biggs, an article in *The Weekend Review* from January 27-28, 1996 tells readers they may travel to Rio de Janeiro to have dinner with him for £68 per head. The particular article has a “Checklist” printed in the bottom right-hand corner saying “Lunch, dinner and entertainment can be booked direct [sic] with Ronald Biggs” – followed by his Brazilian P.O Box address and a fax number. A copy of the article signed by Biggs comprised Lot 150 of the auction held by Humbert & Ellis on June 16, 2015.³⁰³ Last but by no means least as worthy of mention in respect of crime as entertainment, are waxworks of notorious or celebrated criminals produced by Madame Tussauds and historically displayed in the Chamber of Horrors in London. In *The Hanging Tree*, Gatrell notes that after her move from Paris in 1802, Madame Tussaud’s exhibition grew famously, inspired by her professional familiarity with guillotined heads.³⁰⁴ Gatrell notes that it was in the Chamber of Horrors that collective memory was enshrined in the form of the plaster-cast of waxwork effigies of the great murderers including Courvoisier, Burke and Hare – the casts taken from life in the cell

³⁰⁰ "Auction puts 'diverse range' of Great Train Robbery memorabilia under the hammer," *Buckingham and Winslow Advertiser*, June 14, 2015, <https://www.buckinghamtoday.co.uk/news/auction-puts-diverse-range-of-great-train-robbery-memorabilia-under-the-hammer-1-6796710>.

³⁰¹ Tours, East End. "The Krays Walking Tour in London." East End Tours, <https://www.viator.com/en-GB/tours/London/The-Krays-Walking-Tour-in-London/d737-31977P2>.

³⁰² "The Jack the Ripper Tour London," Discovery Tours & Events, accessed October 4, 2019, <https://www.jack-the-ripper-tour.com/> (Advertisement).

³⁰³ Humbert & Ellis Auctioneers, *The Great Train Robbery and Ronnie Biggs*.

³⁰⁴ Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People 1770-1868.*, 114.

of the condemned, or from death after execution.³⁰⁵ Images of the Kray twins were displayed in the Chamber of Horrors as will be discussed more fully in their case study.

It is one thing to consider the myriad ways in which crime can be seen as a form of entertainment; it is another to ask *why* crime is seen as a form of entertainment. It is this question to which this chapter now turns.

5.6 Why is crime seen as a form of entertainment?

As noted above, Dyer identifies entertainment as a form of escapism from reality.³⁰⁶ This notion of escapism was articulated by French Renaissance writer Francois Rabelais within the context of what he refers to as a ‘second life’ as mentioned above, and is more fully discussed by Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World*.³⁰⁷

Whilst Bakhtin does not refer to Rabelais discussing a first life as such, a second life is, by its very definition, a life which is led, and which is different from a person’s ‘first life’. Parallels can be drawn between a first life and a Rabelaisian second life by drawing on the work (in the context of the sociology of risk-taking) of Stephen Lyng.³⁰⁸ The parallels are that instead of a first life, Lyng envisages a “disenchanted world”, and instead of a Rabelaisian second life, he envisages an “other world”. Lyng sees entering this “other world” as “[A] chance to experience an alternative reality circumscribed by sensual dynamics that are radically different from those of mundane social reality”.³⁰⁹

The notion of a second life, Rabelais argues, has its roots in medieval Europe and stems from carnival pageants. The essence of the notion is that in partaking in carnival activities, the common man, against a backdrop of ever-increasing rules and regulations of everyday life can temporarily escape such officialdom by entering into a second life. In doing so, he “[E]nters the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality and abundance”³¹⁰. Bakhtin describes a second life within the context of carnival celebrations by saying:

³⁰⁵ Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People 1770-1868.*, 114-15.

³⁰⁶ Dyer, *Only entertainment*, 20.

³⁰⁷ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his world*, 6,8,9,11 and 33.

³⁰⁸ Stephen Lyng, *Edgework: the sociology of risk taking* (Routledge, 2005), 29.

³⁰⁹ Lyng, *Edgework: the sociology of risk taking*, 29.

³¹⁰ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his world*, 9.

As opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed.... [A]ll were considered equal during carnival. Here, in the town square, a special form of free and familiar contact reigned among people who were usually divided by the barriers of caste, property, profession and age....This temporary suspension, both ideal and real, of hierarchical rank created during carnival time a special type of communication impossible in everyday life.”³¹¹

The notion of a Rabelaisian second life can also be traced back to the *Feast of Fools* from the fifteenth century. This was an annual feast historically celebrated by the clergy in Europe, in which power was conferred on subordinates among the clergy for that one day a year. As Burke notes, some French clerics defended the Feast of Fools in 1444 in these terms: “We do things in jest and not in earnest as the ancient custom is, so that once a year the foolishness innate in us can come out and evaporate. Don’t wine skins and barrels burst very often if the air-hole is not opened from time to time? We too are old barrels...”³¹²

Escapism (or diversion) may assume any number of forms. Escapism through literature is one example, or through watching television or going to the theatre or following celebrities in general as further examples. This study offers a different perspective of a Rabelaisian second life of escapism, namely by arguing that those who follow criminal celebrities enter into an alternative life of escapism from the quotidian toil of everyday life; of escape into a world of freedom and entertainment. The opportunity to enter into an alternative life of escapism is also open to followers of celebrities in general. However, the focus of this study is on those following criminal celebrities who enter into such a life. This life offers the chance of forgetting the everyday world. It is a temporary outlet, in much the same way as were medieval carnival pageants and the Feast of Fools, with those partaking cutting free from existing social norms, ties, duties and obligations of everyday life.

³¹¹ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his world*, 10.

³¹² Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Scolar Press, England, 1996), 202.

It is argued that those who enter into an alternative life of escapism vicariously stand in the shoes of the criminal celebrities they follow, providing a forum where followers can act out their dreams and fantasies; where they can imagine what it might be like to be a criminal; where they can try and get as close as possible to the scene of the crime; where they can vicariously experience the emotions of crime second-hand. What does crime smell like? What does it taste like? What must the adrenalin-rush of a real criminal feel like? Do followers of criminal celebrities wish they were like the criminal celebrities they follow? However, an alternative life of escapism is of course no more than illusory from which followers can resile at any time.

In his 1931 article, Logan offered an interesting perspective on evil-doers by saying “This fascination which evil-doers exercise upon us may be an emotional safety valve. We sin vicariously when we read of their exploits in the newspapers; and when they have been tried and condemned, both our civilised sense of justice and our barbaric protest against the restraint of government are satisfied. They are our scapegoats, and through them, we are purified”³¹³. Logan, therefore, recognised the emotional safety valve in the same way as above that the French clerics recognised wine skins and barrels may burst if the air-holes are not opened from time to time.³¹⁴ Logan also recognised the possibility of a vicarious following of criminals.

If the Rabelaisian theory of escapism is accepted, it follows that within the context of an argument of crime as entertainment, there is a demand for crime as entertainment from those entering into an alternative life of escapism who wish to escape the travails of everyday life. There is also a supply of that demand in the shape of criminals who are elevated to the status of celebrities (or even heroes), through the platform of celebrity culture itself, or the media or by or through their own agency.

The notion of followers of criminal celebrities entering into an alternative life of escapism and entertainment is not only relevant to this study as a means of enjoying crime as entertainment, but is also relevant within the context of resonant engagement as between the follower and the criminal celebrity. This second dimension will be more fully discussed in chapter 9.

³¹³ Logan, "Glorifying the Criminal," 43.

³¹⁴ Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 202.

5.7 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to expand on crime as entertainment as one of the central themes of this study. The chapter identified the manifold ways in which crime is presented in the form of entertainment, not least the ways in which news of crime and criminals is delivered as infotainment, that is to say as an admixture of both information and entertainment. Alongside news in respect of crime and criminals being delivered as infotainment, the chapter also considered how the boundaries of fact and fiction can become blurred in the name of crime as entertainment. In this connection and following a discussion of the life of Jack Sheppard as an early example of a criminal celebrity, the chapter compared the real-life of Jack Sheppard and the fictional life of Raffles.

The life of Jack Sheppard was portrayed in popular culture through the lens of crime as entertainment, and this chapter maintained that such a portrayal offered a template for how criminal celebrities in the celebrity age are likewise portrayed in popular culture. The chapter continued by identifying the impact on popular culture of criminals and criminal celebrities in particular, by reference to a never-ending list of forms of entertainment including films, television, books and even poems. The chapter concluded by asking why crime is seen as a form of entertainment. Drawing on Dyer's identification of entertainment as a form of escapism and wish-fulfilment, the chapter answered this question by arguing that those who follow criminal celebrities enter into an alternative life of escapism. This is an alternative life which offers not only catharsis and escapism from everyday life, but also offers an outlet through which crime can be enjoyed as entertainment.

6

The Metamorphosis of Social Bandit to Criminal Celebrity

This chapter will argue that the criminal celebrity in the celebrity age can, in varying degrees, be recognised as the evolutionary and cultural successor of Hobsbawm's noble robber classification of the social bandit of old. The basis of the argument as will be shown, is that the social bandit has by a gradual process of evolutionary change and development, metamorphosed into the criminal celebrity in the public imagination, even if not in fact.

6.1 Hobsbawm's concept of the social bandit

Hobsbawm's concept of the social bandit is based on Marxist class analysis and has its roots in peasantry. The concept arises out of power in society and the place of minority and resistant groups within this structure. Specifically, Hobsbawm saw social banditry as a protest by peasants (the proletariat) against exploitations of landowners and the ruling classes generally (the bourgeoisie), and that social bandits were driven to crime and became outlaws through what they perceived as injustice.

The term "social bandit" was first coined by Hobsbawm in *Primitive Rebels*.³¹⁵ In his seminal work *Bandits*,³¹⁶ Hobsbawm adopts a taxonomy in relation to social bandits as to "noble robbers"³¹⁷, "avengers" (vigilantes)³¹⁸ and primitive resistance fighters known as "haiduks"³¹⁹. The argument that the criminal celebrity in the celebrity age can be recognised as the evolutionary and cultural successor of the social bandit of old, is solely concerned with the noble robber nomenclature of the social bandit.

Hobsbawm³²⁰ acknowledges noble robbers as the most famous and universally popular type of bandit and the most common hero of ballad and song. Robin Hood is the archetypal noble robber, and all down the ages has been perceived as symbolically representing the altruistic values of the social bandit. These values are of someone who robs the rich to give to the poor; someone who protects the weak from the strong; the powerless from the powerful; the have-nots from the haves and the *Us* from *Them*.

³¹⁵ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels* (Great Britain: Abacus, 2017), 6.

³¹⁶ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*.

³¹⁷ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 46.

³¹⁸ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 63.

³¹⁹ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 77.

³²⁰ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 46.

The starting point for building a case that the criminal celebrity can be recognised as the evolutionary and cultural successor of the social bandit of old, is to consider what Hobsbawm meant by the term “social bandit”. At its most basic, a social bandit refers to someone who has committed a social crime. A social crime is a criminal activity which is classified as “social” in that it expresses “A conscious, almost political challenge to the prevailing social and political order and its values...(which)...occurs when there is a conflict of laws, e.g., between an official and an unofficial system, or when acts of law-breaking have a distinct element of social protest in them, or when they are closely linked with the development of social and political unrest”³²¹ In essence, Hobsbawm gave the label of social bandit to protestors who were criminals in the eyes of the law, but heroes in the eyes of their own people.

Hobsbawm distinguishes between the social bandit and the ordinary bandit by saying that “It would be unthinkable for a social bandit to snatch the peasants’ (though not the lord’s) harvest in his own territory, or perhaps even elsewhere. Those who do, therefore lack the peculiar relationship which makes banditry social”.³²² It follows from this that the concept of the social bandit gives rise to something of a dichotomy between the *good criminal* and the *bad criminal*, and it is this notion of the good criminal as one of the central themes of this study to which this chapter will return.

6.2 Criticisms of Hobsbawm’s concept of the social bandit

Anton Blok says the social bandit as conceptualised and described by Hobsbawm is “a construct, stereotype or figment of human imagination”.³²³ But, whilst recognising that such constructs may not correspond to actual conditions, Blok accepts social bandits are psychologically real, as they represent fundamental aspirations of people – that is to say peasants within Hobsbawm’s description of the phenomenon of the social bandit.³²⁴

In a not dissimilar vein, Nicholas Curott and Alexander Fink refer to the “Mythical Bandit Theory” suggested by Richard Slatta and others to explain the phenomenon of

³²¹ E. J. Hobsbawm, “Distinctions between socio-political and other forms of crime,” *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History* 25 (1972), 5.

³²² Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 20.

³²³ Anton Blok, “The Peasant and the Brigand: Social Banditry Reconsidered,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 14, no. 4 (1972): 500, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500006824>.

³²⁴ Blok, “The Peasant and the Brigand: Social Banditry Reconsidered,” 500.

the social bandit.³²⁵ Lying at the core of this theory is the idea that the social bandit is merely a product of the fancy and imagination of bards and storytellers. Slatta comments that “Most societies harbor [sic] appealing popular legends based on the lives of famous bandits. The power and allure of these images come in part from a seeming need for even highly urbanised societies to retreat to a sometimes heroic past. Myths allow modern man to savour nostalgically the lost virtue, the “freedom, heroism, and the dream of justice” that the social bandit gallantly fought to reassert”³²⁶ Moreover, according to the mythical bandit theory, Slatta argues the characters described in folksongs and legends represent an imagined ideal bandit “since the power and influence of myth and image far exceeds that of social reality”.³²⁷

For his part, Graham Seal, in referring to the social bandit as an “outlaw hero”, does not criticise Hobsbawm for limiting his concept of the social bandit to the oppression of peasants³²⁸ but instead offers a modified understanding. Seal’s position is that he sees Hobsbawm’s concept in the wider context of social banditry arising out of political and economic factors and social tensions within a community.³²⁹ In this connection, Seal’s less restrictive view of social banditry has enabled him to apply his modified understanding of Hobsbawm’s model to real-life criminals from the past such as Jesse James and Ned Kelly who were not natives of peasantry. Moreover, Seal has applied the concept of social banditry in modern times to the likes of Osama bin Laden.³³⁰ With reference to Osama bin Laden, Seal refers to a street theatre production in Calcutta in which bin Laden is portrayed as a Muslim Robin Hood, befitting the belief of his supporters that he is protecting his own Muslim people from oppressive influences of the West.³³¹

³²⁵ Nicholas A. Curott and Alexander Fink, "Bandit Heroes: Social, Mythical, or Rational?," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 71, no. 2 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1536-7150.2012.00837.x>.

³²⁶ Richard W. Slatta, "Introduction to Banditry in Latin America," in *Bandidos: The Varieties of Latin American Banditry*, ed. Richard W. Slatta (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1987), 3.

³²⁷ Slatta, "Introduction to Banditry in Latin America," 8.

³²⁸ Graham Seal, *The Outlaw Legend: Cultural Tradition in Britain, America and Australia* (Cambridge University Press, 1996). In the postscript to *Bandits* (Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 167) Hobsbawm addresses criticisms of his original thesis.

³²⁹ Seal, *The Outlaw Legend: Cultural Tradition in Britain, America and Australia*, 5.

³³⁰ Seal, *Outlaw heroes in Myth and History*, 151-2.

³³¹ Frontline/World, "Interview with Arun Rath: Confronting New Myths," ed. Douglas Foster (2003). <https://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/india205/rath.html>.

6.3 Robin Hood

Even if the above arguments of Blok and Slatta are accepted, and that the concept of the social bandit is little more than an abstract ideal, and even if Robin Hood himself is a myth as Hobsbawm himself suggests is the case,³³² this does not mean Hobsbawm's concept has no practical application. On the contrary, even if Hobsbawm's social bandit may not have existed in reality, his concept gave birth to the notion of the social bandit. And it is this social bandit who is symbolically embodied in the persona of Robin Hood as representing the ideals of Hobsbawm's social bandit. Furthermore, it is argued that the symbol of Robin Hood as representing the ideals of Hobsbawm's social bandit, is sufficient to not only validate the notion of the *good criminal* but to sustain the image of the social bandit in the modern world. This is evidenced by the symbol and image of Robin Hood as fixed in the imagination of the public being attributed to criminal celebrities in the celebrity age.

Notwithstanding the altruistic image of Robin Hood, Hobsbawm admits that in practice few social bandits lived up to the role of popular hero symbolised by Robin Hood, and in real life, most Robin Hoods were far from noble.³³³ Blok comments within the context of an argument that Hobsbawm places undue emphasis on class conflict as between peasants and their overlords, that rather than being champions of the poor, social bandits "[Q]uite often terrorized those from whose very ranks they managed to rise, and thus helped to suppress them".³³⁴ Slatta adds within the context of discussing Latin American banditry, but still with reference to Robin Hood, that "[B]andits did not engage in Robin Hood-style redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor. If they robbed the rich more often, it was because the rich had more to take. But bandits also despoiled and pillaged the poor, seemingly with few qualms. Bandits were economically self-interested and forward-looking, concerned with getting ahead than with looking backwards toward the re-establishment of fading peasant values".³³⁵

³³²Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 46.

³³³ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 46.

³³⁴ Blok, "The Peasant and the Brigand: Social Banditry Reconsidered," 296.

³³⁵ Slatta, "Conclusion: Banditry in Latin America," 316.

In spite of Hobsbawm admitting that in practice few social bandits lived up to the role of the popular hero symbolised by Robin Hood³³⁶, he contends that “[S]uch is the need for heroes and champions, that if there are no real ones, unsuitable candidates are pressed into service”.³³⁷ Such is Hobsbawm’s imperative that he argues “Robin Hood cannot die”.³³⁸ And Paul Angiolillo in a similar vein adds that if this type of champion did not exist in reality, he would have to be invented.³³⁹

Hobsbawm’s above comments concerning the need for heroes and champions is made against the backdrop of him saying (with examples) that genuine Robin Hoods have been known, but that he laments their passing. Hobsbawm saying that in the absence of real heroes or champions, “unsuitable candidates” are pressed into service, strikes at the very heart of the argument that the criminal celebrity can be recognised as the evolutionary and cultural successor of the social bandit of old. It does so, as criminal celebrities – criminals for all that, may, from a moral standpoint if nothing else, be regarded by some as “unsuitable candidates”, but they fill the void left behind by the true heroes of yesterday in the shape of a new genre of hero of today. Furthermore, “unsuitable candidates” in the words of Hobsbawm they might well be, but there can be no escaping the cultural phenomenon of criminal celebrities and their social and cultural acceptance, as the proposed case studies of Howard Marks, Ronnie Biggs and the Kray twins will clearly show.

6.4 Image

Within the context of a discussion on stars, Paul McDonald describes stars as mediated identities and as textual constructions, as audiences do not get the real person, but only a collection of images, words and sounds which are taken to stand for that person.³⁴⁰ “The Star”, McDonald therefore argues, becomes a collection of meanings. And so it is with Robin Hood or the symbol he represents.

In relation to social bandits, Angiolillo adds a useful dimension to the construction of image, not directly in respect of image, but in respect of the traits which go to make up the image. He argues that the typical bandit hero (to use his own terminology),

³³⁶ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 46.

³³⁷ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 47.

³³⁸ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 61.

³³⁹ Paul Angiolillo, *A Criminal as Hero* (The Regents Press of Kansas, 1979), 15.

³⁴⁰ Paul McDonald, *The Star System: Hollywood's Production of Popular Identities*. (Wallflower Publishing Limited, London., 2000), 6.

possesses a remarkably balanced dual capacity for cruel, savage violence on the one hand, and for gentle, even sentimental compassion on the other.³⁴¹ Angiolillo adds that these characteristics are more complementary than contradictory, and that the positive characteristics reflect the more human side of the social bandit's character. He further adds that it is these positive characteristics which permit a closer identification with him by the public.³⁴² It is this mixture of traits, Angiolillo argues, which resolves itself into a personality that reveals the attributes of a morally approved citizen.³⁴³ It is argued that this morally approved citizen achieved not only social acceptance in 1960's Britain, but with it the status of criminal celebrity as standing in the shoes of the social bandit of old.

6.5 Changing boundaries of social banditry

Before commenting on the changing boundaries of social banditry itself, it is pertinent to note that Hobsbawm accepts a certain *fluidity* within his model of the social bandit. In this respect, Hobsbawm acknowledges that one sort of social bandit, that is to say the noble robber, can easily turn into another. Hobsbawm gives as an example the noble robber who turns into a bandolero (viz., a highwayman or a robber).³⁴⁴ In stating that the criminal celebrity can be recognised as the evolutionary and cultural successor of the social bandit of old, it is argued that this same fluidity applies to the criminal celebrity. The criminal celebrity, therefore, needs to be seen not necessarily as a direct descendant of Hobsbawm's noble robber, but as lying somewhere between the common criminal and the noble robber.

There are two components to the concept of social banditry, namely social bandits themselves, and the social crime. However, as there is no fixed definition for either of these components, social banditry must necessarily be seen as an amorphous concept. Moreover, it is argued that the concept is elastic, and can be and is applied to ever-changing structural conditions or circumstances, be they social, cultural or political. It is also argued that it is in the practical manifestations of this elasticity that the evolutionary process of social bandit to criminal celebrity can be identified.

³⁴¹ Angiolillo, *A Criminal as Hero*, 14.

³⁴² Angiolillo, *A Criminal as Hero*, 14.

³⁴³ Angiolillo, *A Criminal as Hero*, 15.

³⁴⁴ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 18.

The suggested elasticity stretches the boundaries in two fundamental ways, namely as to both the identity or perceived identity of the social bandit, and the identity or perceived identity of what constitutes a social crime. On this latter point, Sharpe highlights the dilemma in the study of social banditry of determining exactly where social crime ends and normal crime begins.³⁴⁵ Sharpe then adds that some might argue the distinction is an impossible one to make, and that on this argument, *any* crime could be portrayed as social.³⁴⁶ Sharpe further adds to the dilemma by suggesting that “[T]he analysis of crime in any reasonably developed society, might lead the Marxist or radical scholar to conclude that *all crime* might be interpreted either as the product of a system based on inequalities of wealth and power, or as a revolt against that system”.³⁴⁷ John Lea widens the argument yet further by claiming that shoplifting is a major example of a newer form of social crime, based simply on the widespread tolerance of shoplifting in poor communities as a necessity of survival.³⁴⁸ If shoplifting is indeed to be recognised as a new form of social crime, this opens the floodgates in the name of the injustice of social inequality, so that the boundaries of what is and is not regarded or perceived as a social crime becomes dangerously porous.

6.6 The modern social bandit – two examples discussed

Without any intention of detracting from or in any way seeking to usurp the three main case studies in respect of Howard Marks, Ronnie Biggs and the Kray twins, this chapter firstly turns to the Israelian case of audacious thief Ilan Cooperman-Segal discussed by Gabriel Cavaglioni³⁴⁹ and written as recently as 2007, before secondly discussing the 2015 British case commonly dubbed the *Hatton Garden Heist*. Both of these cases, bear many of the hallmarks of the Great Train Robbery in England in 1963, and each offers a striking example demonstrating changes both in the identification of the public’s perception of a modern-day social bandit, and the nature of a crime now perceived as a “social crime”. And it is this modern-day social bandit to whom this chapter contends the name “criminal celebrity” is now ascribed.

³⁴⁵ James A. Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England 1550-1750* (New York: Longman, 1984), 140.

³⁴⁶ Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England 1550-1750*, 140.

³⁴⁷ Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England 1550-1750*, 121.

³⁴⁸ John Lea, "Social Crime Revisited," *Theoretical Criminology* 3, no. 3 (1999): 313, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362480699003003003>.

³⁴⁹ Gabriel Cavaglioni, "The Societal Construction of a Criminal as Cultural Hero: The Case of "The Brinks Truck Theft": Research Article," *Folklore* 118, no. 3 (2007), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00155870701621749>.

6.6.1. The case of Ilan Cooperman-Segal

No apology is made for the length at which Cavaglione's article will now be discussed, as the case is fundamental in the argument that the criminal celebrity can be recognised in the public imagination as the evolutionary and cultural successor to the social bandit of old. The article is instructive in identifying internet (and therefore unmediated) audience reaction in relation to Ilan Cooperman-Segal. Cooperman-Segal was lionised by the public following the audacious theft as an "insider", of an armoured truck containing large sums of what might be perceived or understood as money belonging to capitalists and thus (from a Marxian perspective) to exploiters of the common man. As will be seen, the case arguably contains all the component parts of what Sharpe identifies as the basic ingredients of social banditry, namely: "An element of social protest; strong communal support, and divergent definitions between the interpretations placed on an activity by those participating in it and that of the law and its enforcers"³⁵⁰.

Analysis of the reactions by the audience to the breaking news of Cooperman's crime revealed in the words of Cavaglione "encouragement, love and glorification that far surpassed mere interest and involvement on the part of the public"³⁵¹. These sentiments, it is argued, show that sympathy or more precisely empathy or resonance with criminal celebrities is both deep-rooted and resolute. The following verbatim responses to Cooperman-Segal's brazen crime show the depth and breadth of feelings of the audience. The examples show the types or categories of responses and the responses themselves.

Glorification of the criminal:

"Robin Hood"³⁵².

"Hero thief"³⁵³.

³⁵⁰ Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England 1550-1750*, 140.

³⁵¹ Cavaglione, "The Societal Construction of a Criminal as Cultural Hero: The Case of "The Brinks Truck Theft": Research Article," 248.

³⁵² Cavaglione, "The Societal Construction of a Criminal as Cultural Hero: The Case of "The Brinks Truck Theft": Research Article," 249.

³⁵³ Cavaglione, "The Societal Construction of a Criminal as Cultural Hero: The Case of "The Brinks Truck Theft": Research Article," 249.

“Cooperman the Superman”.³⁵⁴

“A star is born”.³⁵⁵

Encouragement of the crime:

“We all salute him”.³⁵⁶

“Showtime! Showtime!”³⁵⁷

Identification with Cooperman-Segal:

“He stole my childhood dream (and made it come true).”³⁵⁸.

Anger, desire for revenge against the government, law enforcement system and capitalists:

“One who steals from thieves is exempt from blame”.³⁵⁹

“We’re robbed of millions every day by the State”.³⁶⁰

“What? Are only banks allowed to steal?”³⁶¹

Cavaglione says the effect of Cooperman-Segal’s actions was to reverse the conventional hierarchical structure of society, in that based on the facts of the particular case, the (Israeli) government, the criminal justice system, an iconic corporation (Brinks) and the banks – representing the power wielded by the King (the State), became objects of ridicule.³⁶²

³⁵⁴ Cavaglione, "The Societal Construction of a Criminal as Cultural Hero: The Case of "The Brinks Truck Theft": Research Article," 249.

³⁵⁵ Cavaglione, "The Societal Construction of a Criminal as Cultural Hero: The Case of "The Brinks Truck Theft": Research Article," 249.

³⁵⁶ Cavaglione, "The Societal Construction of a Criminal as Cultural Hero: The Case of "The Brinks Truck Theft": Research Article," 249.

³⁵⁷ Cavaglione, "The Societal Construction of a Criminal as Cultural Hero: The Case of "The Brinks Truck Theft": Research Article," 249.

³⁵⁸ Cavaglione, "The Societal Construction of a Criminal as Cultural Hero: The Case of "The Brinks Truck Theft": Research Article," 250.

³⁵⁹ Cavaglione, "The Societal Construction of a Criminal as Cultural Hero: The Case of "The Brinks Truck Theft": Research Article," 250.

³⁶⁰ Cavaglione, "The Societal Construction of a Criminal as Cultural Hero: The Case of "The Brinks Truck Theft": Research Article," 250.

³⁶¹ Cavaglione, "The Societal Construction of a Criminal as Cultural Hero: The Case of "The Brinks Truck Theft": Research Article," 250.

³⁶² Cavaglione, "The Societal Construction of a Criminal as Cultural Hero: The Case of "The Brinks Truck Theft": Research Article," 256.

At first sight, this case might be seen as drawing a longbow for the public to seemingly justify Cooperman-Segal's crime in the name of protest against a perceived oppressor (that is to say a Brinks armoured truck as representing money and by association, representing the capitalist). As mentioned above, this case includes the basic elements of social banditry, namely of social protest, strong communal support, and divergent definitions between the interpretations placed on an activity by those participating in it and that of the law and its enforcers. However, these elements apart, and as a measure of how far the concept of social banditry has evolved over time, the facts of the Cooperman-Segal case *prima facie* show no evidence of altruistic intent on the part of the protagonist. Moreover, they show only a weak political intent (if any) – save that Cooperman-Segal may have been perceived as a revolutionary in the sense of flouting authority and the law. At face value, Cavaglioni's protagonist Cooperman-Segal was no more than an out-and-out thief. However, the appeal of Cooperman-Segal's audacious crime, and perception of the public that he was a social criminal no more than committing a social crime, were such as to elevate him to the status of criminal celebrity.

6.6.2. The case of the Hatton Garden Heist

As with the above Cooperman-Segal case, The Hatton Garden Heist has in many ways been seen as a social bandit crime in the mould of the Great Train Robbery, not least for its audacity and the sheer amount of money stolen from the rich. Moreover, and as will be seen, the case is also instrumental as an illustration of crime as entertainment, and in this case even of amusement, in the way the case was portrayed as much as a caper as a serious crime.

The heist took place in April 2015 in Hatton Garden which is London's diamond district. The novelty of the crime caught the public imagination. The novelty was not only because of the audacity of the crime and the amount stolen in both cash and jewellery, but because the gang largely comprised lifelong criminals of pensionable age who wanted one 'last hurrah'. The media had a field day. In fact a number of field days. An article in *The Times* carried the headline "With a combined age of 490, the eight jewel heist suspects shuffled into court". The article then commenced by saying "They shuffled into the courtroom looking more like a casting call for *Last of the Summer Wine* than a gang alleged to have been involved in one of

the most audacious raids in decades. Two of the Hatton Garden heist suspects struggled to hear the clerk, and their alleged accomplices were clad in cardigans, and were greying or balding – or both”.³⁶³

A further article by Mark Seal in *Vanity Fair* bears the title *The Over the Hill Mob* which is a parody of the 1951 film titled *The Lavender Hill Mob* about the theft of gold bullion from a foundry. The preamble to the article says that “Mark Seal spins the tale” before he catalogues the gang’s much publicised medical ailments, including one with prostate cancer, one with a heart condition, one with two new hips and knees as well as Crohn’s disease, and one with diabetes who had to take a supply of insulin with him to the burglary. As if to emphasise the caper and the light entertainment value of the crime, Seal refers in his article to Kenny Collins, one of the accused in police custody, as not asking for bail but instead preferring a cup of tea.³⁶⁴ Meanwhile, an article in *The Economist* headed *Lives of Crime: Rough diamonds* refers to the nickname of the *Diamond Wheezers* given to the gang by *The Sun* newspaper.³⁶⁵ Furthermore, an article in the *Independent* bearing the headline “Hatton Garden heist: Why we are so fascinated by crime capers” adds “And there’s little doubt that the Hatton Garden Heist falls within the category of a ‘good tale’ and that the crime was “considered by many as an ‘acceptable’ crime for celebration” which was “[P]erceived as a victimless crime – or a Robin Hood-style criminal enterprise that strikes against the rich.”³⁶⁶

The Hatton Garden Heist was indeed every inch a Robin Hood-esque story both outwardly and inwardly. Outwardly the criminals according to Mark Seal had the support of the public, and inwardly the criminals themselves according to Seal’s above article “[F]elt they were stealing from the rich”. The heist was also every inch a “ripping yarn” in the words of Penfold-Mounce³⁶⁷ For his part Thomas Ohlgren adds the appeal of the outlaw tale (to the extent the Hatton Garden Heist was indeed seen as a social bandit crime as suggested by Penfold-Mounce) is that of a good story

³⁶³ Fiona Hamilton and Faisal Hanif, "With a combined age of 490, the eight jewel heist suspects shuffled into court," *The Times Digital Archive*, May 22 2015.

³⁶⁴ Mark Seal, "The over the hill mob," *Vanity Fair*, March 2016.

³⁶⁵ Newsroom, "Lives of crime: Rough diamonds," *The Economist*, May 4, 2019.

³⁶⁶ Ruth Penfold-Mounce, "Hatton Garden heist: Why we are so fascinated by crime capers," *The Independent*, January 17 2016.

³⁶⁷ Penfold-Mounce, "Hatton Garden heist: Why we are so fascinated by crime capers."

“[W]ith sturdy and honest heroes, vile villains, adventurous chases, daring deed, bold disguises and tricks and lots of narrative suspense”,³⁶⁸ and which Penfold-Mounce considers are crucial to achieving a successful crime caper which will be embraced by the public.³⁶⁹ Such was the extent to which the Hatton Garden Heist caught the public imagination, that the crime was the inspiration for three films: *Hatton Garden: The Heist* in 2016, *The Hatton Garden Job* in 2017 and *King of Thieves* in 2018, thus assuring the Hatton Garden Heist criminals a place in popular culture.

In summary, Cavaglioni’s case study of Ilan Cooperman-Segal and the Hatton Garden Heist each serve to show that the noble robber of old and the image of Robin Hood are still very much in evidence in the persona of the criminal celebrity of today. Furthermore, the cases also serve to show that the perpetrator of any novel or audacious crime which captures the imagination of the public is capable of being imbued with the credentials of Robin Hood, and thus qualifying the criminal for the romantic status of criminal celebrity.

6.7 The evolution of the social bandit to that of criminal celebrity: Further arguments to make the case

Moving on from Cooperman-Segal and the Hatton Garden Heist, there are further contentions which support the argument that the criminal celebrity can be recognised as the evolutionary and cultural successor of the social bandit of old. Seal refers to a “cultural script” which identifies the social bandit in stereotype.³⁷⁰ This script identifies in the eyes of the public, the idea of the social bandit as a good criminal, that is to say one who is criminalised in the eyes of the law, but is seen by his own people not as a criminal, but as an avenger of social injustice. Seal neatly summarises this ambivalence, by suggesting that “The image of outlaw heroes contains both positive and negative elements, these oppositions being held within an overall cultural discourse in which folklore presents the outlaw as a hero, the media represent him as a flawed but romantic figure and the forces of power and the law categorise him as a criminal”³⁷¹. Seal sees social bandits as characters in the cultural script that they and

³⁶⁸ Thomas H. Ohlgren, ed., *Medieval Outlaws: Ten Tales in Modern English* (United Kingdom: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1998), xxix.

³⁶⁹ Penfold-Mounce, "Hatton Garden heist: Why we are so fascinated by crime capers."

³⁷⁰ Graham Seal, "The Robin Hood Principle: Folklore, History, and the Social Bandit," *Journal of Folklore Research* 46, no. 1 (2009): 69, <https://doi.org/10.2979/JFR.2009.46.1.67>.

³⁷¹ Seal, *Outlaw heroes in Myth and History*, 12.

others have perceived and appropriated to their own ends.³⁷² He also argues that whilst the cultural script may change, the underlying narrative remains essentially the same, in that social bandits are perceived as either heroes or villains – or possibly an amalgam of both.³⁷³ Gillian Spraggs makes much the same argument, by suggesting the popular highwaymen heroes of the eighteenth century and earlier were manifestations of a tradition that, under pressures of social change, had passed through many centuries of slow mutation. This process of mutation, Spraggs suggests, was continually undergoing adaptation, losing elements, transforming elements, and sometimes gaining new ones.³⁷⁴

Spraggs, as with Seal, therefore sees the social bandit as an actor within an ever-changing cultural script. And yet further, Angiolillo seeks to understand social banditry as “The process of evolution from fear and condemnation, to nostalgic esteem and admiration”.³⁷⁵ However, there is a missing link in the process of mutation from social bandit to criminal celebrity if the bridge between the two is to be successfully crossed. And that link is the need to identify how the criminal celebrity (a criminal for all that) manages to inherit the mantle of being a good criminal. The starting point as already mentioned, is to say that the myth of Robin Hood gave rise to the notion of the good criminal. It is argued that this notion later matured in practical terms in identifying highwaymen the likes of Dick Turpin as heroes. And going full circle with the earlier thinking of Hobsbawm that there appears to be an inherent social and cultural need for heroes,³⁷⁶ the missing ingredient of favourable publicity afforded by the media machine completes the recipe. The criminal celebrity is thus represented not as criminal per se, but as someone who, by dint of media portrayals, is represented in the symbolic image of Robin Hood as a good criminal. The good criminal label, therefore, imbues criminal celebrities with an air of respectability which fosters their acceptance in society.

From the notion of the good criminal, it is argued that over time and by virtue of an ever-changing cultural script, the social bandit has been invested with an heroic image. In echoing the above words of Hobsbawm, that “[S]uch is the need

³⁷² Seal, *Outlaw heroes in Myth and History*, 150.

³⁷³ Seal, *Outlaw heroes in Myth and History*, 150.

³⁷⁴ Gillian Spraggs, *Outlaws and Highwaymen: The Cult of the Robber in England from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century* (Pimlico., 2001), 280.

³⁷⁵ Angiolillo, *A Criminal as Hero*, 2.

³⁷⁶ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 47.

for heroes and champions that if there are no real ones, unsuitable candidates are pressed into service”,³⁷⁷ it can be seen that in tandem with the rise of celebrity culture in general, criminal celebrities standing in the shoes of the social bandit of old, offer a cogent explanation of the phenomenon of the criminal celebrity or criminal hero in the celebrity age.

6.8 The cultural script applied to the evolutionary process of social bandit to criminal celebrity

The circumstances which gave rise to the phenomenon of social bandits no longer exist, as the structural conditions necessary for their emergence (namely that of the oppression of peasants) are now no more than historic. In tracing the evolution of the social bandit to that of the criminal celebrity of today, it is, therefore, necessary to move forward in time. In doing so, and as part of the unfolding evolutionary process, it is necessary to add further to the notion of the good criminal and the heroic attributes which the good criminal engenders, by recognising the social bandit in his modern guise. And that guise, it is argued, is that of the criminal celebrity of today with no political strings attached. Gone, therefore, are the political imperatives of the social bandit, rebellion against which was their very *raison d'être*. And gone is their altruistic intent. What remains of the legacy of the social bandit it is argued, is little more than the myth of Robin Hood, and more importantly the symbol of Robin Hood as representing the ideals of Hobsbawm's model of the social bandit. And it is this legacy with which the public identify in venerating the criminal celebrity. However, a caveat needs to be entered, and that is to recognise the flexibility of the mythic structure. Whilst the myth and symbol of Robin Hood provide the template for the criminal celebrity of today, the myth needs to be updated as part of the ever-changing cultural script. Within the context of discussing the heroic outlaw, Kooistra says it is important to recognise that the heroic criminal outlaw of the West is a mythical creature, and that myths are by nature ambiguous and open-ended.³⁷⁸ In this connection, Kooistra goes on to quote Claude Levi-Strauss as saying that myths possess an interminable diversity of sequences and themes, so that they may have continued relevance in changing social

³⁷⁷ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 47.

³⁷⁸ Paul Kooistra, *Criminals as Heroes: Structure, Power and Identity* (OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1989), 141.

climates and for diverse audiences.³⁷⁹ And so it is that the myth of Robin Hood needs to be updated as part of the ever-changing cultural script to accommodate the phenomenon of the criminal celebrity in the celebrity age.

Just as Seal's application of the concept of the social bandit has been applied to wider past and present examples of social bandits than Hobsbawm envisaged in his own concept, this chapter in arguing that the criminal celebrity can be recognised in the celebrity age as the evolutionary and cultural successor of the social bandit of old offers yet a further variation of Hobsbawm's model of the social bandit. This further variation, which co-exists alongside Hobsbawm's original concept and Seal's variant model, is that changing times and changing attitudes (that is to say the ever-changing cultural script), coupled with changing boundaries of the characteristics and identity of both social criminals and their crimes, has given rise to a new stereotype of the social bandit found in the criminal celebrity of today.

The final word in respect of the argument that the criminal celebrity can be recognised as the evolutionary and cultural successor of the social bandit of old goes to Kooistra. Kooistra adds considerable weight to the argument in commenting (as previously touched upon earlier in this study) that:

Over time, new meanings and values are given to the heroic criminal, which transcend the social context that initially provided meaning for his criminality. In order to keep the legend alive, its content has to be constantly re-shaped and expanded, so that it continues to have relevance for a changing and varied audience. The heroic criminal is, after all, an image constructed by playwrights and poets, journalists and songwriters, historians and Hollywood. But these architects are only building upon an image that took life from long-forgotten social conditions and political issues.³⁸⁰

The argument made in this chapter offers an explanation for the existence of the criminal celebrity or criminal hero in the celebrity age. It does not explain why one particular criminal is chosen for the role from the wide pool of criminals which

³⁷⁹Claude Levi-Strauss, "Overture to le Cru et le cuit." In Jacques Ehrmann (ed.), *Structuralism*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 38-39, quoted in Kooistra, *Criminals as Heroes Structure, Power and Identity*, 141.

³⁸⁰ Kooistra, "Criminals As Heroes: Linking Symbol to Structure," 227.

undoubtedly exists. The disparate case studies concerning the Kray twins, Ronnie Biggs and Howard Marks will seek to address and tease out these criteria.

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter constructed an argument that the criminal celebrity in the celebrity age can be recognised in the public imagination even if not in fact as the evolutionary and cultural successor of the noble robber classification of Hobsbawm's social bandit of old. The foundation for the argument lies in the myth of Robin Hood and the notion of the good criminal. Building on this foundation, the chapter maintained that the concept of Hobsbawm's social bandit is elastic, and this elasticity has stretched the boundaries as to the identity or perceived identity of the social bandit as well as the identity or perceived identity of what constitutes a social crime. The above studies of Ilan Cooperman-Segal and the Hatton Garden Heist brought both these points into relief in a contemporary setting. The studies show how the social bandit of old is recognised as the embodiment of the criminal celebrity in the celebrity age, which supports Seal's notion of an ever-changing cultural script to accommodate changing times and attitudes.

7

Heroes

Traditional heroes are willing to sacrifice their own needs on behalf of others, and in respect of whom qualities such as “bravery”, “valour” or “fortitude” might readily spring to mind. However, the heroes discussed in this thesis, that is to say, criminal heroes, are far from traditional heroes. They are heroes nonetheless. They are a type of anti-hero, in that whilst they may be the main protagonist, they lack conventional heroic characteristics. Anti-heroes, according to Vogler are not the opposite of traditional heroes; they are more specialised kinds of heroes.³⁸¹ It is argued that the criminal hero is rather like Hobsbawm’s social bandit who is seen as a criminal in the eyes of the law, but a hero in the eyes of society with whom the audience is in sympathy.³⁸² This thesis sees the criminal hero as a special type of hero or even anti-hero. This hero is an offshoot of the traditional hero, and for the purposes of this study is a criminal celebrity who has been elevated to heroic status.

The chapter will focus on the keywords “Villains to Heroes” as set out in the title of this thesis. In doing so, it will seek to identify the historical, social and cultural environments within which the metamorphosis from villain to hero has taken place.

There is a fine line between hero and villain.³⁸³ Scott Allison and George Goethals bring this fine line into relief by giving an example of Osama bin Laden being seen as a hero by some and a villain by others.³⁸⁴ Given this fine line, it is perhaps more accurate to see “villains to heroes” not in the light of any metamorphosis from one to the other, but in the light of how a particular villain *or* hero might be perceived in general. Indeed, in this respect, Allison and Goethals acknowledge that heroism exists in the eyes of the beholder.³⁸⁵ The perception of a hero has changed and continues to change over time against an ever-changing social and cultural backdrop. In other words, the idea of the hero has fluctuated and evolved over the course of history to suit the ethos of the times. It is this ever-changing landscape to which this discussion will first turn, before tracing the evolution of the traditional hero to that of criminal hero.

³⁸¹ Vogler, *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structures for Writers*, 34.

³⁸² Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 20.

³⁸³ Scott T. Allison and George R. Goethals, *Heroes: What They Do & Why We Need Them* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 18.

³⁸⁴ Allison and Goethals, *Heroes: What They Do & Why We Need Them*, 18.

³⁸⁵ Allison and Goethals, *Heroes: What They Do & Why We Need Them*, 18.

7.1 The hero is ever-changing

In relation to the traditional hero, Thomas Carlyle says “It is a thing for ever-changing this of hero-worship; different in each age”.³⁸⁶ Such reference is certainly apposite within the context of considering criminal heroes in the celebrity age. Carlyle’s observation is endorsed by Sidney Hook who acknowledges the needs of the period in which the hero appears.³⁸⁷ Hook adds that the hero must fit in at a certain stage in historical development³⁸⁸, and that if we want to grasp the source and reason for the greatness of a hero his biography and purely personal traits are relatively unimportant; it is to the society and culture of his times that we must turn.³⁸⁹ For his part, Marshall William Fishwick notes that “[C]hanges in media, lifestyle, priorities and ideologies will be reflected in our heroes”,³⁹⁰ later adding that heroes are fluid and not static.³⁹¹ Yet further, a comment by the editor of “Noy Mir” magazine to a *New York Times* reporter adds weight to the argument that heroes are ever-changing, in saying “There is no demand for great people. I can’t say why, but this fact is simply obvious to me. Famous, notable, popular – yes. But not great, in the fullest sense of the word”.³⁹²

What this fluidity amounts to in looking at celebrity culture in general and criminal celebrities or criminal heroes in particular, is that they have replaced the traditional hero. They are compensatory heroes, with celebrities in general and criminal heroes each being a new genre of hero within Richard Crepeau’s constituency argument as discussed below.³⁹³

7.1.1 How is a hero perceived?

The perception of a hero has changed and continues to change over time against an ever-changing social and cultural backdrop. However, this does not address how a hero

³⁸⁶ Thomas Carlyle, *Of Heroes and Hero-Worship* (Oxford University Press, 1841), 43.

³⁸⁷ Sidney Hook, *The hero in history: A Study in Limitation and Possibility* (Beacon Press., 1943), 59.

³⁸⁸ Hook, *The hero in history: A Study in Limitation and Possibility*, 65.

³⁸⁹ Hook, *The hero in history: A Study in Limitation and Possibility*, 66.

³⁹⁰ Ray B. Browne, Michael T. Marsden, and Marshall William Fishwick, eds, *Heroes of popular culture* (Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1972), 4.

³⁹¹ Browne, Marsden, and Fishwick, *Heroes of popular culture*, 6.

³⁹² Robert S. Fogarty, "Celebrities: The Famous and the Infamous," (Yellow Springs: Antioch Review, Inc, 2008). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25475637>

³⁹³ Richard C. Crepeau, "Sport, Heroes and Myth," *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 5, no. 1 (1981): 29, <https://doi.org/10.1177/019372358100500103>.

is perceived at a practical level or, specifically for the purposes of this chapter, how a criminal celebrity or criminal hero is so perceived.

Allison and Goethals acknowledge that what makes heroes and villains, and what makes us perceive people as heroes or villains is “enormously complex”.³⁹⁴ They offer a guided tour of the psychology of heroism, in which they shed light not only on what heroism and villainy mean to people but why they are important in our lives. Allison and Goethals assert that as human beings, we have mental models or images of heroes and villains – that is to say “schemas” or “archetypes”. Allison and Goethals develop this idea by telling the story of where our images of heroes and villains come from, how they develop, and how they are shaped by our perceptions of people we perceive as heroes or villains.³⁹⁵ Specifically in relation to how we make heroes out of criminals, Kooistra offers an holistic approach involving psychological, cultural and sociological explanations.³⁹⁶ For his part, Klapp takes a lighter approach. In terms of identifying (and thus perceiving) the criminal hero, Klapp simply refers to “Mr X” as “that special case where sin assumes its most appealing form”.³⁹⁷ He adds a practical dimension to how we perceive heroes, by the use of the word “colour”.³⁹⁸ “The quality of colour” he argues, “seems to be in the actions or traits which excite popular interest and imagination, giving rise to stories which recount or interpret these features”.³⁹⁹ The term “colour”, Klapp argues, “may be applied to public figures who tend to stand out from rivals by virtue of things they do, or of striking personal traits”.⁴⁰⁰ He continues by saying “colour has three main functions: (a) to excite attention, interest, imagination and interpretation; (b) to set a person apart, rendering him unique or peculiar; and (c) to make him unforgettable.”⁴⁰¹ Klapp sees public figures (that is to say criminal heroes for the purposes of this chapter) exploiting colour through actions or roles, and through personal traits.⁴⁰² This thesis

³⁹⁴ Allison and Goethals, *Heroes: What They Do & Why We Need Them*, p18.

³⁹⁵ Allison and Goethals, *Heroes: What They Do & Why We Need Them*, 59.

³⁹⁶ Kooistra, *Criminals as Heroes Structure, Power and Identity*, 18-30.

³⁹⁷ Klapp, *Heroes, Villains & Fools*, 147.

³⁹⁸ Klapp, "The Creation of Popular Heroes," 137.

³⁹⁹ Klapp, "The Creation of Popular Heroes," 137.

⁴⁰⁰ Klapp, "The Creation of Popular Heroes," 137.

⁴⁰¹ Klapp, "The Creation of Popular Heroes," 137.

⁴⁰² Klapp, "The Creation of Popular Heroes," 137.

will return to the quality of colour in chapter 9 when discussing resonance and the audience, and also when discussing the proposed case studies.

7.1.2 The democratisation of heroism

Turner coined the phrase *demotic turn* within the context of his argument that celebrity has become democratised.⁴⁰³ It is similarly argued that the hero has likewise become democratised. This democratisation is in the sense that the changing nature of heroism has opened up the qualifying criteria to a much wider category of potential candidates. This wider category now includes criminals upon whom celebrity status has already been conferred, but where their celebrity has risen to a yet higher plane of adulation as befits heroic status. This study maintains that each of the case-study subjects attained heroic status in their different ways. Quantitative evidence of this wider category of who is seen as a hero is offered by reference to magazine research undertaken by Leo Lowenthal as will now be discussed. On a point of note, Lowenthal refers to *idols* and *heroes* synonymously.

Lowenthal refers to *idols of production* as being heroes stemming from the productive life – from industry, business and natural sciences.⁴⁰⁴ He then refers to *idols of consumption* as being heroes almost exclusively from within the field of entertainment and sport.⁴⁰⁵ It is significant to note idols of consumptions as emanating from entertainment, as this identifies with the overarching theme of this study of criminal celebrities or criminal heroes being consumed and enjoyed as crime as entertainment.

As the basis for his research, Lowenthal undertook a comparative analysis in relation to a number of biographies published in magazines between the years 1901 and 1941. Sample years from each publication were broken down covering 1901-1914, 1922-1930, 1930-1934 and 1940-41. The survey sought to show the professional distribution of heroes between those years, and biographies were classified within those years as between political life, business and professional and entertainment.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰³ Turner, *Understanding celebrity*, 91-92.

⁴⁰⁴ Lowenthal, Leo. *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*. Pacific Books, 1968, 112.

⁴⁰⁵ Lowenthal, *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*, 115.

⁴⁰⁶ Lowenthal, *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*, 111.

Comparing data from earlier years with that of later years, Lowenthal found an emerging trend which, over the period of his study, identified a progressive fall in the number of idols (heroes) of production, and a corresponding rise in idols (heroes) of consumption. Lowenthal specifically comments on his findings in respect of such idols of consumption by noting almost every one of them was directly or indirectly related to the sphere of leisure time, and not to vocations which serve society's basic needs.⁴⁰⁷

Notwithstanding the age of Lowenthal's data, this study posits that the noteworthy change in composition from idols (heroes) of consumption marked the dawning of an era of new heroes. An example taken from *The Week* magazine from August 2013 brings the distinction between idols (heroes) of production and idols (heroes) of consumption into stark relief. Jolyon Connell the author of the article refers to Flight Lieutenant Tony Snell who died on August 4, 2013 aged 91 and tells the story of Snell's wartime heroics. Connells relates:

On 10th July 1943, Flight Lieutenant Tony Snell was shot down over Sicily. Attempting to avoid capture, he was challenged by a German patrol and ordered to put his hands up. Without warning, his captors rolled a hand grenade towards him, but he managed to jump clear and run off. He hid in a scrub, realised he was in the middle of a minefield, and blundered out of it onto an airfield where he was recaptured. The Germans decided to execute him as a spy and ordered him to kneel. Knowing he was about to be shot, he leapt and ran off as they fired. He was badly wounded, and his right shoulder smashed, but he managed to escape. Once again, his attempt to make the Allied lines failed. He was captured for a third time, but on this occasion, and threatened with execution, successfully proved his identity. After he had spent two months in a hospital in Tuscany, it was decided he should be taken to Germany by train. Snell had other plans. He jumped from the train as it slowed at a junction, headed south, and after a series of narrow escapes, joined forces with Italian partisans, eventually making it across the mountains into Switzerland. It is an extraordinary story. Reading it, one can't help but be conscious that this is the end of a remarkable generation. We will still go on reading obituaries, of course, but they will be of people who made money, or films or Ashes Hundreds. Stories of unsung heroism like Tony Snell's will all but disappear.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁷ Lowenthal, *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*, 115.

⁴⁰⁸ Jolyon Connell, *The Week*, November 2, 2013, 7.

And so it is that the hero in the celebrity age is more likely to be an idol (hero) not of production (within the above meaning as described by Lowenthal) but of consumption, and which, as will be seen, includes the criminal hero.

7.2 The evolution of the hero from a traditional hero to a criminal hero

At this juncture, this study will attempt to identify the evolution of the hero on the journey from that of a traditional hero to criminal hero. In doing so, this chapter will discuss heroes under three separate headings, although there will be some overlap between them. The three headings are firstly the traditional hero, secondly the celebrity hero and thirdly the criminal celebrity as a hero.

7.2.1 The traditional hero

It will be useful to first set the stage in respect of the traditional hero. The purpose of this is to try and understand the historical, social and cultural point or points at which the values typically attributed to a traditional hero are applied to a criminal to give the criminal celebrity or hero status. Such an exercise will help identify the metamorphosis from villain to hero.

There are disparate views on traditional heroes and how they are perceived. At one end of the spectrum, Allison and Goethals say that: “Heroes move us, not just emotionally, but also behaviourally. They set a high bar for us and then dare us all to join them. Heroes take us places that give us rich rewards. They lift our dreams and aspirations. We crave heroes and identify with them. We want to be with heroes, we want to be like them, and we want to bask in their success”. The text goes on to say “We love to associate with successful, heroic people because they make us feel good about who we are”.⁴⁰⁹

At the other end of the spectrum, Klapp sees the traditional hero as in decline. Klapp refers to: “The decline of the titan, the passing of the saint, the age of the common man, the bum as a cultural hero, the age of celebrity Gods”.⁴¹⁰ Klapp sees this deterioration of the traditional hero in the form of a “dumbing down”. He sees modern so-called heroes as having nothing much more to offer in the way of attributes

⁴⁰⁹ Allison and Goethals, *Heroes: What They Do & Why We Need Them*, 173.

⁴¹⁰ Klapp, *Heroes, Villains & Fools*, 122.

than the average man might possess. Tellingly, he argues in the context of dumbing down that: “The functions of many models seem to have shifted from the normal one of holding up an ideal that people are to trying to achieve, to compensating people for lack of these qualities and making them feel more comfortable about not trying to be that way or pretending to be that way – therefore, in many cases, licensing something different from what the model implies”.⁴¹¹ What Klapp is in effect saying is that the bar to becoming a hero has been lowered. A consequence of this lowering, it is argued, is that celebrities in general, or for the purposes of this thesis criminal celebrities or criminal heroes in particular, have been admitted to the pantheon once reserved for the traditional hero.

Boorstin supports Klapp’s thinking by arguing that the old heroic mould has been broken, and replaced with a new mould in the form of mass-produced modern heroes produced to satisfy market demand ⁴¹² – heroes who are nothing more than “receptacles into which we pour our own purposelessness.”⁴¹³ Moreover, Boorstin expresses concern that celebrity worship and hero worship are now confused. He says “Celebrity-worship and hero-worship should not be confused. Yet we confuse them every day, and by doing so we come dangerously close to depriving ourselves of all real models. We lose sight of the men and women who do not simply seem great because they are famous but who are famous because they are great. We come closer and closer to degrading all fame into notoriety”.⁴¹⁴

Joseph Campbell mourned the passing of the traditional hero.⁴¹⁵ Moreover, in the celebrity age, so too did the pop group The Stranglers with their 1977 hit record *No More Heroes*, which mourned the loss of strong figures in culture with the refrain:

“Whatever happened to those heroes?
No more heroes anymore!
No more heroes anymore!”

⁴¹¹ Klapp, *Heroes, Villains & Fools*, 123.

⁴¹² Boorstin, *The Image : A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 48-9.

⁴¹³ Boorstin, *The Image : A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 61.

⁴¹⁴ Boorstin, *The Image : A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 48.

⁴¹⁵ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, Third ed. (New World Library, California, 2008), 333-37.

7.2.2 The celebrity hero

It is argued that those who live life on the “celebrity circuit” cannot and never will be heroes within the true sense of the word. However, modern culture in looking at heroes through a different lens makes its own heroes out of the celebrity in general or, for the purposes of this thesis, the criminal celebrity or criminal hero in particular. These new heroes comprise the burgeoning social category of the celebrity, whose fame derives more from the media than from worthy deeds.

An article relating to celebrities in general appeared in *The Times* in January 1994. The title of the article was “Don’t blame the celebrities – they’re only filling the gap left by real heroes”. The piece laments that our collective loss of faith in the prospect of great men and women achieving great things and changing the world for the better, has left behind the void now being filled by overblown celebrity culture.⁴¹⁶

Within the field of celebrity, the word “hero” is not used in the normal meaning of the word, namely a person of courage and selflessness. Instead, hero has come to refer to a fragmented hero such as a sporting hero, or to someone who has transcended mere celebrity and risen to the higher plane of a hero in the eyes of the beholder.

Within the context of an argument about the fragmentation of (American) society, Crepeau suggests that heroes (that is to say heroes within the traditional sense of the word) no longer appeal to all classifications of people, and that they now have only partial appeal to certain segments of society. Crepeau goes on to argue that with no unified system of values, there are no universal heroes, and that each hero, therefore, has his own constituency (that is to say “public” or “electorate”).⁴¹⁷ This suggests that instead of an all-encompassing hero having universal appeal, we now have different genres of hero, each of whom holds different appeal to a particular audience. This argument helps explain how celebrities, in general, have their own constituency, as does the criminal celebrity or criminal hero.

An example of sporting heroes will make the point about the fragmented hero. As at July 2018, England had been successful in the earlier rounds of the football World Cup. Before they were knocked out in the semi-final, the media were getting

⁴¹⁶ Mick Hume, "Don't blame the 'celebrities'- they're only filling the gap left by the real heroes," *The Times* (London), January 26, 2004, 16.

⁴¹⁷ Crepeau, "Sport, Heroes and Myth," 29.

excited about England's prospects of winning the gold trophy. An article appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* on July 8 that year bearing the heading: "England Players are already heroes but can return as legends".⁴¹⁸ This example shows how a particular genre of hero or perceived hero might appeal to a particular audience, but there would be no resonance between such heroes and someone who did not follow the particular sport. Likewise, followers of celebrities in general or criminal celebrities or criminal heroes, in particular, may have no interest in football but do have an interest in following their own heroes.

7.2.3 The criminal celebrity as hero

Just as the above *Times* newspaper article says "Don't blame the celebrities – they're only filling the gap left by real heroes", it is likewise argued that criminal celebrities or criminal heroes fill the gap left by real heroes.⁴¹⁹

An overarching theme of this thesis is to consider crime and the criminal celebrity or criminal hero through the lens of crime as entertainment. As noted in Chapter 5, Hartley in part defines entertainment as "Based on the commercial imperatives of supply and demand of the consumer, and that at bottom, entertainment reflects what is wanted".⁴²⁰ Indeed, entertainment as what is wanted is the central thesis of Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, where Postman sees cultural life as a perpetual round of entertainment.⁴²¹

This study posits that the supply and demand of crime as entertainment is one of the disparate factors at play in the making of the phenomenon of the criminal celebrity or criminal hero. Indeed, it is likewise argued this supply and demand is a pivotal argument in explaining the rise in popularity of the criminal celebrity.

There is precedent for the supply and demand of heroes, be they traditional or criminal. Hobsbawm notes of historic noble robbers, that such was the need for heroes and champions of the time, that if there were none, unsuitable ones would be pressed

⁴¹⁸ Jamie Carragher, "England's players are already heroes, but can return as legends," *Daily Telegraph*, July 8, 2018, Telegraph <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-cup/2018/07/08/englands-players-already-heroes-can-return-legends/>.

⁴¹⁹ Hume, "Don't blame the 'celebrities'," 16.

⁴²⁰ Hartley, *Communication, Cultural and Media Studies: The Key Concepts.*, 83.

⁴²¹ Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, 20th Anniversary ed. (Penguin Books, 2006), 155.

into service.⁴²² More recently, and as already referred to elsewhere in this thesis, Logan in his 1931 article “Glorifying the Criminal” maintains in relation to heroes generally that “[T]he supply of persons properly qualified for our veneration does not equal the demand”.⁴²³ And more recently still, Daniel Boorstin refers to our “extravagant expectations” of life.⁴²⁴ He argues that people expect more than the world can offer, and that “[W]e expect new heroes every season, a literary masterpiece every month, a dramatic spectacular every night”.⁴²⁵ Boorstin adds there are only so many heroes, that we “make heroes when they don’t exist”.⁴²⁶ He also notes that “By harbouring, nourishing, and ever-enlarging our extravagant expectations, we create the demand for illusions with which we deceive ourselves, and which we pay others to make to deceive us”.⁴²⁷

Boorstin’s above quote about “deceiving ourselves”, leads to a discussion of labelling of deviants as generally discussed by Howard Becker in his work *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*.⁴²⁸ The point of connection between Boorstin’s quote and Becker, as will be seen in an argument which will now follow, is that Becker’s labelling applies to heroes (and for the purposes of this study to criminal heroes) as much as it applies to deviants. As the argument develops, it will be seen that the labelling by the media of criminals as heroes is part and parcel of the supply and demand argument, in that the media stimulate their demand. This is the case, in that such labelling is playing to the whims of the public who are ever-hungry for heroes, criminal or otherwise and real or illusory, in a never-ending cycle of supply and demand.

Becker discusses an “outsider” as a deviant so labelled by society. He explains “[S]ocial groups create deviance by making rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders”.⁴²⁹ He continues by saying “From this point of view, deviance is *not* a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by

⁴²² Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 47.

⁴²³ Logan, "Glorifying the Criminal," 43.

⁴²⁴ Boorstin, *The Image : A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 3.

⁴²⁵ Boorstin, *The Image : A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 4.

⁴²⁶ Boorstin, *The Image : A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 5.

⁴²⁷ Boorstin, *The Image : A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 5.

⁴²⁸ Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*.

⁴²⁹ Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, 9.

others of rules and sanctions to an offender”.⁴³⁰ For emphasis, Becker then summarises by saying “The deviant is one to whom that label has been successfully applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label”.⁴³¹

According to Becker, people who find themselves so labelled, accept such a label as legitimate. In consequence, they live up to the label, both in terms of accepting the legitimacy of the rules which gave rise to the labelling, and by acting the part of the deviant. On this argument, labelling becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy to the extent that, according to Becker it “[S]ets in motion several mechanisms which conspire to shape the person in the image people have of him”.⁴³² In consequence, deviants so labelled may continue or escalate their deviant way of life. David Farrington refers to this escalation as “deviance amplification”. Farrington considers public labelling of deviants from a scientific perspective. In doing so, the hypothesis he tests is whether individuals who are publicly labelled as deviants will increase their deviant behaviour as a result. Farrington then concludes that repeated labelling does indeed suggest greater deviance amplification.⁴³³

In his book *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, Stanley Cohen adds to the conversation of deviance amplification. He considers deviance amplification not so much based on repeated labelling as such, but more from the standpoint of the cause and effect of how deviant acts are reported in the mass media.⁴³⁴ As a preface to the discussion which now follows and with direct reference to the title of Cohen’s book, it is principally *folk devils* who are relevant for the purposes of this dialogue and not moral panics. But that said, it is accepted a moral panic may ensue depending on the particular media treatment of an act or acts of deviance. By way of explanation, a *folk devil* might reasonably be defined as a person (or group of people) portrayed in folklore or in the media as a deviant and outsider and who is blamed for crimes and other social ills.

Within the context of a discussion of deviance and the mass media, Cohen notes that “In an industrial society, the body of information from which such ideas are built

⁴³⁰ Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, 9.

⁴³¹ Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, 9.

⁴³² Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, 34.

⁴³³ David P. Farrington, "The Effects of Public Labelling," *The British Journal of Criminology* 17, no. 2 (1977): 112, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.bjc.a046802oiuj>.

⁴³⁴ Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of Mods and Rockers*, 3rd ed. (Taylor and Francis Group, 2011), <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unda/detail.action?docID=684015&pq-origsite=primo>.

is invariably received second-hand; that is, it arrives already processed by the mass media, and this means that the information has been subjected to alternative definitions of what constitutes ‘news’ and how it should be gathered and presented”.⁴³⁵ Cohen later adds that the mass media devote a great deal of space to deviance, including sensational crimes, and cites Kai Ericson as noting that “A considerable portion of what we call ‘news’ is devoted to reports about deviant behaviours and its consequences”. Cohen continues by saying that this is not just for entertainment or to fulfil some psychological need for identification or vicarious punishment, but is a main source of information about the normative contours of society. It informs us about right and wrong, about the boundaries beyond which one should not venture, and about the shapes the devil may assume.⁴³⁶

In respect of deviance amplification, Cohen considers the nature of the information given by the mass media concerning deviant behaviour, and seeks to identify a causal link between such reporting and societal reaction which may serve to *increase* such amplification.⁴³⁷ Cohen describes the spiral of deviance amplification by reference to media imagery which identifies an initial act of newsworthy deviance cast in a disapproving light. Cohen then says that the deviant or group of deviants are segregated or isolated and this operates to alienate them from conventional society, that is to say, as *outsiders* within the meaning ascribed by Becker. These deviants then perceive themselves as more deviant, which in turn leads to more deviance. This, in turn, Cohen concludes, exposes the deviants to further punitive sanctions by those who condemn, and the system starts going round again.⁴³⁸

Applying a different perspective to Becker’s labelling and drawing on the process of media-induced deviance amplification as discussed by Cohen, this chapter seeks to make an argument that labels are similarly applied to criminal celebrities – and by extension and specifically for the purposes of this chapter to criminal celebrities whose status has risen to that of criminal hero. However, this labelling (and repeated labelling) is not applied *by society* but principally *by the media*, not to create deviance amplification but to create what this study terms ‘criminal celebrity amplification’.

⁴³⁵ Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of Mods and Rockers*, 9.

⁴³⁶ Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of Mods and Rockers*, 10-11.

⁴³⁷ Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of Mods and Rockers*, 11.

⁴³⁸ Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of Mods and Rockers*, 12.

This amplification may also be applied by or through the agency of the criminal hero including the media. Indeed, as an aside, it should be noted that Allison and Goethals suggest a commercial imperative on the part of the media in their reporting of heroes. They say: “It may be true the media crave heroes more than anyone. Appealing heroic tales most definitely increases newspaper and magazine circulation, digital viewership, television ratings and Internet site visits. For this reason, the media are motivated to turn ordinary people into heroes”.⁴³⁹

Labelling a criminal hero, it is therefore argued, has the same effect (but in a positive sense) as the negative labelling of an individual as a deviant. In other words, the criminal hero, once labelled, lives up to the label to the extent the label becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy – namely that it likewise sets in motion several mechanisms which conspire to shape the person in the image people have of him.⁴⁴⁰ In this respect, media news of the criminal hero mirrors and sustains the label so given. A consequence of this labelling which it is suggested may be perceived as a “badge of honour”, is that the newly labelled criminal hero is now seen not as a deviant criminal and thus an outsider, but as an insider, that is to say, ‘one of us’. And because he is one of us, it is reasoned that society can more readily identify and resonate with him. Furthermore, labelling a criminal hero as such, and applying the above thinking of both Farrington and Cohen concerning “deviance amplification” but again in a positive sense, it is argued that the label of criminal hero will raise the personal and media profile of the criminal hero in the public eye as a consequence of such amplification.

The above argument goes full circle in similar manner to that described by Cohen as above in respect of deviants: The media label the criminal as a hero. The criminal hero acts the part, which raises his profile as a criminal hero. Rather than being condemned as deviants or *folk devils* responsible for social ills, criminal celebrities or criminal heroes are lauded for their criminality and celebrity. This gives the media additional opportunity for yet more coverage of the so-labelled criminal hero. The ever-receptive public demand ever-more stories of these heroes, and the media supply them because the label once given will stick. A practical manifestation of this can be seen by considering two brief examples relating to the labelling of Ronnie Biggs. The first is a reference in a 1977 edition of the *Daily Mail* which refers to Ronnie Biggs as “[F]ast

⁴³⁹ Allison and Goethals, *Heroes: What They Do & Why We Need Them*, 38.

⁴⁴⁰ Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, 34.

becoming a cult hero”,⁴⁴¹ and the second comprises details in the Weekend section of the *Daily Mail* from 2002 concerning a Channel 5 television programme called “The Legend of Ronnie Biggs”.⁴⁴² As the case study of Ronnie Biggs will show, there can be no doubt he was portrayed by the media as a hero, and that he lived up to this label in his personal life after his escape from Wandsworth prison in 1965.

As well as labelling, the media also use sensationalist language or other linguistic devices to glamorise, glorify or otherwise promote the celebrity or criminal hero. This will be discussed more fully in chapter 8.

7.3 Conclusion

Focusing on the keywords “villain to hero”, this chapter sought to trace the villain’s historical, social and cultural journey to that of hero via celebrity culture. In doing so, it showed that celebrities and criminal heroes have filled the gap left behind by the traditional hero of old. The chapter then considered the supply and demand of crime as entertainment as one of the factors at play in the making of the criminal celebrity or criminal hero. This led to a suggested alternative application of Becker’s labelling by which the media label certain criminals not negatively as deviants but positively as heroes. This has the effect of glamorising and glorifying such criminals in the name of entertainment and adds to their celebrity prominence as a consequence of positive labelling and criminal celebrity amplification. In wearing the mantle of hero, criminals so ascribed live up to their new status, and this self-fulfilling prophecy turns such criminals into heroes in the eyes of the public. The media and the public thus conspire in the above words of Boorstin to “Make heroes when they don’t exist”.⁴⁴³ Further, this application of Becker’s labelling of criminals as heroes makes the above quote by Boorstin come to life, namely that “By harbouring, nourishing, and ever-enlarging our extravagant expectations, we create the demand for illusions with which we deceive ourselves, and which we pay others (that is to say the media) to make to deceive us”.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴¹ Richard Lay, "Mr Biggs," *Daily Mail* (London, England), August 19 1977, 15, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5krRF7>

⁴⁴² "The Legend of Ronnie Biggs," *Daily Mail*, January 26, 2002, 70-71, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5kmhF1>

⁴⁴³ Boorstin, *The Image : A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 5.

⁴⁴⁴ Boorstin, *The Image : A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 5.

8

The Media, Celebrity and the Criminal Celebrity

This chapter will remain true to one of the central themes of this thesis, that is to say, crime as entertainment. In this connection, the chapter will focus on crime presented by the media as entertainment – or at least crime presented by the media which is perceived by the audience as entertainment. Yvonne Jewkes acknowledges that the reporting of crime news is shaped by the mission to entertain.⁴⁴⁵ In a similar vein, this chapter contends that the reporting of criminal celebrities is likewise shaped by the mission to entertain.

The chapter commences by referring to a typical dictionary definition of the adjective “picaresque”. Picaresque means “Relating to an episodic style of fiction with the adventures of a rough and dishonest, but appealing hero”.⁴⁴⁶ In many ways, it is argued, the word picaresque sums up the way in which the criminal celebrity is portrayed in the media as an object of entertainment in the celebrity age, not least with connotations of glamour and even romance. But how did news of the criminal celebrity reach this point?

The chapter will seek to identify the changing ways in which news in general has been reported over time, and will focus on the underlying economic imperatives, the changing social circumstances and the prevailing cultural and moral climate that has shaped the ever-changing news agenda. However, the particular focus will refer to news of celebrities in general, and criminal celebrities in particular. To this end, the chapter will trace a brief history of the rise of the British *popular press*. The term *popular press* shall mean newspapers with a mass-circulation including the tabloid press (for example, the *Daily Mirror*, or *The Sun*) as distinct from the *quality press* which include such titles as *The Times*, *The Guardian* or the *Daily Telegraph*. This distinction will enable comparisons to be made between what Tom Bairstow refers to as “[T]he stodgy Establishment concept of news”⁴⁴⁷ with its emphasis on political news or hard news, and a more palatable diet of soft news designed in the celebrity age to entertain as well as to inform.

The chosen starting point for this historical account will involve a discussion of a style of journalism which was coined *New Journalism*. *New Journalism* arose in

⁴⁴⁵ Yvonne Jewkes, *Media and Crime*, 3rd ed. (Sage, 2015), 11.

⁴⁴⁶ *Oxford Dictionary of English*. 2010.

⁴⁴⁷ Tom Bairstow, *Fourth-Rate Estate: An Anatomy of Fleet Street* (London: Comedia Publishing Group, 1985), 43.

Britain in the 1880s and was arguably the forerunner of the tabloid press. The chapter will then consider the rise of the tabloid press itself. A discussion of the rise of the tabloid press is relevant in that much of its staple diet focuses on topics concerning celebrities, sensation, and crime. Indeed, Kevin Williams goes so far as to refer to the tabloid press and its “obsession with celebrities”.⁴⁴⁸

Part of the history of the rise of the *popular press* will involve a discussion of changing news values which determine or influence *what* is reported. Having identified *what* should be reported by reference to news values, the chapter will then consider the changing ways over time in respect of *how* such news is reported and will do this by discussing the use of certain linguistic techniques.

Treatment of the death of criminal celebrities by the media and particularly the press can mark not the end of their celebrity, but a new beginning. Later parts of the chapter will therefore enter into a discussion relating to the death and afterlife of criminal celebrities. In doing so, it will suggest that whilst the media play a vital role in helping to maintain celebrity in afterlife, it is the impact of popular culture which is most instrumental in doing so.

The chapter will conclude with addenda firstly in respect of public relations as inextricably connected with the media and its relevance to the criminal celebrity, and secondly in respect of the expansion of agency of the criminal celebrity in the celebrity age.

8.1 The media, celebrity and the audience – a symbiotic relationship

Before proceeding further, it will be helpful to consider media in its wider context. In this connection, media needs to be considered as part of a symbiotic relationship which exists alongside the celebrity and the audience. This chapter argues that the audience is the key driver in this relationship in creating the demand for celebrities, including criminal celebrities. The position of the audience in the celebrity culture industry is seen as fundamental, as without an audience there would be no celebrity. This would be akin to an actor on stage playing to an empty theatre. The audience’s consumption and reception, therefore, according to Sean Redmond and Su Holmes,

⁴⁴⁸ Kevin Williams, *Read all About It! A history of the British Newspaper* (Taylor & Francis e-library, 2009), 222.

symbolises the necessary “fuel” to keep the economic enterprise of celebrity going.⁴⁴⁹ Lea Hellmueller and Nina Aeschbacher quote Pamela Shoemaker and Timothy Vos as saying that because both scholars and practitioners consider the audience an influential factor on media routines, the audience has come to influence news content in as much as journalists develop routines based on assumptions or intuitions about the consuming audience.⁴⁵⁰

This chapter emphasises the importance of the audience in the tripartite relationship with the media and the celebrity. It does so, as based on commercial imperatives, newspapers have by degrees over the years had increasing regard to the wants and needs of the audience when determining news content. This view is supported by Williams who notes that commercialisation is changing the relationship between the mass media and their audience, and that the audience is no longer seen as citizens, but as consumers.⁴⁵¹ Specifically, within the context of news values, crime news and the production of crime news, Jewkes contents that “The desire to accommodate public tastes and interests has prompted some critics to accuse the British media of pandering to what the first Director-General of the BBC Lord Reith, used to call the ‘lowest common denominator’ of the audience”. Jewkes continues by saying “Since the British media went through a process of deregulation in the late 1980s and early 1990s, criticism has intensified, and both broadcast and print media have been accused of ‘dumbing down’ their news coverage and measuring newsworthiness by the degree of amusement or revulsion a story provokes in the audience”. Jewkes further continues by saying “[T]he news media do not cover systematically all forms and expressions of crime and victimization, and that they pander to the most voyeuristic desires of the audience by exaggerating and dramatizing relatively unusual crimes, while ignoring or downplaying the crimes that are most likely to happen to the ‘average’ person”.⁴⁵² On a wider note, Bob Franklin goes so far

⁴⁴⁹ Sean Redmond and Su Holmes, "Consuming fame/becoming famous? Celebrity and its audience: Introduction," in *Stardom and celebrity: A Reader*, ed. S. Redmond and S. Holmes (London: Sage, 2007), 310.

⁴⁵⁰ Pamela J. Shoemaker, and Timothy Vos, (2009) Gatekeeping theory, New York: Routledge, quoted in Lea C. Hellmueller and Nina Aeschbacher, "Media and Celebrity: Production and Consumption of "Well-Knownness"," Article, *Communication Research Trends* 29, no. 4 (2010): 11.

⁴⁵¹ Kevin Williams, *Get Me a Murder A Day! A History of Mass Communication in Britain* (London: Arnold, 1998), 256.

⁴⁵² Jewkes, *Media and Crime*, 77.

as to suggest the task of journalism has become merely to deliver and serve up whatever the customer wants, rather like a deep-pan pizza.⁴⁵³

8.2 Commodification of both crime and the criminal celebrity

This part of the chapter now turns to commodification, and in particular to the commodification of both crime and the criminal celebrity. Commodification is typically defined as “the act or fact of turning something into an item that can be bought and sold”, or alternatively as “the act or fact of exploiting a person or thing for profit”.⁴⁵⁴ In her article concerning Australian criminal celebrity Mark Brandon (“Chopper”) Read, Andrea Mayr refers to the use of crime as both entertainment and as a commodity to be consumed and enjoyed by the public.⁴⁵⁵ The criminal celebrity is therefore seen as a commodity. Indeed, news itself (and by extension media in all its forms) is a commodity, as is the audience. In relation to the commodification of news, Steve Chibnall refers to a Sunday newspaper journalist saying to him in conversation “I regard news as a commodity – it’s there to buy, it’s there to report, it’s there to be processed, it’s there to be packaged, it’s there to be sold”.⁴⁵⁶

The interdependence of the media, the celebrity and the audience are commodified, that is to say, these three elements co-exist in a market of exchange. In this market of exchange, say Hellmueller and Aeschbacher “[C]elebrities exchange visibility and privacy for fame; the media industry exchanges information for attention and subscribers and followers, and the public exchanges attention and maybe money for access to celebrities’ information to satisfy their need for voyeurism.”⁴⁵⁷

In a market-driven media system, the demands of the audience for celebrity content in the celebrity age can explain the increasing market for celebrity in all its guises, where celebrities are bought and sold on the market. Whilst the time period of this thesis commences in the 1960s, Turner notes as at 2010 there was no sign that the spread of celebrity culture has reached its limits, and that celebrity content has

⁴⁵³ Bob Franklin, *Newzak & News Media* (Great Britain: Arnold, 1997), 5.

⁴⁵⁴ *Dictionary*, s.v. “commodification,” accessed December 6, 2020, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/commodification>

⁴⁵⁵ Andrea Mayr, “Chopper: From the Inside: Discourses of the ‘celebrity’ criminal Mark Brandon Read,” *Language and Literature* 21, no. 3 (2012): 261, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963947012444220>.

⁴⁵⁶ Chibnall, *Law-and-Order News: An analysis of crime reporting in the British Press*, 221.

⁴⁵⁷ Hellmueller and Aeschbacher, “Media and Celebrity: Production and Consumption of “Well-Knownness”,” 11.

become fundamental to the news media in the twenty-first century. Turner further notes that celebrity news has proved its capacity to attract attention and to drive consumption.⁴⁵⁸

8.3 Celebrity: What's the media got to do with it?

Having touched on the tripartite relationship between the media, celebrities, and the audience, it will also be helpful before proceeding further to refer to media itself within the context of celebrity. The media is arguably the middle man as between the celebrity and the audience and plays a crucial role in the creation of celebrities by providing visibility and a distribution channel of celebrities' activities which contributes to their well-knownness in society.⁴⁵⁹

In the Introduction to *Understanding Media: Inside Celebrity*, Evans starts with the heading "*Celebrity: [W]hat's the media got to do with it*"⁴⁶⁰ Evans continues by saying that to assess the role of the media in relation to celebrity, a working understanding of the term *media* is required. Evans notes that what is often termed *the media* is in fact a diverse array of institutions and practices which have the function, among others, of *mediation*. Evans further notes that mediation by its very definition involves the relaying of events or phenomena that we cannot directly observe by ourselves, and it, therefore, involves a technical medium.⁴⁶¹

Evans argues that individuals do not become celebrities as a result of their innately alluring or magnetic qualities, but rather that celebrity is a resource created and deployed by a range of often interlocking media – such as the press, films and television programmes to which audiences respond.⁴⁶² Evans adds that celebrities comprise the few known by the many, a consequence of which is that people can only achieve fame or become celebrities in the first place through the active construction

⁴⁵⁸ Graeme Turner, "Approaching celebrity studies," *Celebrity Studies* 1, no. 1 (2010): 11, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392390903519024>.

⁴⁵⁹ Hellmüller and Aeschbacher, "Media and Celebrity: Production and Consumption of "Well-Knownness"," 3.

⁴⁶⁰ Evans, *Understanding Media: Inside Celebrity*, 1.

⁴⁶¹ Evans, *Understanding Media: Inside Celebrity*, 4.

⁴⁶² Evans, *Understanding Media: Inside Celebrity*, 1.

and transmission of an image or persona that represents them.⁴⁶³ Further, Braudy adds to the discussion by asserting that from the beginning, ‘fame’ has required publicity.⁴⁶⁴

The range of media (including mass media) by which information can be disseminated to a dispersed public is manifold. Within the context of crime and justice media history, Surette identifies these vehicles in tabular form starting with sound media in the days of antiquity, through to print media, visual media and finally new media.⁴⁶⁵ The extent of the development of new media is such as to warrant separate mention by Surette. This is shown by Surette in tabular form starting with the World Wide Web in 1991 and taking the reader up to Instagram in 2010.⁴⁶⁶ Moreover, and as already mentioned in chapter 3, Braudy notes of these manifold vehicles that “As each new medium of fame appears, the human image it conveys is intensified, and the number of individuals celebrated expands”.⁴⁶⁷

With specific regard to criminal celebrities, American author Kooistra notes that “[I]n some ways, certain ... technical developments have greatly expanded the possibility for the existence of criminal celebrities”. “Of particular importance,” says Kooistra, “has been the development of the mass media”. Kooistra continues, by saying “Prior to the 19th century, the credentials of a criminal could be presented to a rather small audience, primarily through oral history. During the 19th century, newspapers, dime novels, cheap mass-circulation magazines and biographies spread the fame (or infamy) of criminals much further, making them known to a national audience”. “Today, the exploits of a criminal may be sung on records that will be broadcast by thousands of radio stations, dramatized in movies that will be viewed by millions, reported by a news service that will ensure a worldwide audience...” “Then, of course” adds Kooistra, “there is the book contract and subsequent television features to develop further the mystique”.⁴⁶⁸

With the manifold platforms noted above which in concert comprise mass media, it is necessary to be selective in this chapter in focusing on a particular medium for

⁴⁶³ Evans, *Understanding Media: Inside Celebrity*, 2.

⁴⁶⁴ Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and its History*, 3.

⁴⁶⁵ Surette, *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice*, 7-8.

⁴⁶⁶ Surette, *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice*, 45.

⁴⁶⁷ Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and its History*, 4.

⁴⁶⁸ Kooistra, *Criminals as Heroes Structure, Power and Identity*, 161-62.

discussion. The chosen medium is the *popular press*. However, before discussing the *popular press* and reasons for choosing this medium over others, the chapter makes a brief reference to what is termed the *status conferral function* of the mass media in all its forms and which is relevant to the criminal celebrity. The essence of the *status conferral function*, according to Paul Lazarfeld and Robert Merton, is that it “confers status on public issues, persons, organizations and social movements. Common experience, as well as research, testifies that the social standing of persons or social policies is raised when these command favourable attention in the mass media... The mass media bestow prestige and enhance the authority of individuals and groups by legitimising their status”.⁴⁶⁹ This, in effect, means that the *status conferral function* of criminal celebrities, and especially their favourable attention in the *popular press*, imbues them with social acceptability.

The above choice of the *popular press* as the sole medium for discussion is influenced by particular factors. The first is that the printed word as contained in newspapers is arguably a more effective and less impermanent vehicle for the dissemination of news than, for example, television or films. A further factor is the use of particular language be it sensationalist or otherwise which can arguably create a more permanent word image (specifically in relation to the criminal celebrity) than other less permanent forms of media. This creation of a more permanent word image supports the above proposition by Evans that people can only achieve fame or become celebrities in the first place through the active construction and transmission of an image or persona that represents them.⁴⁷⁰ Moreover, within the context of a discussion of criminals, Hobsbawm in using the term *neo-Robin Hoods* (whom this thesis identifies in the guise of the criminal celebrity in the celebrity age) suggests the effectiveness of the criminal’s image is achieved not so much through their actions, as their success in making headlines.⁴⁷¹ This point will be brought into relief in the individual case studies. The final factor influencing the choice of the *popular press* returns to the above definition of the word picaresque and in particular that part of the definition which refers to an *episodic style*. In this connection, it is argued that

⁴⁶⁹ Paul F. Lazarfeld and Robert K. Merton, "Mass Communication, Popular Taste and Organised Social Action " in *The Communication of Ideas*, ed. Lyman Bryson (New York: Cooper Square Publishers Inc., 1964), 100-01.

⁴⁷⁰ Evans, *Understanding Media: Inside Celebrity*, 2.

⁴⁷¹ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 196.

newspaper stories, and not least in the tabloid press, assume an episodic character which lends itself to the unfolding *soap opera* or entertainment style of stories concerning criminal celebrities and their exploits. A prime example is that of Ronnie Biggs as his case study will demonstrate.

Whilst this chapter will be limited to a discussion of the *popular press*, a brief comparison with public service broadcasting will be instructive, and in particular a consideration of “Reithian values”. Lord Reith was the first Director-General of the BBC which was launched in 1922 under Reith’s remit to “educate, inform and entertain”⁴⁷². If a comparison were to be made between Reithian values of the BBC in respect of public service broadcasting and the modern state of the *popular press*, it would be seen that the rise of the *popular press* has proved to be antithetical to Reithian values. In this regard an online biography of Lord John Reith refers to the above Reithian remit to “educate, inform and entertain”, but arguably only entertainment being the third limb of Reith’s remit is still wholly intact.

8.4 The rise of the *popular press*

This part of the chapter now turns to a discussion of the rise of the *popular press* which, it is argued, has shadowed the rise of celebrity culture itself. But when did the rise of the *popular press* begin? The beginning, it is argued, was in 1855 when stamp duty on newspapers in Britain was abolished, thus stimulating the growth of newspapers. The discussion will draw on a selective history of the British Newspaper. It will do so to identify the points at which readers of newspapers have influenced changes not only in news content, but also in the way news is presented.

A foray into the history of news content will be useful in setting news content of today in context. Williams recounts that in the 1880s, there was a growing recognition that changes were taking place in the newspaper industry with the advent of what cultural commentator and poet Matthew Arnold labelled *New Journalism*. Williams writes that Arnold’s labelling was used to sum up the view many intellectuals and old-fashioned journalists had of the development of newspapers at the end of the nineteenth century. Williams goes on to explain that Arnold battled against what he believed was the growing philistinism of British cultural life borne out of his concern

⁴⁷² "John Reith biography," accessed January 23, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/research/directors-general/john-reith>.

about *New Journalism* focusing on the commercialisation and industrialisation of the newspaper industry and its impact on culture.⁴⁷³ Nonetheless, *New Journalism* witnessed a change in the make-up of the content of newspapers. In a separate work, Williams notes that the daily press of mid-Victorian Britain was characterised by serious journalism which “ranged from political polemic to serious considerations and analysis of the pressing issues of the day”. He then compares this with a “lighter shade” of reporting associated with *New Journalism* which he says supplemented, if not replaced serious journalism by introducing human interest stories, including crime, sexual violence and human oddities.⁴⁷⁴ This lighter shade of journalism became a feature of the British press, and in doing so acknowledged the role of the press to entertain as well as to inform.⁴⁷⁵

Prior to *New Journalism*, the emphasis of news stories was on hard news, not least of which concerned politics as already mentioned. However, over time, and especially with a demand for news to be couched as infotainment⁴⁷⁶ the emphasis gradually changed to soft news, covering the arts, entertainment and lifestyle stories. Franklin says of this change of emphasis from hard to soft news that:

Journalism’s editorial priorities have changed. Entertainment has superseded the provision of information; human interest has supplanted the public interest; measured judgement has succumbed to sensationalism; the trivial has triumphed over the weighty; the intimate relations of celebrities from soap operas, the world of sport or the royal family are judged more ‘newsworthy’ than the reporting of significant issues and events of international consequence. Traditional news values have been undermined by new values; ‘infotainment’ is rampant.⁴⁷⁷

New Journalism circa 1880s was the forerunner of a period in the development and rise of the *popular press* which Williams refers to as the *Northcliffe Revolution*, so named after the ennoblement of newspaper baron Alfred Harmsworth to Lord Northcliffe in 1905.⁴⁷⁸ Williams refers to the launch of the *Daily Mail* in 1896 by Alfred Harmsworth (as he then was). Williams relates that within four years of its

⁴⁷³ Williams, *Read all About It! A history of the British Newspaper*, 119-20.

⁴⁷⁴ Williams, *Get Me a Murder A Day! A History of Mass Communication in Britain*, 51.

⁴⁷⁵ Williams, *Get Me a Murder A Day! A History of Mass Communication in Britain*, 51.

⁴⁷⁶ Surette, *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice*, 19.

⁴⁷⁷ Franklin, *Newzak & News Media*, 4.

⁴⁷⁸ Williams, *Get Me a Murder A Day! A History of Mass Communication in Britain*, 55.

launch, the *Daily Mail* had become the first truly mass-circulation daily newspaper. Williams further relates that Harmsworth (Northcliffe) placed great emphasis on crime stories as a staple feature of the paper. Northcliffe's motto was "Get me a murder a day!"⁴⁷⁹ Williams notes that "The mass-circulation newspapers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries expanded on popular reading material in the areas of crime, scandal, romance and sport at the expense of independent political comment".⁴⁸⁰

Williams writes that the *Northcliffe Revolution* represented the beginning of the trend in the British press to polarisation as between down-market mass-circulation tabloids, and up-market, elite broadsheets with small circulations.⁴⁸¹ However, such has been the evolving nature of the British press, that according to Franklin, broadsheets or at least the front pages of broadsheets, now incorporate many of the characteristic formats of the tabloid genre.⁴⁸² Moreover, Turner notes "[T]he growing trend for the so-called "quality" newspapers to foreground celebrity stories and photo galleries in their online editions when they would be reluctant to identify with something as downmarket as celebrity in their print editions".⁴⁸³

8.5 Changing news values

Before discussing the rise of the tabloid press, it is fitting to discuss ever-changing news values, not least as the tabloid press has embraced such changing values. Jewkes defines news values as the value judgments that journalists and editors make about the public appeal of a story, and also whether it is in the public interest.⁴⁸⁴ However, this chapter claims that the way in which news content has changed over time reflects not so much what is in the public interest, but what the public is interested in. To this end, news values have been updated from time to time to reflect the demands of the public. In reality, according to Chibnall, news values and weighting quickly become associated with reader expectations and are justified in terms of pleasing readers and giving them what they want.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁷⁹ Williams, *Get Me a Murder A Day! A History of Mass Communication in Britain*, 56.

⁴⁸⁰ Williams, *Get Me a Murder A Day! A History of Mass Communication in Britain*, 48.

⁴⁸¹ Williams, *Get Me a Murder A Day! A History of Mass Communication in Britain*, 56.

⁴⁸² Franklin, *Newzak & News Media*, 7.

⁴⁸³ Turner, "Approaching celebrity studies," 11.

⁴⁸⁴ Jewkes, *Media and Crime*, 46.

⁴⁸⁵ Chibnall, *Law-and-Order News: An analysis of crime reporting in the British Press*, 14.

But what is news? Tony Harcup and Deirdre O'Neill said: "Journalists speak of "the news" as if events select themselves".⁴⁸⁶ Harcup and O'Neill refer to their personal experience as working journalists and say that in practice, journalists have ground rules that inform their answer to the question "What is News?" In this connection, they refer to a paper *The Structure of Foreign News* published in 1965 by Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge.⁴⁸⁷ The purpose of the paper by Galtung and Ruge was to identify a set of "news values" informing the ground rules that come into play when journalists select stories. Galtung and Ruge identified twelve "news factors". These factors were acknowledged nearly thirty years later by Denis McQuail who said as at 1994 that he regarded the paper by Galtung and Ruge as the "most influential explanation" of news values.⁴⁸⁸ A further ringing endorsement of the study by Galtung and Ruge was also made as recently as 1998 by James Watson who considered the work of Galtung and Ruge a landmark study of news values and news selection.⁴⁸⁹ Yet more recently still in the year 2000, John Herbert regarded the news factors identified by Galtung and Ruge as "prerequisites" of news selection at the beginning of the new century.⁴⁹⁰ However, there has been much social and cultural change in Britain since the year in which Galtung and Ruge published their paper. In their 2001 article *What is News? Galtung and Ruge revisited*, Harcup and O'Neill considered the news factors of Galtung and Ruge needed to be revisited within the context of an increasingly multimedia landscape and within the context of concerns about the dumbing down of news (that is to say in the words of Harcup and O'Neill the oversimplification of intellectual content).⁴⁹¹ In this connection, and to reflect the climate in which journalism of today is produced, Harcup and O'Neill proposed a contemporary set of news values more in keeping with the times. In place of the twelve news factors enunciated by Galtung and Ruge, Harcup and O'Neill articulated just ten news values.⁴⁹² Whereas the study of Galtung and Ruge was based on an academic approach, the study by Harcup and O'Neill was an empirical study based

⁴⁸⁶ Tony Harcup and Deirdre O'Neill, "What Is News? Galtung and Ruge revisited," *Journalism Studies* 2, no. 2 (2001): 261, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700120042114>.

⁴⁸⁷ Harcup and O'Neill, "What Is News? Galtung and Ruge revisited," 261.

⁴⁸⁸ Denis McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory* (London: Sage, 1994), 270.

⁴⁸⁹ James Watson, *Media Communication* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 117.

⁴⁹⁰ John Herbert, *Journalism in the Digital Age* (Oxford: Focal Press, 2000), 72-73.

⁴⁹¹ Harcup and O'Neill, "What Is News? Galtung and Ruge revisited," 262.

⁴⁹² Harcup and O'Neill, "What Is News? Galtung and Ruge revisited," 279.

on content analysis, and from which news values which appear in the contemporary press can be more readily identified. Furthermore, it is argued that Galtung and Ruge based their twelve “news factors” on abstract principles, that is to say, such factors were based on general ideas of which events should become news, rather than having regard to concrete events.

News values are not static but fluid and reflect the zeitgeist of the times. Allan Bell has added to the taxonomy, but not in ways which have any direct bearing on the subject matter of this chapter.⁴⁹³ Furthermore, Jewkes has added what she refers to as “News values for a new millennium”.⁴⁹⁴ Examples include threshold, predictability and proximity. However, strictly speaking, these are not new news values as such, but are factors by which news values are judged. Of greater relevance in respect of news values which concern criminal celebrities, two news values identified by Harcup and O’Neill, (which did not feature at all in the taxonomy of Galtung and Ruge) have been added, namely entertainment and celebrity. It may be that news of criminal celebrity straddles these two contemporary news values. However, this study goes a step further by proposing an additional and stand-alone news value, namely that of crime itself. It is proposed that such news value would cover both crime and criminals. News values are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, news may call on more than one value. The addition of crime to the taxonomy would mean that the criminal celebrity would straddle the boundaries of entertainment, celebrity and crime.

Jewkes notes that Chibnall’s *Law-and-Order News: An analysis of crime reporting in the British Press* “[R]emains an influential study of news values relating to crime reporting, and has led to numerous applications of the concept of news value in a myriad of different contexts”.⁴⁹⁵ However, on a point of differentiation, there is a distinction between identifying crime as a stand-alone news value, and the study of news values relating to crime reporting. Chibnall’s contribution to the field is therefore not in proposing crime as a stand-alone news value, but in tracing the development of crime reporting in the press as a specialist field of journalism.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹³ Allan Bell, *The Language of News Media* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 158.

⁴⁹⁴ Jewkes, *Media and Crime*, 49.

⁴⁹⁵ Jewkes, *Media and Crime*, 47.

⁴⁹⁶ Chibnall, *Law-and-Order News: An analysis of crime reporting in the British Press*, 48.

The exposure of news of crime and criminals in the press is an incontrovertible fact, justifying it as a news value in its own right. Such exposure is widely acknowledged. By way of example, leading UK journalist Andrew Marr notes simply that “crime is a heavy seller”.⁴⁹⁷ Meanwhile, in *Crime News is Prime News* Judy McGregor asserts that crime news will always be prime news, adding that “[S]ince the early days of journalism, crime news has been central to the news media.”⁴⁹⁸ A further example is to be found in the work of Steven Chermak who refers to a reporter with whom he was having a conversation as saying that crime is often reported in the media because of the “public’s insatiable appetite”.⁴⁹⁹ On a wider note in respect of news content (as inextricably linked with news values), Graeme Turner notes that:

The prevailing definitions of what counts as news and current affairs in the print and broadcast media have been changing for some time now. At least in the UK, the USA and Australia ... a shift away from politics and towards crime, away from the daily news agenda and towards editorially generated items promoted days in advance, away from information-based treatments of social issues and towards entertaining stories on lifestyles or celebrities, and an overwhelming investment in the power of the visual, in the news as an entertaining spectacle.⁵⁰⁰

A final example which is particularly pertinent to criminal celebrities comes from Jeff Ferrell, Keith Hayward and Jock Young who say “[The] media’s overall fascination with ‘celebrity’ tends to marginalize routine crime stories in favour of those crimes made more newsworthy by the sprinkling of celebrity gold dust”.⁵⁰¹ All these examples add weight to the above proposition that crime is justified as a stand-alone news value. This stand-alone news value also reaffirms crime as part of the staple diet of celebrity news.

⁴⁹⁷ Andrew Marr, *My Trade* (London: Macmillan, 2004), 94.

⁴⁹⁸ Judy McGregor, *Crime News as Prime News in New Zealand's Metropolitan Press* ([Auckland]: Legal Research Foundation, 1993), 1.

⁴⁹⁹ Steven M. Chermak, "Body count news: How crime is presented in the news media," *Justice Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (1994): 567, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418829400092431>.

⁵⁰⁰ Graeme Turner, "Tabloidization, journalism and the possibility of critique," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 2, no. 1 (1999): 59, <https://doi.org/10.1177/136787799900200104>.

⁵⁰¹ Jeff Ferrell, Keith Hayward, and Jock Young, *Cultural Criminology* (London: Sage, 2008), 128.

8.6 The rise of the tabloid press

This chapter asserts that *New Journalism*, and the *Northcliffe Revolution* which followed, laid the foundations for today's tabloid press. On a point of note, the word "tabloid" according to Stephens, had been coined in the pharmaceutical industry in the 1880s as the trade name for compressed, easy-to-swallow medicine.⁵⁰² By analogy, tabloid-style news is news which is easy to swallow.

Of the many daily newspapers in existence in the twentieth century, there were several big players. As well the *Daily Mail* launched in 1896 as mentioned above, there was the *Daily Express* launched in 1900 under the editorship of Arthur Christiansen, and the *Daily Mirror* launched in 1903 by Alfred Harmsworth under the editorship of Harry Bartholomew. Christiansen and Bartholomew had by the end of WWII according to Williams "[G]uided their newspapers to the top of the circulation tree based on a menu of sensation, scandal, human interest and readily accessible and well-presented journalism".⁵⁰³ "Their efforts", notes Williams, "[W]ere not about educating people, but producing an 'exciting newspaper' which provided its readers with an 'escapist view of the world'".⁵⁰⁴ This escapist view of the world it should be noted is consistent with the argument advanced elsewhere in this thesis namely that those who follow celebrities in general, or for the purposes of this thesis criminal celebrities in particular, do so by entering into an illusory alternative life of escapism.

Whilst the *popular press* over time assumed an increasingly tabloid agenda, it was not until the 1970s according to Williams, that the tabloid became an established feature of the British Press.⁵⁰⁵ Whilst the *Daily Mirror* had appeared in tabloid form since 1935, Rupert Murdoch's *The Sun* led the march towards greater tabloidisation by going tabloid in 1969 followed by the *Daily Mail* in 1971 and the *Daily Express* in 1977.⁵⁰⁶ Williams contends that following the purchase of *The Sun* by Rupert Murdoch in 1969 the newspaper dominated the market for the next twenty years, and that it achieved this by pushing the newspaper's content relentlessly downmarket and by a combination of brilliant marketing and innovative layout. On the basis of an argument

⁵⁰² Stephens, *A History of News*, 198.

⁵⁰³ Williams, *Get Me a Murder A Day! A History of Mass Communication in Britain*, 221.

⁵⁰⁴ Williams, *Get Me a Murder A Day! A History of Mass Communication in Britain*, 221.

⁵⁰⁵ Williams, *Read all About It! A history of the British Newspaper*, 197.

⁵⁰⁶ Williams, *Read all About It! A history of the British Newspaper*, 197.

that downmarket and dumbing-down are inexorably intertwined, Bairstow in a scathing attack on the dumbing down of the tabloid press says that “It is a format which demands a degree of oversimplification perfectly suited to the dramatization of the trivial and the sordid into the sensational”.⁵⁰⁷ With his pen still dipped in vitriolic ink, Bairstow further criticises the tabloid press as comprising “The metamorphosis of relatively popular journalism, into the junk food of the mass mind market”.⁵⁰⁸ Moreover, within the context of a discussion of the rise of the tabloid press, Williams comments that “The decline in the amount of news coverage has led some to query whether the tabloids can any longer be considered newspapers; rather they are scandal sheets”.⁵⁰⁹ Williams further notes of the tabloid press that “The downward slide has brought about drastic revisions of news values”.⁵¹⁰

Having earlier discussed news values to determine *what* makes the news, this chapter now turns to *how* the presentation of such news has changed over time. In this respect, the chapter will discuss firstly style, presentation and content with specific reference to the tabloid press, and secondly linguistic techniques.

8.6.1 Style, presentation and content

As to style presentation and content, the format of the tabloid press is not new and has a long history. Certainly, it is argued, the form and content of certain newspapers after the arrival of *New Journalism* and then the *Northcliffe Revolution* began to resemble in all but name what was to become the tabloid press. Testament to this history can be found in an article *Journalism Old and New* from as long ago as 1905. The article records a conversation between writer, journalist and editor Edward Dicey and another editor, in which the other editor said: “The newspaper-reading public of today want to be amused, not instructed. They do not wish to use their minds more than they can help it. They like to have their mental food given to them in minces and snippets, not in chops and joints. They prefer smart headed paragraphs to able leading articles”.⁵¹¹ This conversation, it is argued, bears many of the hallmarks of the modern tabloid press. Moreover, and with reference to the above part of the conversation which said

⁵⁰⁷ Bairstow, *Fourth-Rate Estate: An Anatomy of Fleet Street*, 45.

⁵⁰⁸ Bairstow, *Fourth-Rate Estate: An Anatomy of Fleet Street*, 42.

⁵⁰⁹ Williams, *Get Me a Murder A Day! A History of Mass Communication in Britain*, 224.

⁵¹⁰ Williams, *Get Me a Murder A Day! A History of Mass Communication in Britain*, 224.

⁵¹¹ Edward Dicey, "Journalism, New and Old," *Fortnightly Review* no. LXXXIII (1905): 917.

the newspaper-reading public “do not wish to use their minds more than they can help it”, Williams touches on this self-same point. Williams notes a content analysis of news articles contained in both the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror* during the inter-war years found a decline in the space devoted to the coverage of public affairs, such as to prompt commentators of the day to find “think stuff unwanted” in the press. In other words, if the reader had to think about what was presented as news, then there was no room for it in the *popular press*.⁵¹² Dickey’s above conversation and the above comment concerning “Think stuff unwanted”, comprise evidence of the ever dumbing down of news. As noted above Harcup and O’Neill were concerned about the dumbing down of news, which is one of the factors which caused them to consider a new and contemporary set of news values.⁵¹³

8.6.2 Linguistic techniques

Within the context of the criminal celebrity, it is argued that news presented in the way or style of infotainment, not only merges (or even blurs) information and entertainment but also presents the criminal celebrity in a way which blurs fame and notoriety. There are many linguistic tools or stylistic devices or indeed the use of manipulative language itself which can be used to this end. *Language and Crime: Constructing Offenders and Victims in Newspaper Reports* offers a rich array of examples in respect of crime news, not so much in respect of *what* is reported, but *the way* in which it is reported.⁵¹⁴ However, this part of the chapter will focus on just two such individual *tools* for the effective dissemination of news of criminal celebrities. The first is the use of superlatives which will draw on the work of Lowenthal.⁵¹⁵ The second is the use of sensationalism, a tool which is used liberally in the tabloid press to enrich and even enhance stories.

Lowenthal notes that by applying the superlative (which he refers to as a “rhetorical gadget”), the average is transformed into the extraordinary.⁵¹⁶ Lowenthal discusses the use of superlatives within the context of biographies and biographers.

⁵¹² Williams, *Read all About It! A history of the British Newspaper*, 159-60.

⁵¹³ Harcup and O’Neill, “What Is News? Galtung and Ruge revisited,” 262.

⁵¹⁴ Ulrike Tabbert, *Language and crime: Constructing Offenders and Victims in Newspaper Reports* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), viii

⁵¹⁵ Lowenthal, *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*.

⁵¹⁶ Lowenthal, *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*, 130.

However, this chapter will borrow from his discussion in applying the same considerations in respect of this linguistic device as used in the popular/tabloid press concerning stories of criminal celebrities.

Lowenthal notes that if a biographer had to convince himself and his public that he is *really* selling an excellent human being, he sometimes is not satisfied with the ration of one superlative per sentence but has to pack a lot of them into a single passage.⁵¹⁷ Lowenthal then notes that such wholesale distribution of highest ratings defeats its own purpose. “Everything”, he says “is presented as something unique, unheard of, outstanding. Thus nothing is unique, unheard of, outstanding. Totality of the superlative means totality of the mediocre. It levels the presentation of human life to the presentation of merchandise”.⁵¹⁸ This passage from Lowenthal, it is argued, ties in with the earlier reference in this chapter to commodification which argued that celebrities are commodified, the audience is commodified, and even the media is commodified – not least news itself.

This chapter now continues by seeking to develop Lowenthal’s above assertion that “Totality of the superlative means totality of the mediocre”. What Lowenthal is saying is that if the superlative is used to saturation point, it loses its impact. A similar point, which is also relevant to the use of sensationalism which will be discussed presently, arises out of the need for news to stand out. Jewkes refers to the ever-increasing number of news platforms. A consequence of this, specifically in respect of crime news Jewkes argues, is that crime news is more visual and more democratic in terms of its production, and that “It might even be the case that the ante has been upped considerably in terms of the level of sensationalism required to gain mainstream media attention”.⁵¹⁹ The position is therefore that with more news outlets all vying for the same news, linguistic techniques (in all their forms) need to be “ratcheted up” so that a particular news story will stand out. The argument is in danger of going full circle if, according to Lowenthal within the context of superlatives, the use of linguistic devices reaches saturation point so that nothing stands out. The only way to break the cycle is to ratchet up news content yet further in an ever-spiralling fashion with the use of

⁵¹⁷ Lowenthal, *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*, 130.

⁵¹⁸ Lowenthal, *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*, 130-31.

⁵¹⁹ Jewkes, *Media and Crime*, 5.

evermore extravagant superlatives and the greater use of sensationalism. Welcome the tabloid press, not least the way it portrays criminal celebrities in a picaresque way.

A final and general word from Lowenthal relating to linguistic techniques is now given, which has relevance to the presentation of news of criminal celebrities – particularly in the tabloid press. In this connection, Lowenthal notes that “Behind the façade of language there rules, just behind the architectural make-up, a versatility of techniques, gadgets and tricks, for which nothing is too expensive or too cheap that may serve the purpose of entertaining or being entertained”⁵²⁰

8.6.3 Sensationalism

Silvester Bolam, editor of the *Daily Mirror* 1948-1953 referred to sensationalism in the following terms: “Sensationalism does not mean distorting the truth. It means the vivid and dramatic presentation of events to give them a forceful impact on the mind of the reader. It means big headlines, vigorous writing, simplification into familiar everyday language, and the wide use of illustrations by cartoons and photographs. Every great problem facing us... will only be understood by the ordinary man busy with his daily tasks, if he is hit hard and hit often with the facts”.⁵²¹

Bolam was emphatic concerning the sensational presentation of news, and is also quoted as saying “We believe in the sensational presentation of news and views, especially important news or views as a necessary and valuable public service in these days of mass readership. We shall go on being sensational to the best of our ability”.⁵²²

A further definition of the word sensationalism according to a Report by the Royal Commission on The Press 1947-1949 is:

[P]artly an extreme manifestation of the peculiar values reflected in the popular newspapers, partly a desire to provide the excitement which the reader is believed, and has been taught, to expect. In the first form, sensationalism consists in publishing prominent and detailed stories which, as a witness put it [M]inister...to the imaginative personal gratification of the reader, news of crime, of the relations between the sexes, of

⁵²⁰ Lowenthal, *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*, 132.

⁵²¹ Keith Waterhouse, *Waterhouse on Newspaper Style* (London: Penguin, 1993), 36-37.

⁵²² Hugh Cudlipp, *At Your Peril* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962), 116.

extraordinary or scandalous behaviour, or of the private affairs of individuals who are the victims of some misfortune.⁵²³

The Report by the Royal Commission refers to an aspect of this form of sensationalism which has attracted much attention, namely the intrusion of privacy of individuals necessary to satisfy the appetite for intimate personal details.⁵²⁴ In this respect, the Report says: “The pain given to individuals is, however, only part of the evil of this practice. The greater evil lies in the degradation of public taste which results from the gratification of morbid curiosity, and in the debasement of professional standards of the journalist who, whether willingly or otherwise, minister to it”.⁵²⁵

O! Tempora! O! Mores! It is argued that the above particular paragraph is good evidence of the sea-change from privacy perhaps best associated with the Victorian Age, and visibility through the media which is one of the main hallmarks of celebrity in the celebrity age.

Sensationalism, it is argued, has its roots in what was once termed *yellow journalism*. *Yellow journalism* was the name given to a style of journalism which started in New York in the late nineteenth century and arose out of a circulation battle between Joseph Pulitzer’s *New York World* and William Randolph Hearst’s *New York Journal-American*. In a bid to outshine each other in the circulation war, Pulitzer and Hearst resorted to ever-increasing levels of sensational reporting. The *Yellow Kid* was a popular cartoon character which ran first in the *New York World* and then, as the *New York World* and the *New York Journal-American* battled it out, in both publications. This gave rise to the phrase *yellow journalism* as referring to the competition between the two newspapers, and which led to ever-increasing levels of sensationalist reporting.⁵²⁶

Joy Wiltenburg notes that sensationalism has a long history. She writes that “While sexual scandals and other shocking events have become staples of modern sensationalism, its chief focus has always been on crime”.⁵²⁷ Stephens adds to the

⁵²³ Royal Commission, *Royal Commission on The Press 1947-1949: Report* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office 1949), Paragraph 487.

⁵²⁴ Royal Commission, *Royal Commission on The Press 1947-1949: Report*, Paragraph 489.

⁵²⁵ Royal Commission, *Royal Commission on The Press 1947-1949: Report*, Paragraph 490.

⁵²⁶ Stephens, *A History of News*, 195-97.

⁵²⁷ Joy Wiltenburg, "True Crime: The Origins of Modern Sensationalism," *The American Historical Review* 109, no. 5 (2004): 1379, <https://doi.org/10.1086/530930>.

conversation by saying “Anyone who clings to the notion that today’s sensationalism as practised by a supermarket tabloid...or even the most shameless journalist is unprecedented, could be set straight by viewing any number of 16th and 17th-century newsbooks. *The crying Murther: Contayning the cruell and most horrible Butcher of Mr.Trat*, printed in 1624, would certainly do”.⁵²⁸ On a wider note, sensational accounts of public hangings were commonplace in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in England, not least through broadsheets, gallows speeches or the Ordinary’s Accounts, more fully discussed elsewhere in this study.

Sensationalism is a staple of the modern press, not least the tabloid press. However, the longevity of *sensationalist news* is noted in a report by the Royal Commission on The Press of more than seventy years ago. The Report made a finding that the marked rise between 1937 and 1947 in the circulation of the *Daily Mirror* and the *Daily Express* was evidence of the large and expanding public for sensational newspapers during those years.⁵²⁹

As mentioned above, the sensational presentation of news has its roots in *yellow journalism* and has continued under its better-known name of *sensationalism* or *sensationalist news* ever since. However, whilst sensationalism is embedded in the history of news, content which comprises sensationalism has evolved over time. In this connection, Williams notes sensational copy in popular newspapers before the First World War was not the kind of material we associate with the tabloids of today. Page three girls and salacious accounts of people’s private lives were not in keeping with the social mores of Edwardian Britain. Sensational news focused on crime and news of the unusual, bizarre and abnormal.⁵³⁰

It is argued sensationalism has become bolder against the backdrop of ever-changing social mores. Kenneth Tynan’s use of the “F word” on live television in 1965 is an example of what was sensational at the time but then became commonplace.⁵³¹ And thus, the ever-spiralling merry-go-round begins again with *sensationalist news* getting bolder and bolder to stand out from the crowd.

⁵²⁸ Stephens, *A History of News*, 100.

⁵²⁹ Royal Commission, *Royal Commission on The Press 1947-1949: Report*, Paragraph 565.

⁵³⁰ Williams, *Read all About It! A history of the British Newspaper*, 143.

⁵³¹ Bernard Levin, *The Pendulum Years* (Great Britain: Sceptre, 1977), 304.

8.7 The criminal celebrity in afterlife

The death and afterlife of the criminal celebrity, it is argued, gives the criminal celebrity a posthumous second bite of the celebrity cherry. Indeed, Boorstin argues that the dead hero becomes immortal.⁵³² Whether criminal celebrity or criminal hero, this part of the chapter will argue that the media and in particular the *popular press* play a vital role in helping to maintain this immortality. However, the underlying reason for posthumous celebrity is not the role of the media per se, but rather that it is influenced by popular culture itself. In this connection, Ruth Penfold-Mounce argues that within popular culture, death is not the end, but instead, a space where the dead can exert agency whilst entertaining the consumer.⁵³³ These arguably complementary factors will now be discussed in turn, firstly as to the posthumous life of celebrities in popular culture, and secondly as to the role of the *popular press* in the posthumous life of celebrities.

8.7.1 The role of popular culture in the posthumous life of celebrities

Former American President Barack Obama said in 2009 in respect of the funeral of pop star Michael Jackson, that “There are certain people in our popular culture that just capture people’s imagination. And in death they become even larger”, before adding “I have to admit that it’s also fed by a 24/7 media that is insatiable”.⁵³⁴ An article by Penfold-Mounce refers to this self-same quote by Obama⁵³⁵ before referring to some deceased celebrities who become what Lisa McCormick has termed within the context of dead musicians as the ‘special dead’.⁵³⁶ Penfold-Mounce discusses that for these ‘special’ celebrity individuals (which includes celebrities in general, although this conversation is with specific reference to criminal celebrities or criminal heroes), dying does not end their high-profile careers, but instead leads to a posthumous career rather than their resting in peace.⁵³⁷

⁵³² Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 63.

⁵³³ Ruth Penfold-Mounce, *Death, The Dead and Popular Culture* (United Kingdom: Emerald Publishing, 2018), Back cover.

⁵³⁴ K Hechtopf, "Obama compares Jackson to Elvis, Lennon.," (CBS News, 2009).
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/obama-compares-jackson-to-elvis-lennon/>

⁵³⁵ Ruth Penfold-Mounce, "Value, Bodily Capital and Gender Inequality after Death," *Sociological Research Online* 25, no. 3 (2019), 490.

⁵³⁶ Lisa McCormick, "The Agency of Dead Musicians," *Journal of the Academy of Social Sciences* 10, no. 3 (2015).

⁵³⁷ Penfold-Mounce, *Value, Bodily Capital and Gender Inequality after Death*, 491.

Beverley Skeggs refers to the notion of some bodies producing ‘expressions of value’ over time⁵³⁸, whilst Penfold-Mounce uses not dissimilar terms of ‘bodily value’ or ‘bodily capital’. Penfold-Mounce ascribes the notions of ‘bodily value’ or ‘bodily capital’ to celebrities which she seeks to quantify in terms of ‘cultural value’, that is to say as a type of intellectual property. She then develops the conversation further by saying that once celebrities die, their celebrity careers continue through the celebrity traces they leave (namely their bodily value or bodily capital acquired in life), the foremost of which is their celebrity image. Significantly, and with direct reference to the overarching theme of crime as entertainment considered in this study, Wayne Baker and Robert Faulkner see celebrity traces as an entertainment industry resource.⁵³⁹

Bodily capital is thus seen as an heritable asset. It is capable of being maintained and even increased after death by those who own and control the celebrity traces. On this argument, the death of a celebrity is seen as little more than a change of status. The dead celebrity occupies a liminal space between life and death but it is otherwise ‘business as usual’ where the dead celebrity lives on in popular culture and the commercial wheels continue to turn. As Penfold-Mounce succinctly put it in relation to dead celebrities, “[A]lthough the living physical body is gone, their celebrity image and the bodily capital acquired in life survive”⁵⁴⁰. It follows from this that the dead celebrity continues to live on as a cultural product. Seal adds to the debate by saying of the death of social bandits that “When outlaw heroes meet their usually bloody ends, the mythologization intensifies. Folklore, newspapers, artists, dramatists, poets and film-makers do their work, creating an ongoing afterlife”.⁵⁴¹ It is argued that these comments by Seal as applicable to social bandits are equally relevant to the criminal celebrity or criminal hero. Whilst Seal refers to “folklore, newspapers, artists, dramatists, poets and film-makers”, this chapter will refer solely to the chosen medium of the *popular press*.

⁵³⁸ Beverley Skeggs, "Imagining Personhood Differently: Person Value and Autonomist Working-Class Value Practices," *The Sociological Review* 59, no. 3 (2011).

⁵³⁹ Wayne Baker and Robert Faulkner, "Role as resource in the Hollywood film industry," *American Journal of Sociology* 97, no. 2 (1991).

⁵⁴⁰ Penfold-Mounce, *Value, Bodily Capital and Gender Inequality after Death*, 491.

⁵⁴¹ Seal, "The Robin Hood Principle: Folklore, History, and the Social Bandit," 80.

8.7.2 The role of the *popular press* in the posthumous life of celebrities

The *popular press* is both influential and adept in cultivating and reinforcing the myth of the criminal celebrity in life, and so too in death. In life, any event or pretext will be sufficient for the media in general, or the *popular press* in particular, to dredge up and re-state past stories of the criminal celebrity. This helps maintain resonance with the audience and helps perpetuate their celebrity. The same happens in death. Whilst the reporting of death itself may be a significant media event, it is the afterlife which marks the beginning of the second bite of the celebrity cherry. It may be that the high-profile funeral as a celebration of the death launches the celebrity into the afterlife. Indeed, Daniel Harris argues that the media, and specifically the Internet amplifies the expression of public grief to the extent that the death of a celebrity may give rise to a new “death cult”.⁵⁴² An example of the media amplifying the expression of public grief can be seen in the extent of the press coverage of the funeral of Ronnie Kray, the first of the Kray twins to die. Ironically, it was *The Times*, and not a tabloid, which carried this particular coverage in March 1995. *East End Honours villain-turned folk-hero* ran the headline. The article commenced:

The East End of London accorded one of its most infamous sons the equivalent of a State funeral yesterday. Crowds big enough to gladden the heart of an emperor turned out to shower the last journey of Ronnie Kray with tribute, and to greet his handcuffed twin brother Reggie as though he were a conquering hero. Thousands lined the route of the cortege from the funeral parlour in Bethnal Green where the body had lain in state in an open coffin under 24-hour guard, to St Matthew’s Church nearby... [and] aside the text, the image shows six plumed black horses leading the hearse followed by more than twenty limousines, and thousands of people lining the streets.

The article then continued with a further headline on the following page saying “Thousands bid grand farewell to gangster turned local hero”.⁵⁴³ Furthermore, a headline in the *Sunday Times* reporting on the funeral boasted the Kray twins as “Much admired murderers”. The article commenced “They said the funeral would be as big as Churchill’s and they were not wrong. Last Wednesday, it took two hours for the

⁵⁴² Daniel Harris, "Celebrity Deaths," (Yellow Springs: Antioch University, 2008), 617.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25475638>

⁵⁴³ Alan Hamilton and Stewart Tendler, "East End honours villain turned folk hero," *The Times*, March 30 1995, 1 and 3.

horse-drawn carriage carrying Ronnie Kray's body to get from St. Matthew's Church in Bethnal Green to Chingford Mount Cemetery, and an estimated 50,000 watched its progress along the way".⁵⁴⁴ It is not possible to pinpoint the apogee of the celebrity of the Kray twins with any degree of accuracy, but arguably the lavish press coverage of the funeral of the dominant twin Ronnie Kray marked this point.

8.8 Afterlife

Ronnie Kray died on March 17, 1995 and his afterlife in the media commenced the very following day even before his funeral. "A nice man, Ronnie. And good to his mum" ran the headline of an article in *The Independent* dated March 18, 1995, followed by a sub-headline bearing the words "The death of one Kray will not dull the myth that has recast sociopaths as folk villains".⁵⁴⁵ Surviving twin Reggie Kray died on October 1, 2000, and there is seemingly no limit to the number of newspaper articles which keep the memory of the Kray twins alive. "The cult of the Krays lives on" trumpets the headline of a further article in *The Times* in October 2000 shortly after the death of Reggie Kray. The article refers to the words of their trial judge Mr Justice Melford Stevenson saying that the public needed a rest from the brothers' activities before handing down thirty-year sentences to each of them. However, the article suggests such words fell on deaf ears, and that in fact "The public wanted more and more."⁵⁴⁶

Earlier, this chapter referred to the audience being the key driver in creating the demand for celebrities, including criminal celebrities. This part of the chapter likewise maintains that the audience is the key driver in maintaining the posthumous demand for celebrities (for example Elvis Presley or John Lennon) and criminal celebrities (for example the Kray twins). This study now turns to an article by Elizabeth Barry which investigates the changes in the nature of commemorating death. The relevance to the role of the audience will not be immediately clear but will become so. As far back as the eighteenth century, Barry notes that fame and death found a new relationship, and that the huge expansion of popular print journalism in the late eighteenth century brought with it the possibility that almost anyone "might find a form of secular

⁵⁴⁴ "Much admired murderers," *News Review. Sunday Times*, April 2 1995, p2 (S1), <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5kULD0>

⁵⁴⁵ Jim White, "A nice man, Ronnie. And good to his mum," *The Independent*, March 18 1995, 13, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5kUfN1>

⁵⁴⁶ James Morton, "The cult of the Krays lives on," *The Times*, October 24 2000, 3 (S1), The Times Digital Archive 1785-2012.

immortality in print and image".⁵⁴⁷ Moreover, Armando Petrucci notes that historically, the epitaph no longer seemed adequate, bound as it was by its "material link to the tomb", and a newly literate society needed something that could "circulate, be read, recited, quoted, exchanged and reproduced".⁵⁴⁸ Central to the change in the status of death and the dead, Barry constructs an argument in respect of "[T]he relocation of death and its written inscriptions from the monumental materiality of the tomb, to the two-dimensional medium of the newspaper". "Correspondingly", Barry continues, "[T]he audience for the written commemoration of death also changes from faceless posterity to that of the media-literate public of the present-day".⁵⁴⁹ This chapter recognises this media-literate public of the present day in those who follow celebrities including criminal celebrities. This public comprises the same audience as follows the celebrity and criminal celebrity in life and now follows them in death, thus creating a continuing demand into their afterlife. In supplying this continuing and uninterrupted demand the media themselves, and not least the tabloid press, benefit from the death of the criminal celebrity in the name of commercial enterprise.

8.9 Adjunct to media chapter

This study now turns to a discussion in relation to public relations as an adjunct to this media chapter, and its relevance to the criminal celebrity.

As already noted above, the media is seen as the middle man as between the celebrity and the audience and plays a crucial role in the creation of celebrities. It does so by promoting visibility and offering a distribution channel in relation to the activities of celebrities which contributes to their well-knownness in society.⁵⁵⁰ However, the media is not the only forum for the promotion of celebrities. Working side by side with media, public relations in its different manifestations offers a further distribution channel for their promotion. For their part, Turner, Bonner and Marshall see public relations as having a more dominant role in the media landscape than simply

⁵⁴⁷ Elizabeth Barry, "From epitaph to obituary: Death and Celebrity in Eighteenth-Century British Culture," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 11, no. 3 (2008): 260, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877908092584>.

⁵⁴⁸ Armando Petrucci, *Writing the Dead: Death and Writing Strategies in the Western Tradition* (California: Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998), 81.

⁵⁴⁹ Barry, "From epitaph to obituary: Death and Celebrity in Eighteenth-Century British Culture," 261.

⁵⁵⁰ Hellmueller and Aeschbacher, "Media and Celebrity: Production and Consumption of "Well-Knownness"," 1.

working alongside the media. They note whilst the areas of publicity, public relations and promotions (which this chapter will refer to either individually, or collectively as “public relations”) have been considered to be on the periphery of the media, they see these areas as a fundamental component of the media industries.⁵⁵¹

Turner et al assert that public relations comprise a celebrity support industry “[F]illed with media buyers, editors, writers, agents publicists, managers and promoters who produce the blend of national and international celebrity stories that have become familiar to us all.... This cadre of largely unseen workers – in fact, an industry within an industry – determines an increasing proportion of our media content”⁵⁵². Echoing the sentiments and indeed concerns of Franklin in respect of the Fifth Estate,⁵⁵³ Turner et al say the growing number of “PR merchants and spin doctors” influencing the news agenda is such that the Fourth Estate is in danger of being overwhelmed by the “Fifth Estate”.⁵⁵⁴ This concern is borne out of not only the increasing size of the so-called Fifth Estate, but the effect on media content.⁵⁵⁵ Turner et al cite Jeremy Tunstall as saying as long ago as 1971 that public relations had displaced journalism.⁵⁵⁶ Moreover, Franklin writes that “[T]he amount of PR-generated material in media is extensive and growing”.⁵⁵⁷ In this regard, Franklin cites the editor of *PR Weekly* as saying in 1996 “A considered estimate would put this at 50 per cent in a broadsheet newspaper in every section apart from sport. In the local press and the mid-market and tabloid nationals, the figure would undoubtedly be higher...”⁵⁵⁸ Whilst this reference to what the editor of *PR Weekly* says does not specifically refer to celebrities or more specifically criminal celebrities, it is argued that the reference to the amount of PR-generated material in the “tabloid nationals” estimated to be higher than fifty per cent, includes these areas given that celebrity in all its forms is a staple of the tabloid press.

⁵⁵¹ Graeme Turner, Francis Bonner, and P. David Marshall, *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), (i).

⁵⁵² Turner, Bonner, and Marshall, *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia*, 5.

⁵⁵³ Franklin, *Newzak & News Media*, 19.

⁵⁵⁴ Turner, Bonner, and Marshall, *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia*, 29. The Fourth Estate refers to the press and journalism, and the Fifth Estate refers to non-mainstream media outlets.

⁵⁵⁵ Turner, Bonner, and Marshall, *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia*, 30.

⁵⁵⁶ Jeremy Tunstall, *Journalists at Work*, London, Edward Arnold, 1997, 19, quoted in Turner, Bonner, and Marshall, *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia*, 30.

⁵⁵⁷ Franklin, *Newzak & News Media*, 19-20.

⁵⁵⁸ Franklin, *Newzak & News Media*, 20.

It was mentioned above that this media chapter remains true to one of the central themes of this study, namely crime as entertainment. Given the nexus between the media industries and public relations, it follows that any discussion in respect of public relations will identify with this self-same theme. According to Paul Hollander, the entertainment industry has a vested interest in the existence and multiplication of celebrities (which includes criminal celebrities for the purposes of this chapter) and devotes large resources to promoting them. Hence, says Hollander, “[T]he development of the ‘public relations industry’ and the rise of ‘publicists’ celebrities hire,”⁵⁵⁹ whilst Turner sees celebrity itself as a product of the promotions and publicity industries.⁵⁶⁰

Publicity is the lifeblood of celebrities; it is the very oxygen of their existence. In this respect, the focus of an article by Chris Hackley and Rungpaka Amy Hackley is to argue that celebrity does not really exist outside of promotional activity,⁵⁶¹ whilst Kate Fitch sees celebrity as hinging on a strong media profile.⁵⁶²

In the celebrity age, the burgeoning celebrity industry has witnessed the emergence of celebrity chefs, celebrity authors, celebrity doctors, celebrity lawyers and even celebrity make-up artists. There is celebrity almost anything – including criminal celebrities. Whilst the celebrity chef and others are a relatively new phenomenon, the phenomenon of the criminal celebrity is nothing new, and indeed is steeped in history. However, what is new since the days of criminal celebrities of old, is an expansion of public relations in all its forms. The main focus of this chapter will therefore be to consider the correlation between the expansion of public relations and the rise of celebrity culture-including the rise of the criminal celebrity. This is not to suggest per se that an expansion of public relations means there are more criminal celebrities. Any such suggestion would be baseless. What is being suggested is that an expansion of public relations concerning the criminal celebrity gives the potential for

⁵⁵⁹ Paul Hollander. “Michael Jackson, the Celebrity Cult, and Popular Culture.” *Society* (New Brunswick) 47, no. 2 (March 2010): 150. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-009-9294-6>.

⁵⁶⁰ Graeme Turner, “Celebrity,” in *A Companion to the Australian Media*, ed. Griffen-Foley (Australia: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2014), 86-87.

⁵⁶¹ Chris Hackley and Rungpaka Amy Hackley “Marketing and the cultural production of celebrity in the era of media convergence,” *Journal of Marketing Management* 31, no. 5-6 (2015): 461-67, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2014.1000940>.

⁵⁶² Kate Fitch, “Seeing ‘the unseen hand’: Celebrity, promotion and public relations,” *Public Relations Inquiry* 6, no. 2 (2017): 160, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2046147X17709064>.

a larger audience to be reached, which in turn may account for a rise in the *popularity* of the criminal celebrity in the eyes of the increased audience.

8.10 The role of public relations

One of the many roles of public relations is that of promotional intermediary responsible for the creation and maintenance of a favourable and marketable public image of the client (that is to say the criminal celebrity for the purposes of this chapter). This is an image which will sustain the criminal celebrity's relationship with their audience, and which will be designed to heighten the affective connection with the audience, that is to say, resonant engagement. As well as a promotional tool, public relations is also a management tool, namely public relations concern the way news in respect of the criminal celebrity is managed in terms of the presentation of the criminal celebrity for public consumption. At bottom, the role of public relations is concerned with the commodification of the celebrity or criminal celebrity.

In the presentation of news, the public relations industry is capable of "spin" or even of lying, which may help stoke the fire of celebrity. It is argued that spin and lying are part of their stock-in-trade. In this connection, Franklin refers to the late publicist Max Clifford admitting "Of course I lie. I'm in PR. I lie all the time".⁵⁶³ Further, in an article in *The Independent* newspaper, music publicist Alan Edwards admits that he not only manufactures stories but would often "add a nought to what happened".⁵⁶⁴ As to public relations and news content, Edwards staged a show at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in 2015. The show, which included former Prime Minister Tony Blair's "spin doctor" Alastair Campbell as one of the contributors, was called *Always Print the Myth: PR and the Modern Age*.⁵⁶⁵ This revealing title offers prima facie evidence that the art of public relations involves telling the audience what they want to read or hear. In relation to the criminal celebrity, this is the myth which the media in all its forms both cultivate and perpetuate.

⁵⁶³ Franklin, *Newzak & News Media*, 19.

⁵⁶⁴ Ian Burrell, "Alan Edwards Interview: Publicist who worked with David Bowie on the often maligned world of pop PR," *The Independent* 2016, January 24, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/alan-edwards-interview-publicist-who-worked-with-david-bowie-on-the-often-maligned-world-of-pop-pr-a6830571.html>.

⁵⁶⁵ "Always Print the Myth: PR and the Modern Age" A Curious Invitation, 2015, accessed January 3, 2019, <https://www.acuriousinvitation.com/aboutalwaysprintthemyth.html>.

8.11 Celebrity Public Relations

Just as celebrities are now fragmented into individual classifications of celebrity chefs and others as mentioned above, public relations too have become fragmented with the expansion of niche companies specialising in celebrity public relations. In this connection, Fitch notes what she refers to as a “considerable crossover” between services offered by public relations and specialist celebrity management agencies,⁵⁶⁶ whilst Paul Ziek acknowledges the role of the specialist field of celebrity public relations in the promotion of the image of a celebrity.⁵⁶⁷

Fitch argues that public relations scholars have largely neglected celebrity public relations.⁵⁶⁸ The thrust of her article concerns the role of public relations as the “unseen hand” in the production of celebrity.⁵⁶⁹ However, the article is specifically relevant to this chapter in considering the impact public relations has on the increased visibility of the criminal celebrity, and the extent to which, in reaching an ever-widening audience, this may be a contributory factor in the rise of the popularity of the criminal celebrity.

8.12 Further adjunct to media chapter

Yet a further adjunct to this media chapter as an additional medium by which celebrity criminals are promoted, is the need to discuss the agency of criminal celebrities and the expansion of agency in the celebrity age. By way of background to this discussion, this study posits that in the celebrity age, and within the context of stories about criminals and their crimes offered as crime as entertainment, there has been a change of focus. This change has been from stories *about* criminals and their crimes, to crime being presented as entertainment *by* certain criminals themselves upon whom celebrity status has been bestowed. In other words, what is new in the celebrity age is an expanded form of agency. Criminal celebrities have therefore been able to take ownership of their own narrative, and have been allowed to exploit and flaunt their crimes and their celebrity for commercial gain. This marks a considerable cultural shift from the pre-celebrity age position when there was a clear distinction between right

⁵⁶⁶ Fitch, "Seeing 'the unseen hand': Celebrity, promotion and public relations," 161.

⁵⁶⁷ Paul Ziek, "Cultivating celebrity through public relations," *Celebrity Studies* 7, no. 1 (2016): 123, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2016.1131015>.

⁵⁶⁸ Fitch, "Seeing 'the unseen hand': Celebrity, promotion and public relations," 157.

⁵⁶⁹ Fitch, "Seeing 'the unseen hand': Celebrity, promotion and public relations," 158.

and wrong, and where attitudes to crime and criminals were governed by the social and cultural taboos of the day. This was a time in recent history when newly arrested criminals were often pictured in the press with a blanket over their heads to conceal their privacy. This is in stark contrast to the position in the celebrity age where the media spotlight is shone on certain criminal celebrities who seemingly take every photo opportunity which might arise to promote their celebrity. Two contrasting images of Ronnie Biggs make the point. One is from *The Sun* dated April 23rd 1970 showing an image in monochrome of what is implied to be a hooded Ronnie Biggs flanked by two policemen. This edition of *The Sun* is from day four of nine of a 'Biggs in his own words' tell-all serialised by the paper, and where the image dates back to the early arrest of Biggs some short time after the Great Train Robbery.⁵⁷⁰ The second image and contrasting image is a flashback contained in an obituary of Ronnie Biggs from *The Guardian*. This flashback colour image shows Biggs during his exile years confidently posing for the camera on some un-named sun-drenched beach. He is wearing an England football T-shirt and is looking bronzed, fit and happy.⁵⁷¹

The ability of criminal celebrities to take ownership of their own narratives involves *re-storying*, a concept discussed by Lorraine Warren and Robert Smith within the context of entrepreneurial businessmen. It is *re-storying* and entrepreneurial or perhaps poetic licence which gives criminal celebrities, in the celebrity age, the opportunity of portraying and promoting themselves to their best advantage.

8.13 Conclusion

Through the lens of crime as entertainment and using the *popular press* as the medium of choice, this chapter has sought to trace changes over time in the content of newspapers in general, with particular reference to how the criminal celebrity is both portrayed and reported. This journey commenced with *New Journalism* of the 1880s, which then led to a brief discussion of the so-called *Northcliffe Revolution* as an introduction to the tabloid press. A discussion of ever-changing news values has been integral to this history. Having considered changing news values in determining *what* is reported, the chapter then went on to consider changes over time in *how* such news

⁵⁷⁰ Ronald Biggs, "Ronald Biggs Talks," *The Sun*, April 23 1970.

⁵⁷¹ Duncan Campbell, "Ronnie Biggs, face of the Great Train Robbery, slips away with perfect timing," *The Guardian*, July 29 2017.

is presented. It did this by touching on two linguistic techniques; firstly, the use (or arguably the over-use) of superlatives, and secondly the use of sensationalism.

The media circus covering criminal celebrities does not end on their death. On the contrary, and as the above chapter demonstrates, it relentlessly continues into their afterlife where their celebrity image and bodily capital survive in popular culture. This afterlife continues alongside the media and the press in particular who are willing parties in perpetuating their myth.

An adjunct to this media chapter discussed the role of public relations and its expansion as an integral and fundamental part of the media industry, acknowledging, in particular, the specialist field of celebrity public relations in the promotion of the image of a celebrity. The chapter then concluded with a second adjunct by identifying a further promotional string to the bow of the celebrity in general or the criminal celebrity in particular, enabling them to professionally manage their own image and popularity to the best advantage through an expansion in the celebrity age of their own agency.

9

Criminal Celebrities: Resonance and the Audience

The relationship between the criminal celebrity and the audience is often couched in terms of degrees of resonance. But what is resonance, and how is it established? Penfold-Mounce refers to the etymological origin of the word “resonance” as meaning “to resound or reverberate” and notes that people resonate to a greater or lesser degree depending on the strength of the vibrations.⁵⁷² This is a useful starting point in discussing resonance as between the public and the criminal celebrity. In this chapter “the public” means the audience in general or, where specifically mentioned, the individual fan or follower of the criminal celebrity.

Penfold-Mounce writes that for individuals to become celebrated, there must be a connection with the public, and that it is the existence and strength of the connection between the potential celebrity and the public which can lead to the potential celebrity achieving celebrity status.⁵⁷³ This connection is tied to the concept of resonance which Penfold-Mounce sees as a relevant factor in how and why certain criminals achieve celebrity.⁵⁷⁴ Resonance is therefore not a passive concept, and a fleeting connection as between a criminal celebrity and the public (by way of example, a member of the public impassively reading about a criminal celebrity) is not sufficient to give rise to the concept of resonance. Resonance, rather, is seen as a positive concept in which the connection, as Penfold-Mounce argues, must stimulate a response or interaction.⁵⁷⁵ It is this active (albeit usually unilateral) response by the public which marks the progression from merely identifying with criminal celebrities, to resonating with them.⁵⁷⁶

Penfold-Mounce argues that crime type, context and image are factors which may give rise to resonance.⁵⁷⁷ In respect of crime type, resonance does not have to be favourable.⁵⁷⁸ In this connection, Penfold-Mounce in effect distinguishes between good and bad, or even positive and negative resonance according to the crime type. An example of good or positive resonance is relevant to Great Train Robber Ronnie Biggs with media portrayals of him as a likeable rogue, whereas bad or negative or even dark resonance, it is argued, is more appropriate to cases which fall into the

⁵⁷² Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 64.

⁵⁷³ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 63.

⁵⁷⁴ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 70.

⁵⁷⁵ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 63.

⁵⁷⁶ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 64.

⁵⁷⁷ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 97.

⁵⁷⁸ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 97.

iniquitous criminal taxonomy suggested by Penfold-Mounce,⁵⁷⁹ of which a resonant engagement with the Moors Murders Ian Brady and Myra Hindley or Fred and Rosemary West of the “House of Horrors” ‘fame’ are examples.

In respect of context, Penfold-Mounce refers to social, political and cultural circumstances as relevant to the degree of resonance which might be stimulated in a given place at a given time.⁵⁸⁰ The relevance of context is that times and values change, as Penfold-Mounce argues: “In order to resonate with criminality to the extent celebrity status is achieved, the public must be in a contextual position that makes them susceptible to resonating with actions that are usually condemned as wrong or illegal”.⁵⁸¹

With regard to image, as the third factor in identifying resonance, Penfold-Mounce refers to image as being “[C]rucial in the creation of criminal celebrities, particularly via control management and marketing, which can be manipulated for the purpose of attaining celebrated status”.⁵⁸² It follows from this that criminals can only achieve celebrity through the active construction and transmission of an image or personae which represent them. Significantly, Penfold-Mounce notes the image of the criminal celebrity “[R]elies heavily upon public romanticisation and heroization”.⁵⁸³ These characteristics or attributes will be brought into relief in the individual case studies.

Within the context of stars and as already mentioned in chapter 6, audiences do not get the real person, but only a collection of images as standing for the real person.⁵⁸⁴ It is likewise the case with resonance where Penfold-Mounce notes it is the portrayed image of the celebrity with whom the public resonates, and not the real person. Therefore celebrities, notes Penfold-Mounce, are “a cipher, a pool of symbols and images which bounce around, occasionally connecting with sections of the public”.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁷⁹ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 90.

⁵⁸⁰ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 101.

⁵⁸¹ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 101.

⁵⁸² Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 104.

⁵⁸³ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 104.

⁵⁸⁴ McDonald, *The Star System: Hollywood's Production of Popular Identities.*, 6.

⁵⁸⁵ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 65.

In addition to referring to crime type, context and image in identifying resonance, Penfold-Mounce refers to observations by Kooistra that criminality done with style and an assortment of endearing qualities turns certain criminals into candidates for the role of celebrated cultural hero, evoking widespread public resonance.⁵⁸⁶ Penfold-Mounce and Kooistra are therefore looking beyond the crime type, context and image to personal characteristics or traits of criminals themselves, and this will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter when discussing charisma and the nexus between resonance and charisma.

Whilst the constituent elements of crime type, context and image and indeed style as suggested by Penfold-Mounce are highly relevant in identifying resonance, this chapter posits a more holistic consideration of factors which may give rise to resonance. This holistic approach involves a subjective test on the part of the public, or more specifically on the part of the individual fan or follower of the criminal celebrity. It is argued that such an approach will enable the net to be cast wider in the identification of elements which give rise to resonance in the eyes of the beholder. In this respect, this chapter now considers vicarious identification.

Resonance is not a one size fits all concept. Markus Wohlfeil, Anthony Patterson and Stephen Gould aim to explain a celebrity's resonance with consumers, that is to say, the public, by unpacking the individual constituents of a celebrity's polysemic consumer appeal.⁵⁸⁷ They argue that each celebrity offers individual consumers something which chimes with them personally.⁵⁸⁸ The findings of Wohlfeil et al were that the stronger the constituents either individually or symbiotically, the greater the appeal is to the consumer's personal desires, and the more such consumer feels emotionally attached to the particular celebrity.⁵⁸⁹ These findings support the holistic approach, in that, if the findings of Wohlfeil et al are correct, it follows that the greater the dimension of subjectively perceived resonant factors giving rise to resonance as

⁵⁸⁶ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 75.

⁵⁸⁷ Markus Wohlfeil, Anthony Patterson, and Stephen J. Gould, "The allure of celebrities: unpacking their polysemic consumer appeal," *European Journal of Marketing* 53, no. 10 (2019): 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-01-2017-0052>.

⁵⁸⁸ Wohlfeil, Patterson, and Gould, "The allure of celebrities: unpacking their polysemic consumer appeal," 2032.

⁵⁸⁹ Wohlfeil, Patterson, and Gould, "The allure of celebrities: unpacking their polysemic consumer appeal," 2025.

between the criminal celebrity and the individual fan or follower, the greater the resonance and, a priori, the greater the vicarious identification.

Theoretical explanations are important, but so too is their application in the real world. In this regard and on a practical level according to Penfold-Mounce, the public in resonating with criminal celebrities are able to live through them vicariously.⁵⁹⁰ This study will identify vicarious identification at three different levels of resonant engagement by the fan or follower of the criminal celebrity, each of which will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

9.1 Charisma

This chapter seeks to expand the constituents of crime type, context and image as suggested by Penfold-Mounce in the make-up of resonance, so that resonance might be considered in a broader light. It was suggested above that an holistic approach in identifying resonance might produce a better outcome than simply considering specific individual constituents. It was also suggested that such an approach needs to be considered from the standpoint of the individual fan or follower of the criminal celebrity, that is to say subjectively.

It was noted that as well as crime type, context and image, Penfold-Mounce had recognised the style in which the crime was committed as a further factor in the identification of resonance. This chapter now casts the net yet wider in seeking to identify other resonant factors and does so by considering the personal characteristics or traits of the criminal celebrities themselves. In this connection, and on the premise that criminal celebrities hold charismatic appeal, this chapter argues a nexus between resonance and charisma, to the extent charismatic appeal adds to resonant engagement.

Hans Heinrich Gerth and C. Wright Mills note the literal meaning of the word charisma is “gift of grace”.⁵⁹¹ Gerth and Mills explain that the origin of charisma as used by German sociologist Max Weber was to characterise self-appointed leaders whose followers believed them to possess extraordinary qualities.⁵⁹² For his part, Eric Cornelis Hendriks writes that “[C]harisma means to possess extraordinary or even

⁵⁹⁰ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 71.

⁵⁹¹ Hans Heinrich Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 52.

⁵⁹² Gerth and Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, 52.

superhuman powers: a privileged access to Truth, God or Nature, and the accompanying power to perform miracles or great heroic deeds, or to revolutionize our worldview".⁵⁹³ Hendriks questions whether the use of the word "charisma" as it was employed in a Weberian sense is appropriate in its application to celebrities in the celebrity age,⁵⁹⁴ whilst Rojek refers to the "classical term charisma" and its application to modern forms of celebrity as a misnomer,⁵⁹⁵ adding that "What the PR-Media hub calls 'charisma' today is really commodified magnetism."⁵⁹⁶ Stephen Turner adds to the discourse by noting that charisma has become mundane or every day and has lost its special force, not because it has become rare, but because it has become commonplace.⁵⁹⁷

Allison and Goethals apply a more modern meaning to charisma. In this connection, they offer a dictionary definition of the word charisma as "[A] personal quality attributed to those who arouse fervent popular devotion and enthusiasm". An alternative dictionary definition is then offered as "[A] personal magic of leadership arousing special popular loyalty; a special magnetic charm or appeal". Synonyms of "charm", "magnetism" and "presence" are also given.⁵⁹⁸

With reference to the above respective concerns of Hendriks, Turner and Rojek that the use of the word "charisma" may be inappropriate in its application to describing celebrities, it is argued that both language and the meanings or nuances of language change over time. It is a fact that the word "charisma" is oftentimes used by the media in its description of celebrities in general or criminal celebrities in particular. It is therefore argued the word charisma needs to be understood in the celebrity age akin to the above definitions as given by Allison and Goethals than the historic definition as applied by Weber.

⁵⁹³ Eric Cornelis Hendriks, "Breaking Away From Charisma? The Celebrity Industry's Contradictory Connection to Charismatic Authority," *Communication Theory* 27, no. 4 (2017): 348, <https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12120>.

⁵⁹⁴ Hendriks, "Breaking Away From Charisma? The Celebrity Industry's Contradictory Connection to Charismatic Authority," 349.

⁵⁹⁵ Rojek, *Fame Attack: The Inflation of Celebrity and its Consequences*, 62.

⁵⁹⁶ Rojek, *Fame Attack: The Inflation of Celebrity and its Consequences*, 63.

⁵⁹⁷ Stephen Turner, "Charisma Reconsidered," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 3, no. 1 (2003): 24, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468795X03003001692>.

⁵⁹⁸ Allison and Goethals, *Heroes: What They Do & Why We Need Them*, 65.

Just as the hero is in the eyes of the beholder⁵⁹⁹, and likewise with resonance, it is further argued that charisma is in the eyes of the beholder. Adopting the same subjective test to charisma as to resonance, it does not follow that if one person perceives charismatic traits in a criminal celebrity, that the next person will think the same.

Allison and Goethals see charisma as a two-way street. They explain that the charismatic leader or hero has to have certain qualities, but followers have to be willing to acknowledge and attribute those special qualities based on their own needs and commitments.⁶⁰⁰ However, within the context of an argument that charisma is a factor in establishing resonance, charisma is seen only as a one-way street, in that the criminal celebrity, as was the case when discussing resonance as above, is usually unaware of the existence of a particular fan or follower. The particular fan or follower, therefore, needs to find a unilateral fit or match with the charismatic criminal celebrity, which will be one of the ingredients giving rise to resonant engagement. This fit or match will be governed by the individual expectations and the mental make-up of fans or followers and is a further example of vicarious identification. To this extent, fans or followers may seek to identify with particular charismatic characteristics of criminal celebrity and to identify themselves with such person in their struggle or quest for their own identity. The quest for one's own identity is nothing new, and indeed is at the root of Campbell's seminal work *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*.⁶⁰¹

This chapter now returns to a discussion as touched on above concerning the charismatic impact of personal characteristics or traits of the criminal which may resonate with the public in elevating the criminal to celebrity status. It is of course not possible to suggest subjective factors which might give rise to resonance; such factors are necessarily personal to the individual fan or follower and are influenced by the particular values of vicarious identification. However, using a broad brush, this study suggests certain overriding factors at play in the identification of resonance, and which are, it is argued, as important as crime type, context or image as suggested by Penfold Mounce. One such overriding factor is the quality of colour. In this respect, this chapter revisits an article by Klapp already referred to in chapter 7.⁶⁰² Within the context of

⁵⁹⁹ Allison and Goethals, *Heroes: What They Do & Why We Need Them*, 196.

⁶⁰⁰ Allison and Goethals, *Heroes: What They Do & Why We Need Them*, 66.

⁶⁰¹ Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*.

⁶⁰² Klapp, "The Creation of Popular Heroes."

the creation of popular heroes, Klapp refers to action or traits of putative heroes by reference to the quality of “colour”,⁶⁰³ and it is argued that the quality of colour equally applies to criminal celebrities and the identification of resonance.

In considering a further overriding factor in the identification of resonance, it is also necessary to revisit chapter 7 by again referring to a character identified by Klapp only as “Mr X”⁶⁰⁴ Mr X is referred to in this chapter not so much in connection with the identification of a hero, but in identifying that certain *je ne sais quoi* in relation to the criminal celebrity which gives rise to resonance, and which helps distinguish the criminal destined for celebrity from the majority of criminals who fall by the wayside of being just another criminal. It will be recalled that Klapp refers to “Mr X” (who might well be the archetypal criminal celebrity who features in this study) as “[T]hat special case where sin assumes its most appealing form”.⁶⁰⁵

In seeking to identify resonance, the case study in respect of Howard Marks will specifically put the individual factors suggested by Penfold-Mounce as above to the test, whilst the case studies in respect of Ronnie Biggs and the Kray twins will identify generally with such factors. Given this chapter argues that resonance is subjective, this necessarily involves an objective assessment of a subjective test. However the evidence, it is argued, is axiomatic, as the high-media profiles of the case-study subjects will demonstrate. The case studies will likewise seek to identify charismatic qualities in relation to the case-study subjects, which added to their resonant engagement and in turn to their celebrity profiles.

This part of the chapter will now turn to similarities as between resonance and charisma. As noted above, Penfold-Mounce identified context as one of the constituents of resonance, to include time and place as well as changing social attitudes.⁶⁰⁶ Context is likewise relevant to charisma, in that the charisma of celebrities (specifically criminal celebrities in general and the individual case-study subjects in particular) captures something of their time. Richard Dyer gives Marilyn Monroe as an example.⁶⁰⁷ The same example is given by Nick Stevenson who writes that “Marilyn Monroe’s charisma

⁶⁰³ Klapp, “The Creation of Popular Heroes,” 137.

⁶⁰⁴ Klapp, *Heroes, Villains & Fools*, 147.

⁶⁰⁵ Klapp, *Heroes, Villains & Fools*, 147.

⁶⁰⁶ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 101.

⁶⁰⁷ Richard Dyer, *Stars*. (BFI Publishing, London, 1994), 36.

came from her ability to move between the twin poles of sexuality and innocence in such a way that characterised a society that was relaxing censorship laws, being challenged by the feminist movement and encountering the spread of affluence".⁶⁰⁸ Stevenson offers 1950s film star James Dean as a further example of charisma within a given context, namely that of James Dean being viewed as the iconic representation of post-war teenage rebellion.⁶⁰⁹

A further parallel between resonance and charisma is that each of them can be positive or negative. As noted above, Penfold-Mounce identified that resonance does not have to be favourable.⁶¹⁰ This is likewise the case with charisma where Katherine DeCelles and Michael Pfarrer discuss the "dark side" of charisma,⁶¹¹ which it is argued is the counterpart of the dark side of resonance as touched on above. In relation to the dark side of charisma, Allison and Goethals write that villainous leaders can move followers by appealing to their basest motives and their capacities for evil.⁶¹² This, it is argued, was part of the charismatic appeal of the Kray twins which will be more fully addressed in their case study.

The findings of Wohlfeil et al as noted above in respect of resonance, were that the stronger the constituents either individually or symbiotically, the greater the appeal is to the consumer's personal desires and the more such consumer feels emotionally attached to the particular celebrity. The same considerations, it is argued, apply in relation to charisma, in that the greater the charisma, the greater the potential affective engagement on the part of the fan or follower of the criminal celebrity.

9.2 Levels of resonance

As mentioned above, Penfold-Mounce notes it is the existence and strength of the connection between the potential celebrity and the public which can lead to the potential celebrity achieving celebrity status.⁶¹³ In respect of the strength of the

⁶⁰⁸ Nick Stevenson, "Audiences and celebrity," in *Understanding Media*, ed. Jessica Evans and David Hesmondalgh (Maidenhead, England: Open University Press 2005), 140.

⁶⁰⁹ Stevenson, "Audiences and celebrity," 140.

⁶¹⁰ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 97.

⁶¹¹ Katherine A. DeCelles and Michael D. Pfarrer, "Heroes or Villains? Corruption and the Charismatic Leader," *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies* 11, no. 1 (2004): 67, <https://doi.org/10.1177/107179190401100108>.

⁶¹² Allison and Goethals, *Heroes: What They Do & Why We Need Them*, 205.

⁶¹³ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 63.

connection, this study posits a conceptual framework within which there are different levels of resonance, just as there are different levels of vibration within the dictionary definition of “resonance” as identified by Penfold-Mounce above.⁶¹⁴ The conceptual framework identifies three levels of resonance which will be discussed more fully later in this chapter. The first is resonance which gives rise to a unilateral relationship as between the criminal celebrity and the public at large. This is resonance which it is argued stimulates a response at the lowest level of engagement, but which falls short of a para-social relationship. The second and higher level, is resonance which is sufficient to give rise to a para-social relationship as between the criminal celebrity and the individual fan or follower. This second level may then lead into a third level of engagement or connectivity which gives rise to the fan or follower entering into an alternative life of escapism in following criminal celebrities. This study further posits that each level of resonant engagement gives rise to a correspondingly greater illusion of intimacy and affective engagement as between the fan or follower and the criminal celebrity. Moreover, this chapter suggests that these three levels of resonant engagement have porous boundaries, and that one level might flow into the next.

Whilst the unilateral relationship as the first level of resonant engagement is self-evident, this study will now discuss the para-social relationship at the second level of resonant engagement and the notion of followers of criminal celebrities entering into an at the third level of resonant engagement.

9.3 Para-social relationships

This chapter will draw on the work of Donald Horton and R.Richard Wohl in some depth because, as will be seen, there are distinct parallels between those who enter into a para-social relationship with criminal celebrities at the second level of resonant engagement, and followers of criminal celebrities who enter into an alternative life of escapism at the third level of resonant engagement.⁶¹⁵ Horton and Wohl said “One of the striking characteristics of the new mass media – radio, TV and the movies, is that they give the illusion of a face-to-face relationship with the performer....The most remote and illustrious men are met as if they were in the

⁶¹⁴ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 64.

⁶¹⁵ Donald Horton and R.Richard Wohl, "Mass Communications and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance," *Psychiatry* 19, no. 3 (1956), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1956.11023049>.

circle of one's peers".⁶¹⁶ The authors refer to such relationships as "parasocial relationships", which they identify as one-sided relationships that people establish with media personae. Such personae include celebrities in general, and criminal celebrities specifically for the purposes of this chapter.

The one-sided nature of para-social relationships needs further explanation. The relationship is seen as a curious one-way street; curious, not because the relationship is one-sided, and not even because it is illusory, but because the criminal celebrity will usually be unaware of the existence of the individual fan or follower. It is as if criminal celebrities are offering their exploits for sale via the media, and whilst the individual fan or follower is a ready buyer (in the sense of buying into a resonant relationship) the criminal celebrity is oblivious to this. The para-social relationship is also curious in that unlike normal social relationships, para-social relationships according to Horton and Wohl may be governed by little or no sense of obligation, effort or responsibility on the part of what they refer to as "the spectator". "He is free", say Horton and Wohl, "to withdraw at any moment. If he remains involved, these para-social relations provide a framework within which much may be added by fantasy".⁶¹⁷

Horton and Wohl draw an analogy between para-social relationships and the theatre. They refer to the theatre as an ambiguous meeting ground on which real people play out the roles of fictional characters. For a brief interval, the fictional takes precedence over the actual, as the actor (that is to say the criminal celebrity in the role of the actor) becomes identified with the fictional role in the magic of the theatre. This glamorous confusion of identities is temporary, and the worlds of fact and fiction meet only for the moment. And the actor, when he takes his bows at the end of the performance, crosses back over the threshold into the matter-of-fact world.⁶¹⁸ And so it is with the fan or follower of the criminal celebrity who enters into a para-social relationship at the second level of resonant engagement, or indeed the fan or follower who enters into an alternative life of escapism at the third level of resonant engagement.

⁶¹⁶ Horton and Wohl, "Mass Communications and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance," 215.

⁶¹⁷ Horton and Wohl, "Mass Communications and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance," 215.

⁶¹⁸ Horton and Wohl, "Mass Communications and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance," 215.

Horton and Wohl discuss the role of the persona within the context of the typical radio or television presenter (bearing in mind their article was written in 1956 at the very dawn of the celebrity age). They say “The spectacular fact about such personae is that they can claim and achieve an intimacy with what are literally crowds of strangers, and this intimacy, even if it is an imitation and a shadow of what is ordinarily meant by that word, is extremely influential with, and satisfying for, the great number who willingly receive and share in it. They “know” such persona in somewhat the same way they know their chosen friends”⁶¹⁹ Horton and Wohl continue by arguing that “The persona offers, above all, a continuing relationship.... His devotees ‘live with him’ and share the small episodes of his public life – and to some extent his private life away from the show. Indeed, the continued association as between the persona and the spectator acquires a history, and the accumulation of shared past experiences gives additional meaning to the para-social relationship.”⁶²⁰

Whilst the Horton and Wohl article is now rather dated as referring to new mass media as comprising radio, TV and the movies, the theoretical concept of the para-social relationship still holds good in the mass media world in the celebrity age. Jaye Derrick, Shira Gabriel and Brooke Tippin add to the discourse in respect of para-social relationships in noting that such relationships form as people spend time with the media personae (that is to say in a remote sense) and a sense of intimacy develops over time.⁶²¹ Derrick et al also note that the media personae become predictable, and fans come to believe that they know and understand them.⁶²² It can therefore be seen that the characteristics of a para-social relationship are such that followers of celebrities or criminal celebrities are capable of entering into such relationships at this suggested second level of resonant engagement.

⁶¹⁹ Horton and Wohl, "Mass Communications and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance," 216.

⁶²⁰ Horton and Wohl, "Mass Communications and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance," 216.

⁶²¹ Jaye L. Derrick, Shira Gabriel, and Brooke Tippin, "Parasocial relationships and self-discrepancies: Faux relationships have benefits for low self-esteem individuals," *Personal Relationships* 15, no. 2 (2008): 261, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6811.2008.00197.x>.

⁶²² Derrick, Gabriel, and Tippin, "Parasocial relationships and self-discrepancies: Faux relationships have benefits for low self-esteem individuals," 261.

9.4 An alternative life of escapism

The essence of an alternative life of escapism as discussed in chapter 5, is that escapism and the quest for entertainment each bear all the characteristics of a para-social relationship but at a higher level of resonant engagement.

Drawing on the writing of Bakhtin, Mike Presdee discusses the notion of a Rabelaisian second life within the context of cultural criminology from the standpoint of both the criminal (the transgressor) and the follower (the voyeur).⁶²³ In reference to the pleasure of crime, Presdee writes “[T]ransgressing and doing wrong are for many an exciting and pleasurable experience. For others, to be involved in some way in the act of transgression as a voyeur is pleasure enough. To watch, to be there yet absent, is enough”.⁶²⁴ In relation to the voyeur, Presdee adds “In a sense, others do our crime for us, and the multi-media deliver the pleasures to us via the Internet and a growing “reality” television. We can watch in secret without the disapproving “gaze” of the ordered rational world authority”.⁶²⁵ This quotation from Presdee leads to an argument that those who follow criminal celebrities at the third level of resonant engagement (be they “voyeurs”, using Presdee’s terminology, or simply fans or followers of criminal celebrities) themselves enter into an alternative life of escapism offering freedom and entertainment from the routine of everyday life.

There is more than a hint of an alternative life of escapism in the writings of Sigmund Freud. In this respect, Dolf Zillmann refers to Freud pointing to the powers of the playwright and actor. “These agents”, writes Zillmann, “are seen as providers of a *scheinwelt* ⁶²⁶ that enables the spectator (that is to say the fan or follower of the criminal celebrity for the purposes of this chapter) characterized as a “poor soul to whom nothing of importance seems to happen, who some time ago had to moderate or abandon his ambition to take centre stage in matters of significance, and who longs to feels and to act and to arrange things according to his desires, to attain the fulfilment

⁶²³ Presdee, *Cultural Criminology and the Carnival of Crime*, 30.

⁶²⁴ Presdee, *Cultural Criminology and the Carnival of Crime*, 30.

⁶²⁵ Presdee, *Cultural Criminology and the Carnival of Crime*, 30.

⁶²⁶ Scheinwelt means a world of make-believe.

of his thwarted wishes.”⁶²⁷ Zillmann continues in his reference to Freud in saying “The spectator wants to be a hero, if only for a limited time, and playwrights and actors make it possible for him through identification with a hero”. “Accordingly”, Zillmann further adds, “the fictional exposition may be seen as a forum that offers a cast of heroes and others with desirable characteristics from among whom the spectators, depending on their hedonistic inclinations, can choose parties for identification.” Zillmann further continues by saying “Freud’s winning formula thus suggests that we have our pick of the lot of heroes and villains (that is to say criminal celebrities for the purposes of this chapter). We enter into their emotional life, and we exit it as we please. We share euphoric experiences, but we also suffer through dysphoric ones.”⁶²⁸ Zillmann’s writing in relating to Freud are quoted at such length because it lies at the very heart of vicarious identification. Moreover, Freud’s “spectator” can also be clearly identified, it is argued, in the fan or follower of the criminal celebrity entering into an alternative life of escapism.

This section of the chapter concludes by referring to an article by Katz and Foulkes which concerns the use of the mass media as a means of escapism. As will be seen, the article neatly brings together that which has been discussed above, that is to say, the media, resonance, vicarious identification and the notion of followers of celebrity criminals entering into an alternative life of escapism.

Elihu Katz and David Foulkes write that “The favourite answer of popular-culture writers to the question “What do people do with the media?” is that they use it for escape.”⁶²⁹ People seek relief from or compensation for deficiencies in their own lives, and so they turn to the dreamlike world of the mass media for substitute or compensatory gratification.⁶³⁰ This is the point at which resonance as between the fan or follower and the criminal celebrity is established and which may lead to simple engagement at the first level of resonant connectivity outlined above, a para-social

⁶²⁷ Sigmund Freud, (1987). Psychopathische Personen auf der Bühne. In A. Richards (Ed.), *Sigmund Freud: Gesammelte Werke*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer-Verlag. (Orig.1905-1906) quoted in Dolf Zillmann, "The Psychology of the Appeal of Portrayals of Violence," in *Why We Watch: The Attractions of Violent Entertainment*, ed. Jeffrey H. Goldstein (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 190.

⁶²⁸ Zillmann, "The Psychology of the Appeal of Portrayals of Violence," in *Why We Watch: The Attractions of Violent Entertainment*, 190.

⁶²⁹ Elihu Katz and David Foulkes, "On the Use of the Mass Media as "Escape": Clarification of a Concept," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (1962): 379, <https://doi.org/10.1086/267111>.

⁶³⁰ Katz and Foulkes, "On the Use of the Mass Media as "Escape": Clarification of a Concept," 379.

relationship at level two or the fan or follower entering into an alternative life of escapism at level three.

Katz and Foulkes note that escapist worlds are made up of unreal or improbable people who are very good or very bad, and whose successes and failures conveniently cater to the supposed wishes of the audience. Vicarious participation in the lives and adventures of such characters is considered escapism which is “wishfully and vicariously” employed.⁶³¹

Katz and Foulkes refer to the psychological process of escape or escapism, and note that escape seems to mean identifying with a star or hero (that is to say the criminal celebrity for the purposes of this study) to the point that one loses oneself in a dream which cannot possibly have any feedback to real life.⁶³² This view, it is argued, identifies with the third level of resonant engagement referred to above, that to say the follower or fan of the criminal celebrity who enters into an illusory alternative life of escapism.

9.5 Conclusion

The first part of this chapter started by asking the question “What is resonance and how is it established?” The chapter considered factors which give rise to a resonant relationship as between the criminal celebrity and the fan or follower. An holistic approach was adopted to the identification of resonance, and an argument was advanced that there is a nexus between resonance per se and charismatic characteristics of a criminal celebrity which adds to resonance. Part of the holistic approach to the question of what gives rise to resonance involves intrinsic factors, not least the quality of “colour”.

The chapter considered different levels of resonance within a suggested conceptual framework as a gateway to a discussion firstly of unilateral relationships, secondly of para-social relationships and thirdly the notion of an alternative life of escapism. The chapter drew on the work of Bakhtin and the notion of a Rabelaisian second life in applying an alternative life of escapism to the fan or follower of the criminal celebrity who engages with such criminal at a given level of resonant engagement as a means of both escapism and of enjoying crime as entertainment.

⁶³¹ Katz and Foulkes, "On the Use of the Mass Media as "Escape": Clarification of a Concept," 382.

⁶³² Katz and Foulkes, "On the Use of the Mass Media as "Escape": Clarification of a Concept," 384.

10

Howard Marks – Case Study

This case study of Howard Marks is the first of three case studies to be discussed in this thesis. Chapter 6 sought to establish the process over time by which Hobsbawm's historic social bandit in the guise of Robin Hood had, by virtue of a gradual process of evolutionary change and development, metamorphosed into the criminal celebrity in the celebrity age. A consequence of this process, it was argued, was that the criminal celebrity can be identified in varying degrees in the popular imagination even if not in fact as the evolutionary and cultural successor of the historic social bandit. This same argument will be used as a broad backcloth in relation to this case study.

This chapter will discuss the criminal life and times of Howard Marks. This will include an account of his rise to criminal celebrity and how such celebrity was maintained. A brief history of Howard Marks the man will be given prior to considering him in a cultural setting. In this connection, the case study will first recapitulate on the historic cultural setting, that is to say, the structural conditions which gave rise to the historic social bandit as discussed in Chapter 3, before considering the structural conditions which prevailed at the time Howard Marks came to prominence. The purpose of this exercise is so that a benchmark can be established against which the extent of the cultural shift from that of the historic social bandit to that of Howard Marks as a criminal celebrity can best be identified.

The prime focus of this chapter will be the need to look beyond the criminal celebrity and the criminal activities which gave rise to the celebrity of Howard Marks and to consider his cultural persona. Instead of "cultural persona" Kooistra uses the term "cultural product". This term has connotations of commodification and commerciality. Indeed, Kooistra refers to the "Robin Hood criminal" as a product, including consideration of who markets such figure to the public.⁶³³ This commodification and commerciality will be discussed later in this chapter.

In addition to the cultural persona, this case study will also focus on the cultural image of Howard Marks as an extension of his cultural persona. However, the cultural persona and cultural image are only one half of the equation. The other half which is relevant in charting the rise to celebrity of Howard Marks is his celebrity persona and by extension his celebrity image. The central argument of this case study is that the cultural persona and the cultural image on the one hand and the celebrity persona and

⁶³³ Kooistra, *Criminals as Heroes Structure, Power and Identity*, 38-39.

the celebrity image on the other run parallel, and that in the celebrity age both are commodified and blur to the point where they merge in the name of crime as entertainment. It is the cultural persona and cultural image which provide the platform on which the criminal celebrity is built, and the commodification by the media or others of the celebrity persona and the celebrity image which completes the process. These two factors are interdependent in the making of the criminal celebrity. The commodification of the cultural persona and cultural image means that attributes which defined Hobsbawm's social bandit, not least the notion of the *good criminal*, are commercialised and lauded as attributes which now define the criminal celebrity. The consequence of this merger, it is argued, helps the audience identify the modern myth of the criminal celebrity in the celebrity age with the myth associated with Hobsbawm's social bandit in the guise of Robin Hood.

This case study will consider the cultural persona and the celebrity persona of Howard Marks through the lens of image. Specifically, it will consider the commodification of his cultural image which laid the foundations for his celebrity image and how he fitted into the "celebrity machine" in the celebrity age.

10.1 Howard Marks the man

Welshman Howard Marks (1945-2016) was born Dennis Howard Marks. However, he rarely used his first given name of Dennis and was known as Howard Marks or by any other of his forty-three aliases. One such alias was "Mr Nice"⁶³⁴ which caused a judge to once remark he had so many identities he must have had difficulty knowing who he was.⁶³⁵ The reason Marks is chosen as a case study is that he is seen as bridging the gap between Hobsbawm's historic social bandit and the criminal celebrity in the celebrity age, and indeed shares characteristics of each.

Marks was an international drugs baron who ostensibly only dealt in cannabis. Cannabis was perceived by much of the public as an essentially harmless *soft* drug no more harmful than alcohol. In this connection, Donald Thomas notes that in 1969, Lady Wootton (after whom the above *Wootton Report* was named) told an audience in Holland that smoking cannabis was "[A] form of protest by young people, who saw

⁶³⁴ Howard Marks, *Mr Nice* (Vintage, 2017), 2.

⁶³⁵ Tony Dawe, "Decline and fall of worldwide drugs empire," *The Times* (London), July 27 1988, 1, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5nKgh1>

their elders drinking whisky and could not understand why cannabis should be any more harmful”.⁶³⁶

Marks graduated from Oxford University in the late 1960s where he studied nuclear physics. The story of his drug-dealing started at Oxford where he initially sold cannabis only to his friends and acquaintances. However, from these humble beginnings, Marks was dealing in drugs full time by the age of twenty-five, and in a period covering the 1970s and most of the 1980s became one of the world’s foremost drugs barons. The drugs operations of Marks were on a huge commercial scale. When interviewed by Scroobius Pip (the Scroobius Pip interview), Marks said that as his empire expanded, he dealt with cannabis in “tonnes, and tonnes, and tonnes and tonnes”.⁶³⁷ An article in the Irish newspaper *Independent.ie* gives a flavour of the extent of the size of Mark’s commercial operation. The article commences “It’s been said that there are really only two types of drug dealers: those who need forklifts and those that don’t. At the height of his criminal career, Howard Marks who passed away in Leeds last Sunday at the age of seventy, was definitely in the former camp”.⁶³⁸ The Scroobius Pip interview tells of Marks acquiring great wealth. His business empire was therefore not altruistic, but in the public imagination, he still fitted with the image and myth of Robin Hood.

Howard Marks had a chequered career with the police which added to his celebrity profile. In the Scroobius Pip interview,⁶³⁹ Marks recounts that he was arrested three times. He relates that after his first arrest in 1974 and before being summoned to appear at the Old Bailey on narcotics charges, he skipped bail and went on the run as a fugitive for six and half years. During this time, he was said to be the most wanted man in Britain. Marks further relates that following his second arrest in 1980 he was spectacularly acquitted at the Old Bailey, admitting to Scroobius Pip that he had perjured himself in saying he had been in the employ of MI6 at the time of his drug activities (even though his relationship with MI6 had ended some years earlier) and

⁶³⁶ Donald Thomas, *Villains' Paradise: Britain's Underworld from the Spivs to the Krays* (John Murray Publishers, London., 2005), 263. Source not referenced by Donald Thomas.

⁶³⁷ Scroobius Pip, *Howard Marks-Distraction Pieces Podcast with Scroobius Pip #33*, podcast audio, Distraction Pieces Podcast, 1:37:56, 2015, Accessed March 1, 2019, <https://player.fm/series/distraction-pieces-podcast-with-scroobius-pip-61643/howard-marks-distraction-pieces-podcast-with-scroobius-pip-33>.

⁶³⁸ "Mr Nice:Howard Marks, international drug smuggler," in *Independent.ie* (April 17, Dublin, 2016). <http://www.independent.ie/entertainment/mr-nice-howard-marks-international-drug-smuggler-34628326.html>.

⁶³⁹ Pip, *Howard Marks-Distraction Pieces Podcast with Scroobius Pip #33*.

had arranged a false alibi to corroborate his story that he had only taken part in drug activities as an agent of Mexican intelligence. Marks was eventually brought to justice by the American Drugs Enforcement Agency following his third arrest. After entering a guilty plea, he was sentenced in October 1990 to twenty-five years in prison by the Federal Court in West Palm Beach, Florida. The term was reduced to twenty years on appeal, and Marks was released on parole after serving only seven years in Terre Haute Penitentiary in Indiana.

10.2 The social bandit as a cultural product

As mentioned in chapter 1, Penfold-Mounce conceptualises criminal celebrities into four categories, namely the social bandit, the criminal hero, the underworld exhibitionist and the iniquitous criminal.⁶⁴⁰ Howard Marks is a social bandit within such conceptualisation, and a noble robber within Hobsbawm's taxonomy of social bandits.⁶⁴¹ Hobsbawm sees the social bandit as arising out of *structural conditions* of the time. It is such conditions which provide the cultural backdrop or setting. The structural conditions which prevailed historically gave rise to Hobsbawm's concept of the social bandit in the guise of Robin Hood, and it is such conditions which precipitated his actions in making a stand against oppressors. Likewise, it is the structural conditions which prevailed at the time Howard Marks came to prominence which precipitated his criminal activities and in turn gave rise to his criminal celebrity.

Lying at the heart of these structural conditions, at least in an historic sense, was a perceived abuse of political power or a perceived social injustice and a reaction to such abuse or injustice by the social bandit on behalf of the peasant community to which he belonged. The acid test was that the social bandit arose when the equilibrium of communities or society was upset.⁶⁴² Moving into the present, it is pertinent to note that these structural conditions are not static. In this regard, and as already noted above, Kooistra says within the context of a discussion of heroic criminals, that "[O]ver time new meanings and values are given to the heroic criminal which [have] transcended the social context that initially provided meaning for his criminality."⁶⁴³ These new meanings and values are borne out of ever-changing structural conditions. Further,

⁶⁴⁰ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 9.

⁶⁴¹ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 46-62.

⁶⁴² Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, 31.

⁶⁴³ Kooistra, "Criminals As Heroes: Linking Symbol to Structure," 227.

Seal notes within the context of a discussion of social bandits that society apparently has a profound need for such figures, and the cultural tensions they reflect and engage have not disappeared but instead have adapted to changing circumstances.⁶⁴⁴ But what have structural conditions to do with Howard Marks? The answer is that it is the structural conditions which prevailed in 1960's Britain which created the cultural space for the emergence of Howard Marks as a perceived social bandit and a *good criminal* in the mould of Robin Hood. His stance that cannabis was a harmless drug and ought to be decriminalised was in sympathy with the prevailing attitudes of the counter-culture of 1960's Britain, and as will be seen, the drug-dealing activities of Howard Marks turned him into a nouveau cultural hero.

Hobsbawm said that Robin Hood can never die and that is why he is invented “[W]hen he does not really exist.”⁶⁴⁵ The symbol of Robin Hood, therefore, exists in perpetuity. In relation to a discussion concerning the heroic criminal, Kooistra argues that “The basic form of the legend remains unchanged”, adding that “Certain politicized lawbreakers are periodically recruited for the title role in this morality play, and when a national audience has existed for such tales, (American) Robin Hoods have appeared.”⁶⁴⁶ Seal adds to the discourse in referring to the emergence of Robin Hoods from time to time by saying “As long as society continues to generate Sheriffs of Nottingham, Robin Hoods will continue to oppose them. Many of those so celebrated may be undeserving of the honour, a reality that only suggests how important it is for us to have such heroes”.⁶⁴⁷ These “Robin Hoods” are represented by the social bandit or, in the celebrity age, by the criminal celebrity as the evolutionary and cultural successor of the social bandit as mentioned above. Howard Marks was the current incarnation of Hobsbawm's immortal Robin Hood. He filled the particular cultural space and wore the mantle of social bandit-cum-celebrity-criminal only for a finite period, replaceable by another Robin Hood when different structural conditions for the emergence of such a new figure might arise. This explanation captures the essence of the criminal celebrity as a cultural product.

⁶⁴⁴ Seal, *Outlaw heroes in Myth and History*, 138.

⁶⁴⁵ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 61.

⁶⁴⁶ Kooistra, "Criminals As Heroes: Linking Symbol to Structure," 227.

⁶⁴⁷ Seal, *Outlaw heroes in Myth and History*, 174.

10.3 Cultural persona, setting and image

Howard Marks was a criminal celebrity belonging to a particular time in British cultural history. To this end, this study focuses as much on the structural conditions, that is to say, the cultural backdrop or setting to Marks' celebrity, as it does on the man himself. The significance of the cultural backdrop is stressed by Mark Edberg and is particularly relevant to this case study. Edberg notes within the context of a discussion concerning Mexican drug traffickers as social bandits, that it is the cultural persona that symbolises resistance of some sort.⁶⁴⁸ Specifically, in respect of corridos,⁶⁴⁹ Edberg cites Hernandez as saying that in most narco-corridos,⁶⁵⁰ drugs and drug-traffickers themselves are not the primary focus, and that it is the conflict with authorities and other themes of opposition that are in the foreground.⁶⁵¹ This case study likewise contends in relation to Howard Marks, that in a cultural context it is his conflict with authorities and other themes of opposition which are in the foreground.

The cultural setting to the drug-dealing activities of Howard Marks, and the public mood in respect of cannabis, are vividly encapsulated in *The Wootton Report*.⁶⁵² It will be noted that the year of this Report coincided with the time of the permissive society or counter-culture of 1960's Britain, as well as the early years of drug dealing by Howard Marks. In the event, and as already mentioned in chapter 2, the recommendations of *The Wootton Report* which fell on the side of the decriminalisation of cannabis were not accepted by the Callaghan government.

The contents of *The Wootton Report* were such that they might have been drafted by Howard Marks himself as capturing the zeitgeist of late 1960's Britain. In the Scroobius Pip interview sometime following his release from prison for drug offences, Marks said of cannabis "Some laws are wrong and I just don't agree with them and

⁶⁴⁸ Mark C. Edberg, "Drug Traffickers as Social Bandits: Culture and Drug Trafficking in Northern Mexico and the Border Region," *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 17, no. 3 (2001): 269, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043986201017003005>.

⁶⁴⁹ The corrido is a popular narrative song and poetry that forms a ballad. The songs are often about oppression, history, daily life for peasants, and other socially relevant topics. It is still a popular form today in Mexico and was widely popular during the Mexican Revolutions of the 20th century.

⁶⁵⁰ A narco-corrido is a genre of folk music in Mexico concerning drug ballads.

⁶⁵¹ G.Hernandez (1992). El corrido ayer y hoy:Nuevas notas para su estudio [The corrido yesterday and today: New notes for study] In J.M.Valenzuela Arce (Ed.),Entre la magia y la historia:Tradiciones,mitos y leyendas de la frontera [Traditions, myths and legends from the border]. Tijuana, Mexico: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte cited in Edberg, "Drug Traffickers as Social Bandits: Culture and Drug Trafficking in Northern Mexico and the Border Region," 269.

⁶⁵² *Wootton Report*.

had no problem breaking them”.⁶⁵³ The position of Howard Marks, therefore, was that he disagreed with the law which criminalised cannabis. He believed the law was out of step with public opinion (a view with which *The Wootton Report* was cognisant), and that adults choosing to consume cannabis should not contravene the law, let alone be prosecuted. It did contravene the law, however, and Marks saw himself as “working outside the law”, in much the same way as did the social bandit of old. The view held by Howard Marks that the law was out of step with public opinion, was supported by the large advertisement in the form of a petition which appeared in 1967 in *The Times* as already referred to in chapter 2.⁶⁵⁴ Even Judge James C. Paine in delivering sentence on Marks at the West Palm Beach Courthouse in 1990 appeared to have had some sympathy with the belief by Howard Marks that the law was out of step with public opinion. In this connection, Judge Paine as a preamble to announcing sentence said “It is apparent, Mr Marks, that you regard the use of marijuana and its derivatives as consistent with sound moral principles, and it is also apparent that you have been quite willing to violate the laws which prohibit or control use, possession, or commercial transactions with respect to marijuana”. Judge Paine later continues by saying “I have taken an oath to administer justice, (and to) perform all duties agreeable to the laws of the United States. So, even if I agreed that laws controlling the use and sale of marijuana are inappropriate, even foolish, I would have to abide by them until Congress has repealed them. These are rules of society which the courts are bound to apply – whether you agree or not that these laws should be in place”.⁶⁵⁵

In his dealings with drugs, Howard Marks was perceived as a Robin Hood figure, who, rather like the bootleggers in respect of the supply of alcohol during the Prohibition in America between 1920 and 1933, procured and supplied cannabis to a ready black market. This was symbolically analogous to him stealing from the rich and giving to the poor. Moreover, in making illicit cannabis available to a ready

⁶⁵³ Pip, *Howard Marks-Distraction Pieces Podcast with Scroobius Pip #33*.

⁶⁵⁴ "The law against marijuana is immoral in principle and unworkable in practice," 5.

⁶⁵⁵ Marks, *Mr Nice*, 506-07. Considerable attempts have been made to obtain a copy of a transcript of the judgment in respect of Howard Marks from the sentencing court in West Palm Beach, Florida. The court confirmed the case number as 88cr00469 and that the original court papers are held by National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in Ellenwood, Georgia. A request for a copy of the transcript was duly made of NARA online who replied from email address orderonlinePM@nara.gov on December 10, 2019 quoting Order number CR31-540114951E saying they could not trace this case because of its age. Further enquires have been made of both West Palm Beach Court and NARA but to no avail.

market, an article in *The Independent on Sunday* tells how Marks saw himself and was seen by others as performing a public service, thus further enhancing his Robin Hood image.⁶⁵⁶ Marks was therefore portrayed as a social bandit and hero in the mould of Robin Hood in the eyes of his followers. The Robin Hood image of Marks was further enriched in that he was seen as standing against the social injustice of the illegality of cannabis which he and his acolytes and even sympathisers perceived as an unjust law. By reference to this Robin Hood image, Marks was seen as a criminal in the eyes of the law, whilst those members of the public who agreed with his stance on cannabis saw him as a hero and even a martyr to the cause. In relation to his image, Marks was also seen as a symbol⁶⁵⁷ in standing against *The Establishment* which viewed those who used cannabis as criminals and thus as deviants and outsiders within the meaning ascribed by Becker.⁶⁵⁸

Kooistra refers to “Robin Hood criminals” as fitting into a formula with villains cast into the role of victim.⁶⁵⁹ Such was the case with Howard Marks who was seen as a victim of social injustice. This engendered ever-increasing public support and in turn, promoted his celebrity status.

10.3.1 Commodification of cultural image

The factors or characteristics at play in the make-up of the cultural image of the social bandit-cum- criminal celebrity are manifold. However, it is argued there are only two constant key factors or characteristics. The first is the notion of the good criminal as discussed in chapter 6, and the second is the public perception of the social bandit not as a criminal, but as a victim. It was argued above in respect of the criminal celebrity, that in the celebrity age the cultural persona and the cultural image on the one hand and the celebrity persona and the celebrity image run in parallel, and that both are commodified and blur to the point where they merge in the name of crime as entertainment. The practical manifestation of this argument in respect of Howard Marks can be seen in the media in general and the press in particular, where Marks was assuredly portrayed as a good criminal. However, his portrayal as a victim of

⁶⁵⁶ Lynn Barber, "Lynn Barber on Howard Marks. Her old friend turned drugs smuggler," Review, *The Independent on Sunday*, August 5, 1990, 12.

⁶⁵⁷ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 139.

⁶⁵⁸ Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, 3-8.

⁶⁵⁹ Kooistra, "Criminals As Heroes: Linking Symbol to Structure," 227.

social injustice in the press was not so much by the media but by Marks himself as a “wronged man”, giving him the opportunity, it is argued, of re-writing his own cultural script to fit with the myth of Robin Hood. An article in *The Independent on Sunday* article in 1990 refers to Marks relating how he was “the victim of American judicial colonialism”,⁶⁶⁰ whilst the *Daily Mirror* in 1996 says that on his *Mr Nice* roadshow, Marks will “[R]ail once more against his outrageous treatment at the hands of government agencies”.⁶⁶¹

10.3.2 Commodification of celebrity image

Howard Marks already had a high criminal profile and had been the subject of media interest long before his release from prison. However, it is argued his rise to celebrity (or at least the heights it reached) only started in earnest after his release. In the Scroobius Pip interview,⁶⁶² Marks says that following his release he was approached by several publishers for his life story. His first book was his autobiography called *Mr Nice* which was an international bestseller of more than one million copies. The title *Mr Nice*, as noted above, was one of his many aliases. Marks also tells how he started to give readings at various literary outlets to promote his book. He then says he was approached by Avalon Promotion at one of the readings who suggested he should turn his readings into a one-man show.⁶⁶³ The result was that Marks performed twenty-five live shows at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival telling the story of his life and crimes in the form of entertainment. Marks became a travelling showman playing at theatres and other venues across the United Kingdom. It was this marketing by Howard Marks of himself coupled with allowing the public to have access to him which raised his celebrity profile. As well as being an entertainer, Marks was also billed as a comedian. An example of this can be found in *The Times* in 1999 which advertised forthcoming events in London. The advertisement said “Howard Marks – Conversations with Mr Nice” followed an introduction to his show saying “The notorious drugs smuggler and bestselling author of Mr Nice with an evening of anecdotal humour”.⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶⁰ Barber, "Lynn Barber on Howard Marks. Her old friend turned drugs smuggler," 8.

⁶⁶¹ Richard Pendlebury, "Deification of a dirty drug dealer," *Daily Mail* (London), September 6, 1996, 22-23, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5nMph2>

⁶⁶² Pip, *Howard Marks-Distraction Pieces Podcast with Scroobius Pip #33*.

⁶⁶³ Avalon Promotions Limited is a company which provides media promotion services, specialising in live acts.

⁶⁶⁴ "Comedy," in *The Times* (October 2, 1999), 41 (S2). <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5nMee5>.

The two immediate paragraphs as above have discussed the commodification of both the cultural image and the celebrity image of Howard Marks. However, it is argued there is a further image which needs to be considered, and that is the media image. In this connection, a distinction needs to be drawn between objective and factual reporting by the media, (even if the facts are distorted or masked as infotainment) and subjective reporting or even bias which conveys a particular impression or stance. Reference to two separate and contrasting newspaper articles will make the point. The first is a 1990 article in *The Times*, a newspaper not normally prone to bias or sensationalism. The opening lines of the article headed “Marco Polo of the drug world is jailed for 25 years”, said “Howard Marks, Oxford graduate, sometime MI6 informant and drugs dealer extraordinary...”⁶⁶⁵ The second article is from *The Guardian* in 2016 which refers within the context of “reputational laundering” to the greatest feat of Howard Marks being his transformation in the public imagination from that of criminal into an alternative national treasure. This article, it is argued, added to the commodification of the image of Howard Marks who was therefore portrayed not only as a good criminal, but also as a “national treasure”, and is an example of the media itself taking a stance which helps stoke the fire of celebrity.⁶⁶⁶

10.4 Media review

The media embraced Marks as a criminal celebrity, and this chapter will presently embark on a brief media review of how he was portrayed in a picaresque fashion, specifically in the press. However, before doing so this chapter touches on the use of certain words which the media often employ to describe or glamorise or indeed glorify criminal celebrities including Howard Marks. Whilst chapter 8 has already discussed the use by the media of superlatives and sensationalism, this part of the chapter focuses on descriptive and regularly used labels such as “myth”, “legend”, or “folk-legend” in reference to criminal celebrities. Indeed, this study recalls reference to the use of Becker’s labelling in chapter 7 in relation to the criminal hero. That chapter argued the labelling of a criminal hero has the same effects (but in a positive sense) as the labelling of a deviant. It further argued that the criminal hero once labelled lives up to the label

⁶⁶⁵ Stewart Tendler, "Marco Polo of the drug world is jailed for 25 years," in *The Times* (October 19, 1990), 3. link.gale.com/apps/doc/IF0503257600/GDCS?u=blibrary&sid=GDCS&xid=cb6d7aba.

⁶⁶⁶ Tom Wainwright, "Drug barons like Howard Marks always claim to be Mr Nice. Don't fall for it," *The Guardian* 2016, April 13, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/apr/12/drug-baron-howard-marks-mr-nice-violent-mafia>.

to the extent the label becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy – namely that it sets in motion several mechanisms which conspire to shape the person (in this case the criminal celebrity) in the image people have of such criminal.⁶⁶⁷ It is likewise argued that the use by the media of words such as “myth” and “legend” have the same effect in colouring the image of the criminal celebrity and in turn the perception of the public.

Criminal celebrities are shrouded in myth. Kooistra argues in relation to the image of the social bandit that the reality must match the myth, and that “those who recognized (sic) the symbolic potential of a lawbreaker market him to the public as a[n] heroic figure, selecting different aspects of his criminality, and drawing on other mythic formulas to fit the outlaw into the Robin Hood genre”.⁶⁶⁸ Kooistra further notes that “[I]t is important to recognise that the heroic outlaw of the West is a mythological creature and myths are by nature ambiguous and open-ended”.⁶⁶⁹ Kooistra then continues by citing Claude Levi-Strauss as saying that myths possess “[A]n interminable diversity of sequences and themes, so that they may have continued relevance in changing social climates and for diverse audiences”.⁶⁷⁰ But what does the word myth really mean when applied to criminal celebrities? It is argued that a definition of the word myth offered by Richard Hofstadter captures its relevance to criminal celebrities. Hofstadter says “By ‘myth’, I do not mean an idea that is simply false, but rather one that so effectively embodies men’s values that it profoundly influences their way of perceiving reality and hence their behaviour. In this sense, myths have varying degrees of fiction or reality”.⁶⁷¹ This case study of Howard Marks shows how he was mythologised in a particular way. The case studies in respect of Ronnie Biggs and the Kray twins which will follow, will likewise show how they were mythologised in their different ways.

The word “legend” is also used by the media in describing criminal celebrities and is arguably largely synonymous with the word myth. Just as “The myth of Robin Hood” was given as an example of how the word myth might be used in a sentence, “The

⁶⁶⁷ Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, 34.

⁶⁶⁸ Kooistra, "Criminals As Heroes: Linking Symbol to Structure," 225.

⁶⁶⁹ Kooistra, *Criminals as Heroes Structure, Power and Identity*, 141.

⁶⁷⁰ Claude Levi-Strauss, 1966. Overture to le Cru et le cuit in Jacques Ehrmann (ed.), *Structuralism*. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books quoted in Kooistra, *Criminals as Heroes Structure, Power and Identity*, 141.

⁶⁷¹ Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 24.

legend of Howard Marks” says much the same thing. However, a further definition of “legend” is simply that of a famous person, and in this connection, the word is lavishly used by the media in its application to celebrities, including criminal celebrities.

This chapter now returns to the media review. The press took a great interest in Howard Marks who, as well as being a sometime agent for MI6, ostensibly had connections with both the Mafia and the IRA. “The life and times of Dennis Howard Marks is the stuff of thrillers,” said the *Daily Mail* in 1990,⁶⁷² whilst an article in the *Daily Mail* in 1996 is relevant on a number of counts. The writing of the article coincided with the imminent launch of *Mr Nice* and refers to *The Guardian* newspaper “lionising” Marks’ life story. This further article relates that immediately after one of his one-man shows that same week, Marks was greeted by an adoring fan who said “All hail. You’re my hero man”. The article adds Howard Marks has *huge* charisma and that “He sounds like Richard Burton and looks like a Rolling Stone”, and further that “Hollywood wants his story”. Towards the end of the article there is reference to Howard Marks “as a Robin Hood figure”, although this reference is made pejoratively on behalf of “drugs charities and those families who had suffered a personal loss.”⁶⁷³ To add to this article extolling the virtues of Howard Marks, an article in *The Times* in 2010 reviewing the impending release of Howard Marks’ book *Mr Nice* (now made into a film,) says “Howard Marks is a drug dealer of such charm that no one seems to mind about his crimes...”⁶⁷⁴

There was no end to the adulation. An article in *The Independent* from 1997 bearing the heading “Having a spliffing time” commences “Howard Marks was a man most wanted. He still is. But not for his drug-running activities. He’s the biggest draw in town with the launch of his one-man shows in which he reads extracts from his book and talks about his notorious lifestyle”. The article continues by saying the press release in respect of the show is headlined “World’s Most Notorious Drug Smuggler to Play Shepherd’s Bush Empire”. The article says Howard Marks was aware of the irony and quotes him as saying “I spent years trying to disguise myself, and now I’m trying to promote myself...Then I was hoping no one would recognise me, now I’m

⁶⁷² Michael McDonough, “Drug baron gets 25 years,” *Daily Mail* (London), October 19, 1990, 2.

⁶⁷³ Pendlebury, “Deification of a dirty drug dealer,” 22-23.

⁶⁷⁴ Kate Muir, “Mr Nice,” *The Times* (London), October 9, 2010, 8 (S5), <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5nKGs6>, Gale.

hoping everyone will”.⁶⁷⁵ And so the criminal celebrity and his ever-increasing celebrity profile continued. Travelling showman, raconteur, author, media personality and even one-time parliamentary candidate for Norwich North in 1997 with his platform on legalising cannabis. The book *Mr Nice* was followed by another with the fitting title *Mr Smiley: My Last Pill and Testament*. The blurb on the back of this second book reads “Howard Marks is the most famous drug smuggler of his age and a hero to a generation”.⁶⁷⁶ Howard Marks also penned a book *The Howard Marks Book of Dope Stories* which was on a list of “fast climbers” published in *The Times* when it was released in late 2001.⁶⁷⁷ These publications by Howard Marks, it is argued, gave him the opportunity of telling if not re-writing his own story, that is to say writing his own cultural script in such a way as portrayed his image in the most favourable light – or in the words of Schmid – enabling him to assume the starring role in a narrative of his own making.⁶⁷⁸ This is consistent, as was noted in chapter 6, with Seal seeing social bandits as “[C]haracters in the cultural script that they and others have perceived and appropriated to their own ends”⁶⁷⁹. Yet further, an article by Lorraine Warren and Robert Smith refers to the concept of *re-storying* and “[T]he magic cloak of entrepreneurial licence”⁶⁸⁰ which, it is argued, may have served Howard Marks well (as with his travelling one-man show) in manipulating his public image, promoting his own legend and legitimising his criminal activities to gain public acceptance. All these avenues show how adept Howard Marks was at self-publicity, and how he even availed himself of the tools of new media by having both a website and a Twitter account.

10.4.1 The *Daily Mirror* – Media review and sensationalism

Chapter 8 discussed the use of sensationalism in the press, and particularly the tabloid press, as a means of enriching and even enhancing news stories. The *Daily Mirror* is one such tabloid newspaper unashamedly associated with *sensationalist news*, as was made clear by the mantra of Bolam referred to in chapter 8. The amount of press

⁶⁷⁵ James Rampton, "Having a spliffing time," *The Independent* (London), November 5, 1997, 1, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5nLfp4> Gale.

⁶⁷⁶ Howard Marks, *Mr Smiley: My Last Pill and Testament* (MacMillan, 2015).

⁶⁷⁷ "Hardback fast climbers," *The Times* (London), November 17, 2001, 20 (S3), <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5nLtS5>.

⁶⁷⁸ Schmid, *Natural Born Celebrities: Serial Killers in American Culture*, 17.

⁶⁷⁹ Seal, *Outlaw heroes in Myth and History*, 150.

⁶⁸⁰ Lorraine Warren and Robert Smith, "Restorying entrepreneurship in a changing world," *Tamara Journal for Critical Organization Enquiry* 10, no. 1-2 (2012): 1.

coverage of Howard Marks was necessarily limited given the underworld nature of his criminal activities. However, the *Daily Mirror*, given its penchant for *sensationalist news*, took an interest in reporting stories in respect of Howard Marks when the opportunity arose. This part of the media review takes a brief look at sensationalist headlines from the *Daily Mirror* in respect of a small selection of issues of the newspaper spanning the years 1974-1990. It is argued that as well as exciting the interest of the reader and romanticising the life of Howard Marks in every sense of the word, the use of sensationalism added both to the celebrity profile of and resonant engagement with Howard Marks.

“Mirror Exclusive” ran the headline of an edition from May 2, 1974 “Police hunt for drugs-case man who was a Secret service informer”, whilst a sub-heading read “The day that my lover vanished”.⁶⁸¹ Immediately following this Mirror Exclusive was “Another Mirror Exclusive” the very following day and aside an image of Howard Marks was text referring to his “handsome face”. The same edition spoke of “The amazing Mr Marks” and “New revelations in the paper that was first with the story”,⁶⁸² with the same paper also carrying a separate story of Howard Marks bearing the headline “He was the boy I loved”, and referring to a different one-time girlfriend than was referred to in the previous day’s edition.⁶⁸³

In July 1974 the *Daily Mirror* took it upon themselves to write an article to piece together “[T]he amazing undercover story of Howard Marks”.⁶⁸⁴ This story is evidence of the press taking the initiative in *making* news and not just *reporting* it – a point which will be more fully addressed in chapter 11.

“Mystery man” is how Marks is referred to in an edition in October 1974.⁶⁸⁵ “Millionaire Howard Marks,” said an edition in July 1988 bearing the headline

⁶⁸¹ Edward Laxton, "Mirror Exclusive," *Daily Mirror*, May 2, 1974, 1 and 3, Mirror Historical Archives, 1903-2000.

⁶⁸² Edward Laxton and Tom Merrin, "The Informer," *Daily Mirror*, May 3, 1974, 1, Mirror Historical Archive, 1903-2000.

⁶⁸³ Ken Rogers, "He was the Boy I Loved," in *Daily Mirror* (May 3, 1974), 5. Mirror Historical Archive, 1903-2000.

⁶⁸⁴ Edward Laxton and Tom Merrin, "Mirrormen Edward Laxton and Tom Merrin Piece Together the Amazing Undercover Story of Howard Marks," *Daily Mirror*, July 6, 1974, 7, Mirror Historical Archive, 1903-2000.

⁶⁸⁵ Edward Laxton and Tom Merrin, "Marks: The £40,000 Question," *Daily Mirror*, 31 October 1974, 3.

“English toff’s power rivalled Mafia barons”.⁶⁸⁶ With ever-increasing informality, an edition of the *Daily Mirror* in July 1988 carried a story “My mate the drug billionaire”.⁶⁸⁷ The following month, the paper sought sympathy for Marks when he was in prison in America with a headline which ran “Caged Briton”,⁶⁸⁸ but by October 1990 the *Daily Mirror* was glamorising Howard Marks in referring to him as an “Ace smuggler” and as a “[J]et-set racketeer”.⁶⁸⁹

These sensationalist headlines have been referred to chronologically. The reason for this, it is argued, is that there can be identified a shifting sense of familiarity as between the *Daily Mirror* and the reader, as if the reader is being enmeshed in the criminal escapades of Howard Marks. Moreover, the news stories feature not only Howard Marks, but his friends and family as well as details of his love life. As the criminal life of Howard Marks is played out in the press in the style of a *soap opera*, this fascination with and interest in crime offers the reader an escape from the routine of everyday life and is evidence of followers of criminal celebrities entering into an alternative life of escapism.

The above brief media review show how Howard Marks was portrayed as a legendary drug dealer of some mystique and how he was glorified, glamorised, romanticised and valorised by the media. It is evidence of the commodification of both his cultural and celebrity image in the name of crime as entertainment, and evidence of the media facilitating his social and cultural acceptance; it is evidence of the media cultivating, maintaining and perpetuating the myth of Howard Marks, and it is evidence of changing attitudes to crime and to criminals. Most of all it is evidence of the extent of the cultural shift from the time of Hobsbawm’s social bandit to the celebrity age.

In looking at the career trajectory of Howard Marks post-prison, an article in *The Independent on Sunday* gives an interesting twist in saying “The day has already arrived when the perfect launch to a showbusiness career is no longer a long run at

⁶⁸⁶ Sylvia Jones, "Drugs King of the World is Trapped at Last," *Daily Mirror*, 26 July 1988, 5. Howard Marks was neither English (he was Welsh) nor a “toff” (he was raised in a coal-mining community).

⁶⁸⁷ Frank Thorne, "Behind Bars," *Daily Mirror*, July 28, 1988, 1, 18 and 19, Mirror Historical Archive, 1903-2000.

⁶⁸⁸ Frank Thorne, "I'll do a Deal to Free Wife, Vows Drugs King," *Daily Mirror*, August 31, 1988, 7, Mirror Historical Archive, 1903-2000.

⁶⁸⁹ Don MacKay, "Ace Smuggler Marks to Keep Secret Fortune," *Daily Mirror*, October 19, 1990, 5, Mirror Historical Archive, 1903-2000.

Her Majesty's Theatre Blackpool, but a short stretch at Her Majesty's pleasure".⁶⁹⁰ This paragraph speaks volumes about one of the main themes of this thesis, namely crime as entertainment – which includes Howard Marks in the billing.

10.5 Resonance and the audience

In Chapter 9, a promise was made to put the theories in respect of resonance as expressed by Penfold-Mounce to the test in their practical application to the individual case-study subjects. The final part of this chapter, therefore, will now address this specifically in relation to Howard Marks. In brief, Penfold-Mounce identified three main factors associated with public resonance, namely crime type, context and image⁶⁹¹ which will now be discussed first as to crime type and context together, and then as to image separately.

10.5.1 Crime type and context

On the basis of the more relaxed social climate witnessed in 1960's Britain, and especially against the backdrop of the counter-culture, it is argued that Howard Marks' dealings in cannabis were perceived as no more than a moral crime. Those who smoked cannabis arguably did so as a form of protest against *The Establishment*; it was a symbol of rebellion of a discontented generation.⁶⁹² *The Wootton Report* discussed above expressed the sentiment of many towards cannabis, as referred to in paragraphs 14, 16 and 17 in particular. It was on the basis of this sentiment, the changing social climate and the attendant loosening of moral values which had for so long been constrained by the Victorian straight-jacket, that Howard Marks found sympathy with the public, and why they resonated with his (outwardly at least) victimless crime.

10.5.2 Image

Chapter 4 discussed at length the public's longstanding fascination with crime. In this connection, this chapter recalls the previous quotation by Lamb⁶⁹³. It was also mentioned in chapter 4 that the public's fascination with and, interest in crime has the

⁶⁹⁰ Hettie Judah, "In with the inside crowd," *The Independent on Sunday* (London), June 21, 1998, 3, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5nMJx9>.

⁶⁹¹ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 95.

⁶⁹² Green, *All Dressed Up: The Sixties and the Counterculture*, 175.

⁶⁹³ Lamb, Editorial Director of *The Sun* and *The News of the World* 1975.

enticement of forbidden fruit. Enter Howard Marks: International drugs baron. Sometime MI6 agent. Reputed connections with the Mafia and the IRA. Robin Hood. Victim of social injustice. Martyr to the cause. Fugitive. Author. Travelling showman. Entertainer. And not least, criminal celebrity. “The stuff of thrillers” indeed.⁶⁹⁴ The ingredients are all there including the quality of colour in every shade. As mentioned in chapter 7, Klapp said that colour has three main functions: (a) to excite attention, interest, imagination and interpretation; (b) to set a person apart, rendering him unique or peculiar; and (c) to make him unforgettable. It is argued that Howard Marks identifies with all three and that the portrayal of the cultural image, the celebrity image, and indeed the media image of Howard Marks as already covered in this chapter offers clear evidence of how and why the public resonated with his image.

10.5.3 Resonance

Chapter 9 also promised when considering the individual case studies, to seek to identify aspects of charisma in the identification of resonance which have contributed to the celebrity of the individual subjects. The chapter sought to identify charisma by reference to personal characteristics or traits of the individual criminal celebrity. Among the definitions of charisma previously offered, the one suggested by Allison and Goethals arguably has the most practical application – and certainly to Howard Marks – namely “A personal quality attributed to those who arouse fervent popular devotion and enthusiasm”. Chapter 9 also noted synonyms of “magnetism” or “presence”. It is argued there can little doubt that Howard Marks with his picaresque life story fits these definitions and that he had charisma in abundance. Equally, there can be little doubt that there was in consequence a high degree of resonant engagement by the public.

10.6 Conclusion

The chapter commenced by revisiting chapter 6 which makes an argument that, in varying degrees, the criminal celebrity in the celebrity age can be recognised as the evolutionary and cultural successor of Hobsbawm’s original social bandit. The chapter considered this argument in greater detail within a cultural setting by seeking to compare the structural conditions which gave rise to Hobsbawm’s social bandit with the structural conditions which gave rise to Howard Marks as a criminal celebrity. The

⁶⁹⁴ McDonough, "Drug baron gets 25 years," 2.

purpose of this exercise was to provide a benchmark against which the extent of the cultural shift between the historic social bandit and Howard Marks as a criminal celebrity might be identified. This identification was by reference to new meanings and values previously identified by Kooistra which have transcended the social context which gave rise to and provided meaning for the original criminality.⁶⁹⁵

The central tenet of the chapter argued that in the celebrity age, the cultural persona and by extension the cultural image of the historic social bandit, run parallel with the celebrity persona and by extension the celebrity image of the criminal celebrity, and that they are both commodified and blur in the name of crime as entertainment. To this end, the chapter considered the cultural persona and the celebrity persona of Howard Marks through the lens of image to establish how Marks fitted into the celebrity machine in the celebrity age. This journey involved a brief history of Howard Marks the man and how his drug empire grew from small beginnings. This was followed by a discussion in respect of the commodification of both the cultural image and celebrity image of Howard Marks. The chapter then entered into a brief foray concerning classical mythology to try and better understand labels such as myth or legend which have at times been ascribed to Howard Marks by the press. A brief media review then followed by reference to a small sample of newspapers articles spanning the years 1990-2016. These samples looked at the portrayal of Howard Marks as a criminal of some mystique who was glamorised, glorified, romanticised and valorised by the press, thus facilitating his social and cultural acceptance. Moreover, the media review showed how repeated accounts of the life and times of Howard Marks helped to both create and maintain his criminal celebrity, and how the press adeptly cultivated, reinforced and perpetuated the myth of Howard Marks.

Revisiting chapter 9 the chapter concluded by considering the practical manifestations of resonance and charisma in their application to Howard Marks. In this connection, the chapter found in particular that theories relating to resonance enunciated by Penfold-Mounce – that is to say crime type, context and image, came to life in a practical setting and that resonant engagement by the public was instrumental in the rise of Howard Marks as a criminal celebrity.

⁶⁹⁵ Kooistra, "Criminals As Heroes: Linking Symbol to Structure," 227.

11

Ronnie Biggs – Case Study

“Who dares wins”

Motto of the Special Air Service.

This chapter offers a case study of Great Train Robber Ronald (“Ronnie”) Arthur Biggs (1929-2013). The chapter will show how the dramatic life of Ronnie Biggs was played out in the media and particularly in the tabloid press as a form of entertainment, which resulted in Biggs becoming a “mediated criminal hero”.⁶⁹⁶ As entertainment, and as will be seen, the story of Biggs had many of the characteristics of a fictional story – crime, escape, pursuit, adventure, kidnap, tension, and even romance, with the press telling stories about him in a style resembling fiction. The case study of Biggs will show him in the role of the protagonist, and the police, the law and authority in general in the role of the antagonist in a never-ending game of cat and mouse. It will also show Biggs being lauded as someone who beat the system by evading the law time and time again. In this game of cat and mouse, Biggs resonated with the public in such a way it is argued, that they saw him in an heroic light as someone fighting the system on their behalf.

This case study presents the opportunity to bring together and further discuss three disparate and yet complementary strands of this thesis, that is to say, crime as entertainment, the media, and the notion of those following criminal celebrities entering into an illusory alternative life of escapism. Given the high and prolonged level of media interest in Ronnie Biggs spanning more than fifty years, (that is to say from the date of the Great Train Robbery in 1963 until Biggs’ death in 2013 and beyond) this chapter will also consider the extent to which the media (and press in particular) simply *represents* things the way they are or *make* things the way they are in terms of creating rather than simply reflecting popular culture.

11.1 The social and cultural backdrop

The social and cultural backdrop to Britain in the 1960s has already been well-documented. However, Levin adds a neat summary in respect of 1960's Britain which is pertinent to this case study. He says there emerged “[S]trange things, strange attitudes; events and people once considered reprehensible now suddenly ceased to be,

⁶⁹⁶ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 86.

even became admirable, or at any rate admired. Such, for instance, was the fate of the Great Train Robbers...”⁶⁹⁷ Levin later continues “Britain during the Sixties seemed to be so desperately in need of heroes that she was willing to accept fake ones, even criminal ones. And there might even have been an additional feeling that her people had for so long been deprived by the fiscal system of the opportunity to acquire and retain substantial sums of money legally, that they were willing, indeed eager, to admire those who had acquired gigantic sums illegally”.⁶⁹⁸

Whilst context is important in understanding how a particular criminal celebrity might arise, a caveat needs to be entered. In this respect, and within the context of Levin alluding in the same breath to both a covetous fiscal system and the Great Train Robbers, Penfold-Mounce points out that criminal celebrities who arise directly in response to the oppression of the public, are fewer than those who emerge and take advantage of the context in which they find themselves.⁶⁹⁹ It is argued that the Great Train Robbers in general, and Ronnie Biggs in particular, are examples of the latter and that with the help of an accommodating press and a receptive audience, they were able to capitalise on their criminal celebrity.

11.2 Ronnie Biggs and the Great Train Robbery

Before what came to be known as “The Great Train Robbery” and which has oftentimes also been dubbed “The Crime of the Century”, Ronnie Biggs was a carpenter by trade and a little-known small-time crook. According to a *Daily Mail* article in 1981, Biggs was a late addition to the gang, and was only enlisted as he knew a retired train driver whom Biggs understood would be able to drive the train once it had been hijacked.⁷⁰⁰ However, the involvement of Ronnie Biggs as one of the gang in the Great Train Robbery changed his life forever, and he thereafter became a criminal hero, a criminal celebrity, a household name and something of a British institution.

The Great Train Robbery took place at Bridego Railway Bridge near Cheddington in Bedfordshire, England in the early hours of August 8, 1963. A gang

⁶⁹⁷ Levin, *The Pendulum Years*, 377.

⁶⁹⁸ Levin, *The Pendulum Years*, 378.

⁶⁹⁹ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 103.

⁷⁰⁰ John Passmore, "Runaway Ronnie the artful dodger," *Daily Mail*, April 24, 1981, 2-3, Daily Mail Historical Archive, 1896-2004.

of robbers held up a travelling Post Office train en route from Glasgow to London and stole over two and a half million pounds in used banknotes which had been contained in 120 mailbags. Whilst the gang spent some time after the robbery at Leatherslade Farm, a nearby hideout, most of the gang members were arrested in a short time and eventually sentenced at Aylesbury Special Assize Court in 1964. What made the Great Train Robbery so memorable was firstly the audacity of the crime which caught the imagination of the public, secondly the sheer amount of money involved which was beyond the dreams of avarice, and thirdly the thirty-year prison sentences handed down to a number of the gang – including Ronnie Biggs.

An article in the *Daily Mail* in April 1964 reported on the sentences imposed by trial judge Mr Justice Edmund Davies the previous day. The article quotes the judge as saying “Let us clear out of the way any romantic notion of daredevilry. This is nothing more than a sordid crime of violence inspired by vast greed”. The article continues “When grave crime is committed, it calls for grave punishment, not for the purpose of mere retribution, but that others similarly tempted will be brought to the realisation that crime does not pay and that the game is not worth the most alluring candle”.⁷⁰¹

The robbery was not without violence in that the driver of the train, Jack Mills, had been coshed over the head by an unidentified member of the gang. Nonetheless, the thirty-year sentences handed down to some of the gang caused a public outcry and flew in the face of the changing attitudes of a liberal Establishment towards crime witnessed in Britain in the 1960s. An article in *The Daily Telegraph* on April 17, 1964 the day following sentencing and headed “Making an Example”, said “Such sentences as Mr Justice Edmund Davies imposed on the train robbers yesterday have been exceeded in modern times only in the Portland spy case, when national safety had been endangered. Thirty years, even allowing for possible remission, is twice as long

⁷⁰¹ "Judge shatters Great Train gang 307 years.," *Daily Mail*, (London), April 17 1964, 6, Daily Mail Historical Archive, 1896-2004. Considerable attempts have been made to locate the original High Court verdict and sentencing, but in the absence of being able to do so, the chapter has had to rely on newspaper accounts. A transcript of all five days of the trial of Ronnie Biggs was made available for inspection by National Archives in London. Page 81 of the transcript for Day 5 ends with a note saying “For verdict, antecedents, mitigation and sentence, please see transcript in main Volume 50.” On enquiry, National Archives could not find Volume 50 and they concluded after an exhaustive search that it must have been destroyed after all this time—as confirmed in an email from Erica Peacock, Remote Enquiries Duty Officer, National Archives of December 4, 2019 under their reference TNA1558673134016.

as is normally served by a capital murderer who has been reprieved”.⁷⁰² An article the same day in the *Daily Mirror* which commenced “The whole country is arguing today about the tremendously long sentences imposed on the Great Train Robbery criminals”⁷⁰³ said much the same thing.

11.3 Political backdrop

A brief look at the political backdrop, it is argued, will help put these lengthy prison sentences and the public reaction to them in context. The year 1963 was a time of turmoil for the MacMillan government. In the early part of that year, Kim Philby a one-time British Intelligence officer was unmasked as a Soviet spy.⁷⁰⁴ Philby had been one of the so-called “Cambridge Five” spy ring which had passed information to the Soviet Union during World War II and in the early stages of the Cold War. This embarrassment to the government was quickly followed by the “Profumo affair”. John Profumo was a government Minister holding the office of Secretary of State for War. Profumo, a married man, had a sexual liaison with prostitute Christine Keeler. Keeler was at the same time having a sexual liaison with Russian Military attaché Yevgeny Ivanov. Profumo at first denied his association with Keeler to the House of Commons but later admitted lying. His confession and subsequent resignation in June 1963 threw the MacMillan government into a state of further embarrassment and crisis amid suggestions that Profumo’s involvement with Keeler and in turn her involvement with Ivanov may have led to a breach of national security. Moreover, the Profumo affair enmeshed Establishment figure Lord Astor, a one-time Conservative Member of Parliament and a then Member of the House of Lords. The resignation of Harold MacMillan followed in October that year.

The Great Train Robbery in August 1963 followed on the heels of the Philby revelation and the Profumo affair. When thirty-year prison sentences were handed down to some of the Great Train Robbers in April 1964, many argued a connection between *The Establishment* still smarting from the embarrassments caused by Philby and Profumo, and the theft by the train robbers from the travelling Post Office of a vast amount of what was seen as government money. An article by Cassandra in the *Daily*

⁷⁰² "Making an Example," *The Daily Telegraph* (London), April 17 1964.

⁷⁰³ "Crime and Punishment," *Daily Mirror*, April 17 1964, 2, Mirror Historical Archive, 1903-2000.

⁷⁰⁴ "Kim Philby, (1912–1988)," (2015). <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/politics-obituaries/6077806/John-Philby.html>.

Mirror in April 1964 made this link. The article read: “The Great Train Robbery, in spite of the highly moral and puritanical remarks of Mr Justice Davies who imposed savage sentences of up to thirty years on the miscreants, is still regarded by the British public as a bit of a joke against Established Authority”. The article then referred to Established Authority as including free-for-all Capitalism, before continuing “The citizenry were pleased to see this successful revolt against the banks, the insurance companies, PAYE and all the governmental directions from the top which says ‘You’ll do what it says here – and shut up’”. The article further continued by saying “It was a natural reaction against Authority, with a capital A, that began with Dick Turpin and Robin Hood”.⁷⁰⁵ This reference by Cassandra to Robin Hood echoes comments by Kooistra in respect of historic outlaws who saw banks, railroads and other institutions as “oppressors of the people”. Kooistra adds that outlaws, in psychological terms were acting out the collective fantasies of a disenchanting populace.⁷⁰⁶ Indeed, as mentioned in chapter 6, the 2007 case of Ilan Cooperman-Segal drew parallels with the Great Train Robbery but in a more recent setting, and gained popularity on the very basis of a crime against perceived oppressors of the people which resonated with a disenchanting populace.⁷⁰⁷

It is argued the sentences of thirty years were seen as a striking back by an “Established Authority” as so labelled by Cassandra, still reeling from the embarrassment of Kim Philby’s unmasking as a Russian spy and the Profumo affair, and now further embarrassed by a perceived attack on it as represented by the Post Office and British Railways. The sentences are well-entrenched in the public memory as was shown in an article in *The Times* in 1988. The article marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Great Train Robbery and still harked back to the severity of the prison sentences in saying “[M]any construed them as petty revenge on the part of an Establishment licking its wounds after a series of political and social drubbings”.⁷⁰⁸

The above context, it is argued, clarifies how those train robbers who received thirty-year sentences were portrayed by the press and seen by the public not as criminals, but as victims, and with whom the public was in sympathy. The harsh

⁷⁰⁵ Cassandra, "Achieve the Impossible," *Daily Mirror*, August 14, 1964, 6, Mirror Historical Archive, 1903-2000. Cassandra was the pseudonym of William O'Connor, a well-known and well-respected English journalist of his time who needed no further introduction.

⁷⁰⁶ Kooistra, "Criminals As Heroes: Linking Symbol to Structure," 224.

⁷⁰⁷ Cavaglion, "The Societal Construction of a Criminal as Cultural Hero: The Case of "The Brinks Truck Theft": Research Article."

⁷⁰⁸ Colin Shindler, "More fame than fortune," *The Times*, August 6 1988, 13, <http://tinyurl.gale.com/tinyurl/CC3zn4>

prison sentences backfired, and the tide of public opinion was such that more than just sympathising with the Great Train Robbers, the public sided with them against *The Establishment*.

The Great Train Robbers duly went to prison, and the initial furore died down. However, events were re-ignited when Ronnie Biggs, who went on to become the most celebrated of the Great Train Robbers, escaped from high-security Wandsworth prison in London in July 1965 just fifteen months into his sentence in what the *Daily Mirror* described as “One of the most audacious jail escape plots of the century”.⁷⁰⁹ Given that the public opinion was already on the side of Biggs, his escape from prison truly marked the beginning of his celebrity career in earnest.

11.4 Biggs as criminal hero

As already noted in chapter 1, Penfold-Mounce conceptualises criminal celebrities as between the social bandit, the criminal hero, the underworld exhibitionist and the iniquitous criminal.⁷¹⁰ Ronnie Biggs most identifies with the criminal hero, described by Penfold-Mounce as someone “[W]ho becomes popular for their daring, audacity, recklessness and pursuit of profit...”.⁷¹¹ To the extent Cassandra is correct in his above *Daily Mirror* article about *The Establishment*,⁷¹² Ronnie Biggs as one of the gang of Great Train Robbers can also be identified in part as a social bandit within the concept posited by Hobsbawm,⁷¹³ to the degree the robbery might have been seen as an attack on *The Establishment*. Moreover, to the extent Biggs identifies with Penfold-Mounce’s criminal hero or Hobsbawm’s historic social bandit, a passage by Seal is worthy of note. Seal says “The outlaw hero needs to display an ability to outwit, elude and escape the authorities, usually with style and often in disguise... his ability to elude capture and to strike at the police again and again with apparent impunity is an important aspect of his life that fits perfectly into the legend”.⁷¹⁴ This passage, it is argued, is particularly apposite to Ronnie Biggs given that during his life as a fugitive he eluded capture time and time again.

⁷⁰⁹ "Yard Probe the Great Escape," *Daily Mirror*, July 9 1965, 1, Mirror Historical Archive, 1903-2000.

⁷¹⁰ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 9.

⁷¹¹ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 84.

⁷¹² Cassandra, "Achieve the Impossible," 6.

⁷¹³ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*.

⁷¹⁴ Seal, *Outlaw heroes in Myth and History*, 133.

11.4.1 Biggs the great escaper

The life of Ronnie Biggs as a fugitive was glamorised and glorified by the media in general and the press in particular, not least his escapes from the law in a number of different ways, each of which added to his celebrity credentials. The following accounts of these escapes by Ronnie Biggs have been constructed from contemporaneous press reports. After his escape from Wandsworth Prison in 1965, Biggs spent time in Australia, and narrowly escaped the police in 1970 before fleeing to Rio de Janeiro. Four years into his refuge Chief Superintendent Jack Slipper of Scotland Yard amid a tip-off, flew to Rio in 1974 with a view to arresting Biggs and returning him to England. He was to learn that Biggs' girlfriend Raimunda de Castro was pregnant, and that under Brazilian law the father of a Brazilian child had a right to remain in the country until the child attained the age of twenty-one years. Slipper, therefore, flew back to England empty-handed.⁷¹⁵ An article in the *Daily Mirror* the following year carried the headline "The little boy whose birth helped Ronald Biggs cheat British justice" and said Biggs "[S]pends his sunny days making furniture for the cottage, playing with Michael, and laughing at the law".⁷¹⁶

The next escape came in 1981 after Biggs had been kidnapped in Rio and taken to Barbados. The kidnappers had hoped to hand Biggs over to the authorities with a view to him being extradited to England. However, the Court in Barbados ruled against his extradition to England enabling him to return to Rio. A *Daily Mirror* article published the day after the Court's decision said: "Great escaper Ronnie Biggs did it again yesterday", and spoke of "Biggs' sensational change of fortune and his latest and greatest escape act". The popularity of Biggs was evident from this same article. As well as saying public sympathy in Barbados had been running at fever pitch in favour of Biggs, the article also included a comment from Chief Superintendent Jack Slipper who had failed to bring Biggs back from Rio in 1974, with Slipper reported as saying "I don't like seeing villains get away with their crimes, but I do have a certain sympathy for Biggs".⁷¹⁷

⁷¹⁵ "Biggs Slip-up That Gave Slipper Fame," *Daily Mirror*, August 9 1988, 8, Mirror Historical Archive, 1903-2000.

⁷¹⁶ Anthony Delano, "The Little Boy Whose Birth Helped Ronnie Biggs Cheat British Justice" *Daily Mirror*, May 13 1975, 15, Mirror Historical Archive, 1903-2000.

⁷¹⁷ Paul Connaw, "I Can't Wait to Get Home to My Son," *Daily Mirror*, April 24 1981, 3, Mirror Historical Archive, 1903-2000.

It was sixteen years later in 1997, and after another sixteen years of freedom that the British authorities following the ratification of an Extradition Treaty between Britain and Brazil sought to extradite Biggs to England. However, and as reported in *The New York Times* in 1997, the Brazilian Court ruled that under the Brazilian Statute of Limitations, crimes committed more than twenty years ago were no longer recognised, and in consequence, Biggs could not be extradited.⁷¹⁸ The following day, the *Daily Mail* boasted the headline “Yet again, Biggs gets away with it”.⁷¹⁹ And so it was that the legend of the man beyond the reach of the law lived on.

11.4.2 The image of Biggs

Ronnie Biggs was portrayed in the media as a “loveable rogue”. It is argued this portrayal was complemented by psychologist E.L. Thorndike’s description of the “Halo effect”.⁷²⁰ Oskar Gustafson interprets Thorndike’s description of the Halo effect by saying “The Halo effect occurs when we develop a bias in which our overall impression of a person colours our judgment of that person’s character and action”. Gustafson continues by saying “If we know (or believe) that a criminal once lived up to the ‘Robin Hood’ standard, we can attach the same standard to other criminals and even networks of criminals. Then, every action supporting that idealised picture reaffirms our bias and convolutes the reality of their actions and whom they are as a person”.⁷²¹

An article in the *Daily Mail* in 1997 inset with an image of bouncer George Cole as television’s Arthur Daley carried the headline “Cads, cheats, scoundrels – why does everyone love a rogue”. The article perfectly encapsulates Biggs in the role of loveable rogue in saying “Over the years, while Biggs has lived it up in refuge in Brazil, we have developed a certain affection for him...The truth is that he has entered that cherished category of the loveable rogue”. The article later continues “The most enduring rogues not only misbehave, break the law and extend the boundaries of what

⁷¹⁸ Reuters, "Brazilian Court won't Extradite 'Great Train Robbery' Fugitive," *The New York Times*, November 13 1997, Section A, p5, <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/11/13/world/brazilian-court-won-t-extradite-great-train-robbery-fugitive.html>

⁷¹⁹ Harold Emert, "Yet again, Biggs gets away with it " *Daily Mail*, November 13 1997, 13, Daily Mail Historical Archive, 1896-2004.

⁷²⁰ E. L. Thorndike, "A constant error in psychological ratings," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 4, no. 1 (1920), <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0071663>.

⁷²¹ Oskar Gustafson, "Social Banditry, Myth and Historical Reality" (Master of Arts in European Studies Lund, 2017), 18-19, <http://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=8926949&fileId=8926953>.

is acceptable and decent, they behave excessively and in style. And more often than not, they follow up their misdemeanours with a smile”, adding “There is something comforting about rogues. We enjoy their larger-than-life antics as we do a pantomime, safe in the knowledge that there is no danger that we shall get involved”.⁷²²

The role of Biggs in the audacious Great Train Robbery, his equally audacious escape from Wandsworth Prison and his subsequent escapes from the law portrayed a picture of a man beyond the reach of the law. It seemed Biggs could do no wrong in the eyes of the media or the public, and the Halo effect, it is argued, imbued him with an invincible or even saintly quality which the press were keen to deify. In the eyes of the public, Biggs was living the dream. He was a man who managed to live tantalisingly beyond the reach of the law; he was a man who had triumphed on his own terms. The qualities his life encompassed became synonymous with those things conspicuously absent from the lives of ordinary people, not least riches and leisure time and above all, freedom.⁷²³ This seemingly sybaritic lifestyle of the man who “had it all” offers an explanation of why those who follow criminal celebrities enter into an illusory alternative life of escapism of excitement, escapism, and freedom where they can enjoy such a lifestyle vicariously – away from the quotidian toil of everyday life which, in the words of George Gissing, “[F]or the greater part of humanity both defines and limits existence”.⁷²⁴ This chapter will return later to the notion of an alternative life of escapism.

The image of Ronnie Biggs as a loveable rogue sat alongside other images. Foremost among these and fundamental to resonance with his audience was the projection of a personality with which the public could identify. An article in the *Sunday Times* in 2001 asks how such a small-time crook as Biggs came to occupy such a prominent place in criminal iconography. Then in answer to the question, the newspaper explained: “Biggs was the sort of charming ne’er-do-well that people recognised; every mother’s wayward son, every bloke’s drinking buddy, every

⁷²² Allan Massie, "Cads, cheats, scoundrels-why does everyone love a rogue?," *Daily Mail*, October 31 1997, 8, Gale Daily Mail Historical Archive,1896-2004.

⁷²³ Dick Hebdige, "The Kray Twins: A study of a system of closure," *Stencilled Occasional Paper*, (1974): 61. <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-artslaw/history/cccs/stencilled-occasional-papers/1to8and11to24and38to48/SOP21.pdf>.

⁷²⁴ George Gissing, *New Grub Street* (Penguin Books, 1968), 9.

floozie's bit on the side".⁷²⁵ In other words, Ronnie Biggs was an *Everyman*, that is to say, he was a man seen by the public at large as one of their own, and whose conduct fostered wide identification with them. Indeed, such was his popularity that between 1965 and 1984 he could be seen sitting on a bench in pride of place at the foyer of Madame Tussauds in London alongside fellow Great Train Robber Charlie Wilson.⁷²⁶

The importance of image over what might have been reality is an important point to make, and as indeed was acknowledged by Hobsbawm in relation to the social bandit.⁷²⁷ Whilst Biggs might have been living the dream to the outside world, the reality appeared to be different – at least at one point of his fugitive career in 1974. This was made clear from a hand-written letter dated February 1, 1974 from Ronnie Biggs written on the occasion of the visit as mentioned above by Chief Superintendent Jack Slipper of Scotland Yard. The letter read:

Statement of Ronald Arthur Biggs, born 8.8.29.

I, Ronald A. BIGGS was convicted on 15th April 1964 with conspiracy to rob and robbery. The following day I was sentenced to 25 years and 30 years imprisonment concurrent. On 8th July 1965 I escaped from H.M. Prison Wandsworth. Today 1st February 1974 I was delivered in Rio de Janeiro. Not only do I want to go back to England, but I would like to go today.

I have read the above statement and it is true.

(Signed) R.A. Biggs.

Statement taken by Det. Ch. Supt. Slipper and witnessed by F.Costa, British Vice-Consul". (Official Seal added).⁷²⁸

It is the image which forms the basis of resonance with the audience which counts, and not the reality which may be very different as the above letter shows.

⁷²⁵ "He's been getting away with it all his life," *Sunday Times*, May 6 2001, 15, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5kkug8>

⁷²⁶ As confirmed in an email dated October 14, 2019 from Zoe Louca-Richards, Curator (Archives and Heritage Collection) Madame Tussauds, London.

⁷²⁷ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 64.

⁷²⁸ Statement of Ronald Arthur Biggs February 1, 1974, Handwritten letter, The National Archives, Kew, London.

11.5 The rise of Ronnie Biggs as a criminal celebrity

A certain prestige attached to the Great Train Robbers. In the case of Ronnie Biggs, this prestige was further enhanced by his audacious escape from Wandsworth prison in 1965. The events which followed the prison escape, most of which were covered by the press in glorified details, made Biggs a household name as his celebrity star rose and rose again. As Biggs' life was played out in the media, it was as if the press had created an emotional bridge between Biggs and their readers in such a way – as with fiction – that readers cared about Biggs as a character, and vicariously followed his adventures in the way of a *soap opera*, waiting for the next instalment to unfold. In this way, the ongoing story of Biggs continued to resonate with the public.

The life of Ronnie Biggs in criminal iconography cannot be overstated. He was not just a celebrity; he was an international celebrity. Evidence of his international reach can be found in an article in the *Daily Mirror* in 1991. The article gave details of a top Beverly Hills entertainment lawyer who had bought the worldwide rights to the screenplay “Fugitive...The Ronnie Biggs Story” which was set to be made into a Hollywood blockbuster.⁷²⁹

11.5.1 Biggs as entrepreneur

Ronnie Biggs was adept at marketing himself as a criminal celebrity. In doing so, he was able to exploit his celebrity which in turn helped him maintain resonant engagement with his audience. A marketing article published in December 2013, almost immediately after the death of Biggs bore the headline “The Fabulously Entrepreneurial Life of Ronnie Biggs”. The article commences “Crime never pays, but Ronnie Biggs certainly found a way to make a successful business out of it”. The article says that Biggs became the world's most famous criminal by turning his status as a fugitive into a business, hosting parties for UK and American tourists. “Yes”, says the article, “Cross his palms with a few cruzeiros and you could eat skewers of beef with Ronnie Biggs and hear him regale you with stories of the Great Train Robbery and his daring escape from Wandsworth”. The article went on to say that Biggs did what all marketers do: He sold his brand. Further, the article touches on Biggs' attempts to become a rock star and his collaboration with Sid Vicious and Johnny

⁷²⁹ "Robber Ronnie on Film," *Sunday Mirror*, August 18, 1991, 4, Mirror Historical Archive, 1903-2000.

Rotten formerly of the rock band the Sex Pistols. The article concludes by saying Biggs had a certain flash that one can only admire. “Robber, yes. Fugitive, yes. But also showman, marketer, innovator, punk rocker, and, yes, entrepreneur”.⁷³⁰

The press was all too happy to run stories of the entrepreneurial activities of Ronnie Biggs. Examples of his entrepreneurship are many and various. His name was featured in a British Leyland advertisement for the Mini car in 1979 with the slogan “Nips in and out like Ronnie Biggs”.⁷³¹ A photograph of fellow Great Train Robber Buster Edwards standing in front of the advertisement signed by Ronnie Biggs comprised Lot one of the Humbert & Ellis auction of Great Train Robbery/Biggs memorabilia auctioned on June 16, 2015.⁷³² An article in the *Sunday Times* dated 22nd June 1997 refers to the “Ronnie Biggs Experience” offering small groups of people the opportunity of visiting Biggs at home and enjoying dinner with him, or larger groups being able to book a “guest appearance” at an hotel or restaurant complete with an after-dinner speech by Biggs spiced with anecdotes. Biggs is quoted in the article as saying “There’s no limit to the number of times you can tell the same tale”.⁷³³ So indeed it was with the press, as will be shown later in this chapter. Meanwhile, an article in the *Daily Mail* in August 1991 says of Biggs “Forever dreaming up money-making ventures, he has given security advice on how not to be robbed and made commercials for coffee and running shoes... When you’re on the run, as I am, you need a good cup of coffee and good shoes”, Biggs said.⁷³⁴

Further, an article in the *Daily Mirror* in June 1982 refers to Biggs selling what might be termed “celebrity merchandise” in the way of T-shirts to tourists with the slogan “*I know someone who went to Brazil and met Ronnie Biggs ...honest!*”⁷³⁵

⁷³⁰ Ray Hennessey, "The Fabulously Entrepreneurial Life of Ronnie Biggs," *Entrepreneur, Asia Pacific*, December 18, 2013, <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/230458>.

⁷³¹ Duncan Campbell, "Great Train Robbery: 10 things you didn't know," *The Guardian (Australian edition)*, August 8 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/aug/08/great-train-robbery-10-things>.

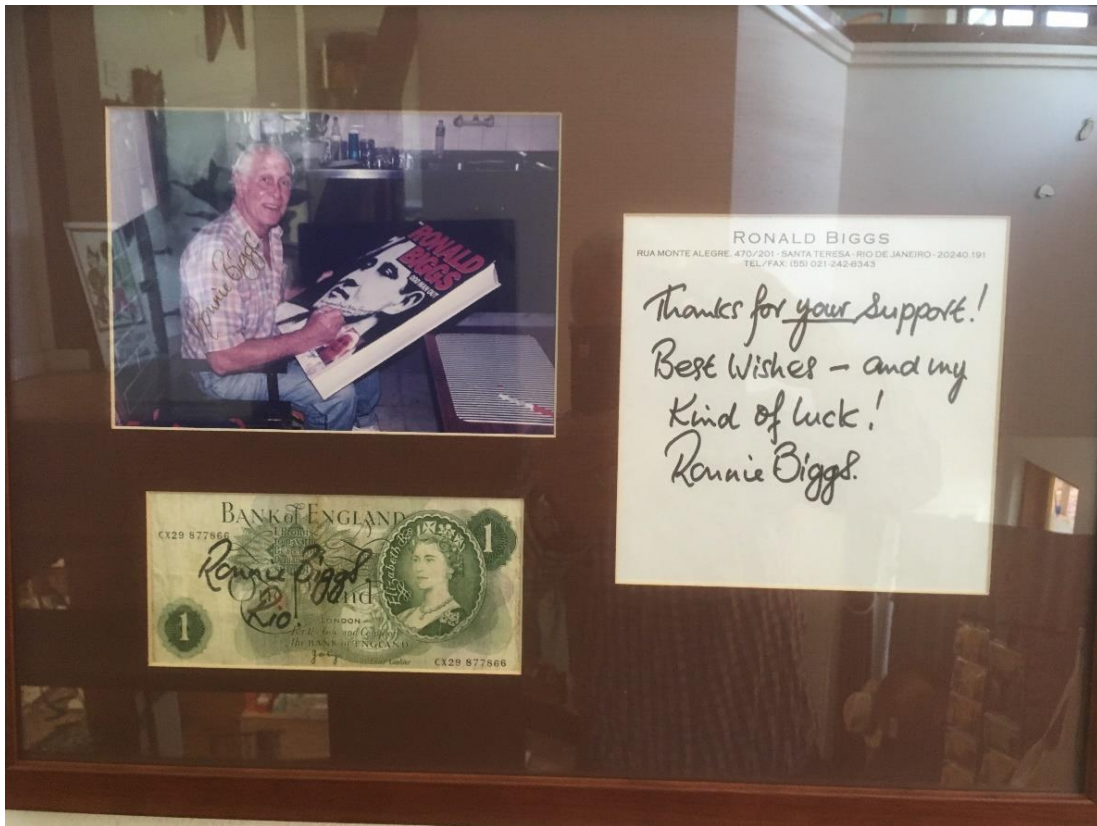
⁷³² Humbert & Ellis Auctioneers, *The Great Train Robbery and Ronnie Biggs*.

⁷³³ David Wickers, "Biggs business," *Sunday Times*, June 22 1997, p7(S4), <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5kmSt0>.

⁷³⁴ Nigel Dempster, "Lack of cash is restricting flamboyant fugitive Ronnie Biggs to a smaller birthday party than usual at his colonial mansion in Rio de Janeiro," *Daily Mail*, August 7 1991, 17, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5kmnb1>.

⁷³⁵ Sydney Young, "It's Biggs to a 'T'," *Daily Mirror*, June 9 1982, 7, Mirror Historical Archive, 1903-2000.

Figure 11.1
Collage featuring Ronnie Biggs.⁷³⁶



There was no end to the entrepreneurship. Biggs was engaged as a design consultant together with fellow train robber Bruce Reynolds in respect of a proposed computer game based on the Great Train Robbery.⁷³⁷ He published a book: *His Own Story* in 1981 followed by another *Odd Man Out*, published in 1994. The dedication at the beginning of this second book reads “This book is for my loved ones past and present, my family, my friends and my fans”.⁷³⁸ This reference to fans is evidence of Biggs ever-playing to his audience. A final reference to Biggs as entrepreneur echoes the sentiments of showman P.T. Barnum. In this respect, Biggs was quoted in the *Sunday Telegraph* in January 1998 as saying “Any publicity for me is good publicity”.⁷³⁹

⁷³⁶ This image of Ronnie Biggs was bought at auction and is reproduced by kind permission of the owner Kerry Sibly of Cowaramup, Western Australia.

⁷³⁷ "Ronnie Biggs the Great Train Robber is exploiting his 1963 crime in the computer games market," *Sunday Telegraph*, October 31 1999, B3, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5kmjh7>.

⁷³⁸ Ronald Biggs, *Odd Man Out*. (Great Britain.: Bloomsbury., 1994).

⁷³⁹ Alex Bellos, "Samba school seeks Biggs lookalike," *Sunday Telegraph*, January 25 1998, 29, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5kmN39>.

Away from his own self-publicity, the legend of Ronnie Biggs had taken on a life of its own, a life which was enriched by embellishment and hyperbole. An example of hyperbole is to be found in the “*Crime through Time*” exhibition at Littledean Jail in Gloucester, England where a collector’s card can be seen in which Biggs was said to have been dubbed by Scotland Yard as the “Brain of the Great Train Robbery”,⁷⁴⁰ This offers an example of how the myth grows, given the reality that Biggs was no more than an extra hand in the Great Train Robbery. However, and in returning yet again to image, it was the image of Ronnie Biggs which fed his celebrity, and he was unashamedly prepared to personally sign and sell a limited edition of 100 of these collector’s cards, each propagating the myth that he was indeed the brain of the Great Train Robbery.

11.6 The media

The role of the media in general, and the press in particular, were instrumental in the rise of Ronnie Biggs as both a criminal celebrity and a mediated criminal hero, and warrant detailed consideration. Jewkes discusses media influence in the reporting of crime news.⁷⁴¹ This part of the chapter adds to this discussion in bringing to the table a discussion in respect of media influence in the way news of criminal celebrities is reported, with specific reference to the celebrity of Ronnie Biggs. Media stories of Ronnie Biggs during what might be termed his “fugitive years” were centred on his latest escape from justice or some other aspect of his adventurous life. This was not crime news as such in that there was no new criminal activity on the part of Biggs. Nonetheless, these stories were reported by the media in much the same way as crime news, that is to say, they were couched as entertainment and presented in a style which created the image the media had themselves constructed of Biggs’ living the dream.

The question which needs to be considered in respect of the presentation of news, be it crime news or news of criminal celebrities, is whether in the reporting of news the media simply *represents* things the way they are, or does the media *make* things the way they are? In relation to the reporting of crime news, Jewkes, as mentioned above, maintains that such news is shaped by the mission to entertain. It is likewise

⁷⁴⁰ Ronnie Biggs: *Brain of the Great Train Robbery*, (Gloucestershire: Littledean Jail, n.d.), Collector’s card.

⁷⁴¹ Jewkes, *Media and Crime*, 45.

argued that the reporting of news of criminal celebrities is similarly shaped. Indeed, it will be recalled that according to Surette, crime perfectly fits infotainment demands for content about real events that can be delivered in an entertaining fashion.⁷⁴² Jewkes writes that “[W]hile it might be expected that the news simply reports the “facts” of an event and is an accurate representation of the overall picture of crime, this is not the case”. Jewkes continues “Thus, despite often being described as a “window of the world” or a mirror reflecting “real life”, the media might be more accurately thought of as a prism subtly bending and distorting the view of the world it projects”. Jewkes concludes by saying that media images are *not* reality; they are a *version* of reality.⁷⁴³ Allied to the argument by Jewkes that the media presents only a version of reality, is the argument posited by Boorstin in respect of what he terms “pseudo-events”. The essence of Boorstin’s thesis is that people expect more than the world can offer. He refers to our “extravagant expectations” of life⁷⁴⁴ and that by harbouring, nourishing and ever-enlarging these expectations, we create the demand for the illusions with which we deceive ourselves, and which we pay others to make to deceive us.⁷⁴⁵ Boorstin adds “We have become so accustomed to our illusions that we mistake them for reality. We demand them. And we demand that there be always more of them, bigger and better and more vivid. They are the world of our making: The world of the image”.⁷⁴⁶ Boorstin says “There was a time when the reader of an unexciting newspaper would remark “How dull is the world today!”. Nowadays, he says “What a dull newspaper!”⁷⁴⁷ He argues that in our “Demanding more than the world can give us, we require that something be fabricated to make up for the world’s deficiency”.⁷⁴⁸ The point of connection between the version of reality suggested by Jewkes and the pseudo-event image as suggested by Boorstin is that both give a particular image of reality. What Jewkes and Boorstin argue produces the same end result, that is to say, news presented in such a way as satisfies both the expectations and the appetite of the audience. In other words, the media gives the public what they want. This is consistent

⁷⁴² Surette, *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice*, 20.

⁷⁴³ Jewkes, *Media and Crime*, 45.

⁷⁴⁴ Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 3.

⁷⁴⁵ Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 5.

⁷⁴⁶ Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 5-6.

⁷⁴⁷ Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 7.

⁷⁴⁸ Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 9.

with Boorstin's argument that we create the demand for the illusions with which we deceive ourselves, and which we pay others (the media) to make to deceive us.⁷⁴⁹

It is clear from the above-mentioned handwritten note of Ronnie Biggs confirming he wanted to go home,⁷⁵⁰ that life was not a bed of roses, and that he was prepared to swap the safe haven of sunny Rio for the inside of a prison cell somewhere in England, and yet the media continued to project the image of the utopian life he was apparently leading. This suited his celebrity agenda, and also suited the agenda of the media in selling the dream of the man who ostensibly had it all: a criminal-turned-playboy; a man to be envied and admired; a man who lived beyond the reach of the law; in short, a man who had come first in the lottery of life.

Arthur Asa Berger defines, or at least seeks to identify, the meaning of popular culture by reference to the culture of the people – their behaviour, their values, and in particular their entertainments.⁷⁵¹ On the basis of an argument that criminal celebrities are a new or at least widening genre of crime as entertainment in the celebrity age, it is argued that the media's version of reality in respect of criminal celebrities, and whether adopting the prismatic argument of Jewkes, or the pseudo-events argument of Boorstin, is instrumental in the creation of popular culture. On this basis, there is a sustainable argument that the media does not simply report things the way they are, but actually represents things the way they are to the extent the media both makes and reflects popular culture. And it is popular culture which kept the name of Ronnie Biggs on everyone's lips.

11.6.1 Saturation point?

As already mentioned, media news of Biggs spanned more than fifty years. The question which therefore needs to be asked is whether news in relation to Biggs reached a saturation point. In this connection, it is argued there is a further dimension to the question of whether the media simply *represents* things the way they are or *make* things the way they are. This study maintains the media (and tabloid press in particular) oftentimes went off “on a frolic of their own” in telling stories about Ronnie Biggs, therefore, *making* news instead of simply *reporting* news. It is argued that this making

⁷⁴⁹ Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 5.

⁷⁵⁰ Statement of Ronald Arthur Biggs

⁷⁵¹ Arthur Asa Berger, *Pop culture* (Dayton, Ohio: Pflaum/Standard, 1973), 8.

of news as against simply reporting of news can be explained by reference to the respective agendas of Biggs and the media. Whilst there is a tripartite relationship as between the media, the criminal celebrity and the audience, each of whom has their own agenda and each of whom is engaged in an interdependent market of exchange, this chapter focuses on the symbiotic aspect of that relationship as between the criminal celebrity and the media. Biggs had his own agenda. He was capitalising on his celebrity for commercial gain in the market of exchange. The media also had (and have) their own agenda, which again is based on commercial imperatives. The agendas of Biggs and the media were therefore tangentially connected in that they fed off each other to mutual commercial advantage. A brief media review demonstrates that time and time again the press took stories about Biggs into their own hands for the sake of keeping his story alive, and in doing so cultivated and promoted the myth. The relentless press coverage and visibility which Biggs enjoyed was not dissimilar to that which is typically afforded to rising or indeed established celebrities in general. Such a level of visibility, it is argued, and as will be more fully mentioned in the conclusion, is the point at which the celebrity and the criminal celebrity intersect.

Any pretext for a story of Biggs sufficed. The date of the Great Train Robbery was also his thirty-fourth birthday. It follows from this that any given anniversary of the Great Train robbery was an opportunity for the press to mark the robbery or Biggs' birthday or both. An article in the *Daily Mirror* in 1979 offers an example of the licence the press allowed themselves in writing stories about Biggs. The article admits that their reporter Peter Donnelly was taking "a bit of a liberty" in composing a few words "Biggsy" himself might have written.⁷⁵² This *story* was based on conjecture and had no basis in fact. What it did, however, and especially in referring to Ronnie Biggs as "Biggsy", was to foster a cosy climate of familiarity with Biggs being portrayed as somewhere between a loveable rogue and an avuncular figure. A further example of where there was no story, but where the press went in pursuit of a story, is to be found in the *Daily Mirror* in 1988. This article tells of the *Daily Mirror* tracking down the Great Train Robbers following their release from prison, so the press could make a story following their interviews.⁷⁵³ Such was the level of media interest in Ronnie

⁷⁵² Peter Donnelly, "Having a Wonderful Time...Glad You're Not Here," *Daily Mirror*, July 6 1979, 16+, Mirror Historical Archive, 1903-2000.

⁷⁵³ "The Mirror Tracks down the Great Train Robbers," *Daily Mirror*, August 8 1988, 14+, Mirror Historical Archive, 1903-2000.

Biggs, that he himself is quoted in a *Sunday Telegraph* article in 1997 as referring to what he saw as the “[R]itual interest of the press”⁷⁵⁴ in him.

Stories of Biggs have been endlessly recycled over fifty years and more, instilling him into the public mind by a process of osmosis. Because his story ran and ran, it is not difficult to see how *The Independent on Sunday* in 2009 carried the headline “Biggs is the darling of Fleet Street. When he goes, it goes.” Just as Hobsbawm said that Robin Hood can never die⁷⁵⁵, *The Independent on Sunday* article in lamenting on the future death of Ronnie Biggs, says the worst will be the newspaper journalists of the Fleet Street era who will have one last chance to dredge up their memories of the tale of Ronnie Biggs. The article concludes on a reflective note in saying of Biggs that newspapers cannot let the story die, or their dreams would die with it.⁷⁵⁶ Further, an article in *The Times* in 1997 similarly laments in respect of Biggs that “[S]ome stories are too good to die”.⁷⁵⁷ And so it was that stories in respect of Biggs could never die. This suited the agenda of Biggs in perpetuating his celebrity, and also suited the disparate yet complementary agenda of the media in keeping Biggs at the forefront of popular culture, in sustaining and cultivating his myth and at the same time benefitting the media from a commercial perspective.

11.7 Alternative life of escapism

The foundation of celebrity in respect of Ronnie Biggs was his neo-Robin Hood image arising out of his part in The Great Train Robbery and arguably its moral justification in the eyes of the public as being no more than essentially a crime against property – and government property at that.

It is argued that the Robin Hood motif carries with it two recurrent themes. The first is Robin Hood as the symbolic representation of hope and justice in the fight against tyranny and oppression, and the second is of Robin Hood as the good criminal. Penfold-Mounce refers to the Robin Hood motif. It is the following of such motifs that

⁷⁵⁴ Simon Bell, "Time Bandit," *Sunday Telegraph*, August 17 1997, 8+, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5kn7J6>.

⁷⁵⁵ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 61.

⁷⁵⁶ Sarah Sands, "Biggs is the darling of Fleet Street. When he goes, it goes," *The Independent on Sunday*, August 9 2009, 41, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5krpc3>

⁷⁵⁷ Magnus Linklater, "Legends in their own crime," *The Times*, July 31 1997, 18, <https://go-gale-com.rp.nla.gov.au/ps/i.do?p=TTDA&u=nla&id=GALE%7CIF0501235888&v=2.1&it=r&sid=ebsco>.

creates the social bandit as an acceptable type of criminal, defining him as symbolic of the fight against tyranny or oppression. This makes him representative rather than individual, thus ensuring his survival in a non-primitive mediated society.⁷⁵⁸ Penfold-Mounce is right to identify Robin Hood as a symbol, as there have been, and over time will be, different incumbents of that symbolic role thus ensuring that Robin Hood will never die. In contrast to Penfold-Mounce looking at the social bandit solely as a representative rather than an individual, Hobsbawm said the social bandit is not only a symbol but a man. In other words, Hobsbawm looks at both the representative symbol *and* the individual.⁷⁵⁹ This study agrees with Hobsbawm in the need to consider both the representative and the individual. It is argued that whilst the notion of the good criminal as relating to Robin Hood is well-entrenched in the popular imagination and that this vestige easily attaches to the criminal celebrity, the symbol of Robin Hood in its current form – that is to say Robin Hood as symbolic of the fight against tyranny or oppression – only stretches so far. There comes a point at which new meanings and values attach to the individual criminal celebrity, and that point, it is argued, has been reached in the celebrity age. The argument advanced, and specifically in this instance in respect of Ronnie Biggs, is not therefore solely of Biggs standing in the shoes of Robin Hood as a beacon of hope and justice in the fight against tyranny or oppression; closer to home and in the celebrity age, it is of Biggs the individual, the glorified and glamorised criminal celebrity, as denoting a different set of values of hopes, of dreams and of escapism in respect of life itself. The argument that Biggs might have been perceived as representing the victor against the oppressors of the people in the guise of *The Establishment*, is therefore taken a step further. This further step sees the oppressor at a more local and practical level. It is no longer the archetypal Sheriff of Nottingham but someone else seen in the twenty-first-century role or perceived role of oppressor. By way of example, this might be an employer vis-à-vis the average person sitting in front of their office computer in their 9-5 office job. It is this average person, wishing to escape from the routine toil of their day-in-day-out job who wishes to escape from this perceived oppressor and who has a resonant engagement with the criminal celebrity; it is such a person who enters into an illusory alternative life of escapism to vicariously enjoy the adventures of the criminal celebrity. It was therefore Ronnie Biggs

⁷⁵⁸ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 84.

⁷⁵⁹ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 139.

the individual, the talisman of liberty and pleasure, with whom the public enjoyed a high degree of resonant engagement in their quest for hopes and dreams and escapism from everyday life. The employer example is just that – an example. The oppressor may be actual or perceived or may simply be the humdrum of everyday life itself. The door to an alternative life of escapism is open to anyone with a daydream to spare.

Penfold-Mounce appears to subscribe to the notion of an alternative life of escapism (albeit couched in a different way), in saying “Criminal-celebrities portray a lifestyle and activities that make all else seem pallid and boring, illustrating an image of great magnitude to the public. The image of the romanticized heroic criminal holds the ability to take the public out of the ordinary everyday world of convention into fantasy that is sometimes fearful in its fascination, but successfully provides an escape from the rigid boundaries of reality”.⁷⁶⁰

French Philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau said, “Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains”.⁷⁶¹ It is argued that the perceived hedonistic lifestyle of Biggs was such that followers – and specifically for this study those who entered into an illusory alternative life of escapism – saw Biggs the individual as a form of release from these chains, and as standing for hopes and dreams in relation to life itself.

11.8 Who dares wins

Hobsbawm notes that “Bandits became folk heroes for doing what most of their fellows would have liked to do”.⁷⁶² Furthermore, Ivan Olbracht says “[M]an carries within himself the wish to have what he cannot have – if only in the form of a fairy tale. That is perhaps the basis for the heroic sagas of all ages, all religions, all people and all classes”.⁷⁶³ It is argued that the story of Ronnie Biggs in the folkloric sense, was that fairy tale. Biggs epitomised the very essence of the criminal celebrity. He was the consummate criminal who invited fascination and admiration in equal measure. He was the underdog who beat both the system and the odds. He captured hearts and minds. He was courted by the public and media alike. Everyone wanted a piece of him, and he arose out of 1960’s Britain as a cultural hero. This chapter ends where it started

⁷⁶⁰ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 105-06.

⁷⁶¹ "The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations," ed. Elizabeth Knowles (5th, Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1999), 636.

⁷⁶² Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 167.

⁷⁶³ Ivan Olbracht, *Der Rauber Nikola Schuhaj*, pp76-77 quoted in Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 145.

by referring to the motto of the SAS “Who Dares Wins”. Ronnie Biggs dared. And Ronnie Biggs won.

11.9 Conclusion

This case study of Ronnie Biggs exemplified popular culture’s fascination with the criminal celebrity in the guise of Ronnie Biggs, a man of enduring appeal whose influence reached out to the public at large. The chapter showed how the life of Ronnie Biggs was played out in the media and particularly the tabloid press as crime as entertainment, and how Biggs became a media-created myth. Ronnie Biggs was labelled “The Darling of Fleet Street” with good reason. The colourful story of his life included characteristics often found in fiction, and the press was able to tell his story in an interesting, even dramatic way, in the style of a fictional work of great adventure. This was crime as entertainment “writ large”.

The chapter considered firstly the social and cultural backdrop and secondly the political backdrop to offer the context within which the celebrity of Biggs can be understood. The chapter was at pains to discuss the mediated image of Ronnie Biggs and to emphasise the significance of image over reality in establishing and maintaining resonant engagement.

Biggs was an able self-publicist and an equally able entrepreneur. This enabled him to capitalise on and indeed exploit his criminal celebrity to his own commercial advantage, whilst simultaneously helping maintain resonance with his international audience. The extent of Biggs’ renown was such, that as well as cultivating his cultural image as a criminal celebrity, he promoted what had arguably become the Biggs’ brand. An accommodating press was ever at the ready to run stories of Biggs, effectively giving him free publicity adding yet further to his celebrity, his resonant engagement, and his brand.

The chapter considered media influence, and questioned whether the media represents things the way they are, or whether it makes things the way they are in terms of creating rather than simply reflecting popular culture. The chapter then went on to consider a further dimension of this same question, demonstrating that the press go off “on a frolic of their own” in making news where there might otherwise be no reportable news – in this case in respect of Ronnie Biggs – in the interests of keeping the story

alive and cultivating the myth. This discussion of media influence suggested that the media not only represents things the way they are but makes things the way they are in not just reflecting, but in actually creating popular culture. This is clear from the way in which they glamorised and glorified Ronnie Biggs – a loveable rogue yes, but at bottom still a criminal.

The chapter identified the foundation of the celebrity of Ronnie Biggs from his role in the Great Train Robbery. To the extent this was perceived as a crime against *The Establishment*, and to the extent Biggs was perceived as a social bandit in the mould of Robin Hood, this set in motion pre-conceived notions of the *good criminal* representative of Robin Hood. Whilst the chapter considered the symbolic meaning of Robin Hood, it argued that new meanings and values attach to the criminal celebrity as an individual in the celebrity age. The chapter showed it was Ronnie Biggs the man more than that of the symbolic Robin Hood who captured hearts and minds and drew his followers into an illusory alternative life of escapism.

Biggs occupied a cultural space created by changing social mores witnessed in 1960's Britain. Interest in his adventurous life as a criminal fugitive, and his repeated escapes from justice meant he was courted by the public and the media alike. Biggs became one of the most celebrated criminals in British criminal history, and such was his popularity that he arguably took the cultural phenomenon of the criminal celebrity to new heights.

12

The Kray Twins – Case Study

This case study of the Kray twins will discuss their criminal life and times. It will consider the Kray twins within a cultural context, and in so doing will seek to identify the extent to which a cultural explanation might explain their criminal celebrity. There were three Kray brothers. The eldest, Charles, was born in 1927 followed by identical twins Ronald “Ronnie” (1933- 1995) and Reginald “Reggie” (1933-2000). Ronnie and Reggie were kings of the underworld in Britain in the 1960s. They were gangland bosses whose crimes included fraud, extortion, violence, torture and murder. An article in the *Daily Mirror* in July 1964 read: “This gang is so rich, powerful and ruthless that the police are unable to crack down on it. Victims are too terrified to go to the police. Witnesses are too scared to tell their story in court. Or they tell the wrong story. Or they go dumb or go missing because they have been bribed or threatened”. The article later continues: “The police, who know what is happening, but cannot pin any evidence on the villains, are hamstrung”.⁷⁶⁴ The corruptive power of the Kray twins was on such a scale that they were even alleged to have had the police under their influence. In this connection, James Morton notes “There was also the belief in the East End that the Krays had the local police in their pockets, and that if a man went into a police station, the twins would know about it before he left. This may not have been wholly accurate, but the twins were keen to foster such suspicions”.⁷⁶⁵ Anxieties in respect of the criminal activities of the Kray twins were even aired by the Home Secretary Henry Brooke in the House of Commons the day after the above *Daily Mirror* article was published.⁷⁶⁶ And yet, the Krays twins paradoxically became criminal celebrities and cultural heroes against the social and cultural backdrop of 1960’s Britain, immortalised on film, in a plethora of books and perennially etched in the public imagination. The twins also became part of the social and cultural history of Britain as well as part of its folklore.

12.1 Background

The Kray twins were born and raised in the poverty of the East End of London. Their father Charles Kray senior (to distinguish him from his eldest son also named Charles)

⁷⁶⁴ “The Home Secretary and the gangsters,” *Daily Mirror*, July 15 1964, 1+, Mirror Historical Archive, 1903-2000.

⁷⁶⁵ James Morton, *The Krays* (Surrey, England: The National Archives, 2008), 39.

⁷⁶⁶ United Kingdom, *Parliamentary Debates* House of Commons July 16, 1964, vol 698, col 277-278, <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1964/jul/16/blackmail-and-extortion-activities-london>.

was what was known as a “pesterer” who, according to the autobiography of Ronnie and Reggie Kray, travelled around the better class areas to try and persuade people to sell bits of gold and silver, even clothing, so he could re-sell at a profit.⁷⁶⁷ Charles Kray senior was conscripted into the army at the beginning of World War II, but deserted and spent the next twelve years on the run. He was therefore largely an absentee father, and Charles junior and Ronnie and Reggie were mainly raised by their mother Violet who was the main influence in their lives.

Boxing had proved to be a popular pastime for working-class boys in the East End of London. In their autobiography, Ronnie Kray said “In the East End, when we were kids, you really had only one of two choices if you wanted to make anything of yourself in life; you either become a boxer or a villain”⁷⁶⁸ Following in the footsteps of Violet’s father Jimmy “Cannonball” Lee, Ronnie and Reggie Kray took to amateur boxing and both turned professional in 1952 at the age of nineteen. Even before this the twins were prone to fighting and had a reputation for violence. Ronnie Kray says in as many words in the autobiography of the twins that their background was one of fighting and violence,⁷⁶⁹ and that in their youth they had a gang in their street and used to have brick battles with kids from other streets.⁷⁷⁰ As they grew up, they had even taken to wearing razor blades sewn into the lapels of their jackets.⁷⁷¹

The fact that Reggie and Ronnie were identical twins was used to their advantage, in that the victims of their crimes were often unable to say with any degree of certainty which twin had been the offender, which led to the offending twin not being charged. It was also in 1952 following their becoming professional boxers that the twins were conscripted into the army. However, like their father before them, they too deserted and eventually received dishonourable discharges which put an end to any chances of their pursuing careers as professional boxers. The twins, therefore, embarked on the second choice of career which they felt was open to them, namely as villains.

The East End of London has its own unique cultural history, and this part of the chapter will briefly discuss this cultural history so that the life and times of the Kray

⁷⁶⁷ Reg Kray, Ron Kray, and with Fred Dineage, *Our Story* (Pan Books, 2015), 6.

⁷⁶⁸ Kray, Kray, and Dineage, *Our Story*, 13.

⁷⁶⁹ Kray, Kray, and Dineage, *Our Story*, 14.

⁷⁷⁰ Kray, Kray, and Dineage, *Our Story*, 3-4.

⁷⁷¹ Morton, *The Krays*, 12.

twins can be considered in context. The East End, certainly from the mid-to-late nineteenth century, was an area of extreme deprivation. John Pearson writes that “By the time Queen Victoria came to the throne, a string of once-picturesque Thameside villages like Stepney and Whitechapel and Bethnal Green had become the dumping ground for the richest city in the world”.⁷⁷² Pearson describes how those who couldn’t find work would turn to crime or prostitution, and that violence was endemic and inevitable.⁷⁷³ Dick Hobbs adds to the conversation by saying the East End had become a metaphor for crime and depravity, where “crime” was crucial in the formation of its culture and an enduring feature of East End Life.⁷⁷⁴ In 1861 Henry Mayhew added to the discourse when he published his study of the poor and criminal in London, in which John Binny⁷⁷⁵ declared:

Thousands of our felons are trained from their infancy in the bosom of crime; a large proportion of them are born in the homes of habitual thieves and other persons of bad character and are familiarised with vice from their earliest years; frequently the first words they lisp are oaths and curses. Many of them are often carried to the beer shop or gin palace on the breast of worthless drunken mothers, while others clothed in rags, run at their heels or hang by the skirts of their petticoats. In their wretched abodes, they soon learn to be deceitful and artful, and are in many cases very precocious. The greater number are never sent to school; some run idle about the streets in low neighbourhoods; others are sent out to beg throughout the city.⁷⁷⁶

Meanwhile, Charles Booth viewed crime as hereditary,⁷⁷⁷ and prison chaplain Reverend W.D. Morrison in 1891 wrote:

There is a population of habitual criminals which forms a class of itself.
Habitual criminals are not to be confused with the working of any other

⁷⁷² John Pearson, *The Cult of Violence* (London, England: Orion Books Ltd, 2001), 28.

⁷⁷³ Pearson, *The Cult of Violence*, 28.

⁷⁷⁴ Dick Hobbs, *Doing the Business* (Clarendon Press, Oxford., 1988), 108.

⁷⁷⁵ Mayhew does not say who John Binny is. However, research shows Binny was an author and contemporary of Mayhew who co-authored certain books with Mayhew.

⁷⁷⁶ Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor: Vol iv “Those That Will Not Work”* (London: 1861) Published as *London’s Underworld in the Victorian Period* (New York: Dover Publications, 2005,109, quoted in Drew D. Gray, *London’s Shadows: The Dark Side of the Victorian City* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 169.

⁷⁷⁷ Henry Maudsley, *Body and Mind* (London MacMillan, 1873) quoted in Martin J. Wiener, *Reconstructing the Criminal: Culture, Law and Politics in England 1830-1914*, 230 cited in Gray, *London’s Shadows: The Dark Side of the Victorian City*, 169; Gray, *London’s Shadows: The Dark Side of the Victorian City*.

class; they are a set of persons who make crime the object and business of their lives; to commit crime is their trade; they deliberately scoff at honest ways of earning a living, and must accordingly be looked upon as a class of a separate and distinct character from the rest of the community.⁷⁷⁸

But out of this slough of despond, a class solidarity of the East End emerged.⁷⁷⁹ Hobbs discusses the development of the area and the evolution of its culture which he argues encapsulates independence, tough masculinity, a traditional deviant identity and most importantly, entrepreneurial ability.⁷⁸⁰ Meanwhile, Pearson writes that “What morality there was, centred on survival, loyalty to the family and the tribe, and deep suspicion of the world outside; all combined in an ethos that united these excluded people”. Pearson continues “This ethos produced in the old East Enders many of the attitudes the twins would come to exemplify”, adding that “True East Enders would never ‘grass’ to the police. They were loyal to each other, and they lived by a code of conduct all of their own”. And so it was that this was the culture into which the Kray twins were born.⁷⁸¹

12.2 Upwardly mobile

As discussed in chapter 2, whilst the seeds of social change were starting to emerge in the 1950s, it was Britain in the 1960s that witnessed a decade of social change, not least in relation to the class system which challenged *The Establishment*. Class structures became more porous, which allowed the “upwardly mobile” to achieve a new social acceptance previously denied by *The Establishment*. The climate was right for the creation of working-class heroes, and the Kray twins embraced this opportunity in creating an image by which they became working-class heroes in the eyes of their own community. Moreover, this image resonated with the public at a macro level as their celebrity star began to rise. This heroic image, it is argued, was somewhat contradictory as between the philanthropic image which the twins fostered on the one hand and their image as gangsters on the other, as this chapter will presently show.

⁷⁷⁸ Andrew Barrett and Christopher Harrison eds, *Crime and Punishment in England: A Sourcebook* (London: UCL 1999) quoted in Gray, *London's Shadows: The Dark Side of the Victorian City*, 169.

⁷⁷⁹ Hobbs, *Doing the Business*, 53.

⁷⁸⁰ Hobbs, *Doing the Business*, 84.

⁷⁸¹ Pearson, *The Cult of Violence*, 28-29.

As mentioned in the case study of Howard Marks, Penfold-Mounce classifies criminal celebrities as social bandits, criminal heroes, underworld exhibitionists and iniquitous criminals.⁷⁸² The Kray twins primarily fall within the classification of underworld exhibitionists, described by Penfold-Mounce as “[C]riminals who actively manufacture a celebrity career from their past activities with the intent of financial and status profit”.⁷⁸³ This chapter now looks at this definition a little more closely. Celebrity, it is argued, is largely based on image. In this respect, it is argued that image, that is to say, the “right image” led to the twins’ celebrity. It is further argued it was the ability of the Kray twins to cultivate the “right image” which helped them manufacture their celebrity image and associated status, and that it was the commodification and commercialisation of this image which led to financial gain. But what was the image of the Kray twins, and how was it constructed and promoted?

The twins had two images which, on the face of it, were polar opposites. One image was the philanthropic image of the twins as *good criminals* who gave generously to charity. The other image was as ruthless gangsters who incited fear and who enjoyed a reign of terror particularly in London in the 1950s and 1960s. Paradoxically this reign of terror was tempered with relief by some, in that if the legend of the twins is to be believed, they were said to have made the streets safe for women and children and only killed their own.⁷⁸⁴

12.2.1 Philanthropic image

This study sees the notion of the good criminal as a cultural vestige of the historic social bandit in the guise of Robin Hood, which has arguably survived and now attaches to the criminal celebrity. The notion of the good criminal is rooted in the idea of Robin Hood stealing from the rich and giving to the poor. Subject to the caveat entered in the case-study comparisons in respect of the Kray twins as set out in the thesis conclusion, this notion, it is argued, was sufficiently entrenched in the public imagination to allow the public to see the Kray twins as good criminals in a Robin Hood sense, that is to say as philanthropists albeit with a criminal background, and which had the effect of cementing their acceptance in society.

⁷⁸² Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 9.

⁷⁸³ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 86.

⁷⁸⁴ Morton, *The Krays*, 107.

The Kray twins were keen to promote their philanthropic image. However, this was only a façade as were their outwardly respectable business interests, which only served to mask their criminality. The philanthropic image stemmed from the involvement of the Kray twins in boxing. It was the success of the twins in the ring which gave them a certain reputation and standing within their own community and which proved to be the springboard for their ultimate celebrity. Boxing led to Ronnie and Reggie being acquainted with or even befriending some of the better-known names within the sport including Henry Cooper and Sonny Liston. The twins were keen on self-publicity, which supports their classification of underworld exhibitionists as suggested by Penfold-Mounce, and seemingly missed no opportunity to be photographed with “known names” when promoting charitable causes. A full-page article in the *Sunday Times* as early as August 1964 (and other press stories over many years later) made great play of the twin’s charitable deeds. The article said of the Kray twins “In the East End of London, they have posed with civic dignitaries, boxing champions, show business personalities and the occasional aristocrat. The functions were almost invariably charitable”.⁷⁸⁵

12.2.2 Gangster image

The Krays were gangsters who brought Mafia-style crime to the East End of London. According to Morton, Ronnie Kray was more of the stereotypical gangster who “[M]odelled himself on Al Capone of whom he sometimes said he was a reincarnation, wearing an Albert watch and chain, a fawn camel-hair coat or a dark blue cashmere one, which he wore over his shoulders like the American”.⁷⁸⁶ The twins were often seen wearing double-breasted pin-striped suits befitting of a gangster image and exuded an air of fear which paradoxically also attracted admiration. It was the twins and their henchmen known as “The Firm” who ruled the East End of London and beyond by fear in the 1950s and in particular in the 1960s.

Two verbatim statements now follow which attest to the gangster image of the Kray twins. The first is a Report by Detective Superintendent Tommy Butler held at The National Archives in London which gives a summary of the information he gathered

⁷⁸⁵ "The charitable life of the Brothers Kray ", *Sunday Times*, August 9, 1964, 4, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5kG4C7>.

⁷⁸⁶ Morton, *The Krays*, 34.

in relation to the Kray twins and their associates as early as the beginning of the 1960s, and the second is a statement made to the police by Lenny Hamilton of his torture at the hands of Ronnie Kray.

The first statement comprises a summary. It was compiled several years before the murders for the twins were ultimately found guilty and gives a telling account of how they operated and the fear they instilled. The Report reads as follow:

They are well known in London criminal circles as “THE TWINS”.

They are the joint owners of the “Double R” Club Bow Road E. This is a low-drinking club, which can only be described as a sink of iniquity. They are careful to adhere closely to all club regulations, but every visitor to it is either (a) a convicted criminal or (b) one of the many degraded lower-class newspaper reporters seeking “colour” and “drama” or so-called atmosphere for rubbishy news items. They also own the Regal Billiards Hall, Eric Street, Bow, E3.

During the last three years the Kray twins and their older brother Charles James KRAY, C.R.O. (Criminal Records Office) No. 33830/1951, assisted by the notorious NASH family, have welded themselves into a formidable criminal association.

They have organised the “Protection” technique, and the keystones of their confederacy are VIOLENCE and INTIMIDATION. At present, this is mainly directed towards owners, café proprietors, billiard hall owners, publicans, and motor car dealers operating in the East End of London. That they will spread their operation to other districts in due course may be taken for granted.

Their reputation is already such that persons threatened almost frantically deny visitations by anyone connected with the Kray twins. Not one victim can be persuaded to give evidence against anyone connected with their organisation.

The fact that Ronald Kray is certainly mentally unstable (to put it at the very least) is of immense importance to the others, and adds considerably to the victim’s undeniable urge to comply with demands made upon him, and to his atrocious memory when questioned by Police at a later stage.⁷⁸⁷

⁷⁸⁷ Statement of Detective Superintendent Tommy Butler, May 6 1960, The National Archives, Kew, London.

As if by way of corroborative evidence to the above comments of Detective Superintendent Tommy Butler, James Morton dedicates a whole chapter of his book to the Kray twins and their ‘Reign of Terror’. The opening paragraph of the chapter refers to the Kray twins’ controlled but unpredictable violence, and relates that one man was shot in the foot, another was slashed, another had a sword pushed into his mouth, and yet another was shot following which the bullet was given to him as a souvenir.⁷⁸⁸ Yet further evidence of the gangster image of the Kray twins, if evidence be needed, is the wall of silence from customers who had been drinking in the Blind Beggar Public House at the time Ronnie Kray had shot and killed George Cornell. Ronnie Kray was not even identified at a subsequent identity parade according to James Morton. The barmaid who had been on duty on the night of the murder failed to attend after being warned of the danger she was in, whilst of two other ‘witnesses’ who did attend to inspect the identity parade, one said he was not sure, and the other made no attempt at identification.⁷⁸⁹

The second verbatim statement is the chilling account of Lenny Hamilton of his experience with Ronnie Kray whom he had displeased in some way. A gangster image needs to be portrayed to the outside world. However, whilst the account which follows necessarily took place behind closed doors, the gangster image it illustrates fell within the public domain once the statement had been made to the police, and subsequently became a matter of record for public consumption. The statement reads:

Ronnie Kray was standing in front of the cooker and pointing to the armchair said, “Sit down there Len”, which I did.

I looked away to see who else was in the room and as I moved my head back into the original position I saw him holding a cold steel knife sharpener. Instinctively I thought it was a poker because it was glowing red hot for he had just taken it off the gas ring.

Holding it in his hand, he slashed it right across my left cheek. I felt a searing pain flash through my head. There was a horrible smell of burning flesh and I thought he was going to kill me.

I jumped up, turned round, and faced him. The steel was still glowing red and Ronnie appeared mad. He shouted, “Fucking well hold him you cunt.” He kept shouting to Payne “Hold him! Hold him! He appeared very

⁷⁸⁸ Morton, *The Krays*, 38-56.

⁷⁸⁹ Morton, *The Krays*, 44.

frightened but he got behind me and held my arms because Ronnie kept shouting at him.

Ronnie then stared at me – nearly nose to nose, with a mad glare in his eyes. He said “We don’t like anybody using our names.”

I could not talk or move because I was too frightened. I would have passed out had it not been through fear. It was fear alone that kept me on my feet.

He then placed the red hot poker again across the bottom of the same cheek touching the bottom lip. There was a smell of burning flesh – a blinding light in my eyes – a terrible stinging pain as though all my face was on fire.

Ronnie Kray then placed the red hot steel right across my head and my hair shrivelled as though I had a centre parting. I had a big scar on my skull for several months afterwards.

Ronnie was enjoying himself – he looked like a nut case. He then kept burning my suit. He placed the red hot steel on both shoulders and burnt holes in it.

The steel began to cool because it was not so hot as when he placed it on my right arm because the material was only scorched.

He held the poker in front of my eyes and said “If you say anything about this out of here you will get both your eyes burnt out next time.” He then said “He’s had enough – fuck off.”

I nearly fell down the stairs and heard somebody laugh. As I got to the taxi I had my hands covering my face.⁷⁹⁰

Yet more evidence of the gangster image of the Kray twins was found in abundance at Littledean Jail visited on a field trip to England, as mentioned in the methodology. One of the items exhibited is an image of a crossbow said to have been seized by the police prior to the Krays being arrested. Other items of weaponry on display included an array of knives, pliers, pincers, knuckle-dusters and thumb screws which were all part of their stock-in-trade, and serve to cement the veracity of their stop-at-nothing gangster image.

⁷⁹⁰ Statement of Lenny Hamilton, February 28 1968, The National Archives, Kew, London.

Figure 12.1

Image of a crossbow exhibited at Littledean Jail said to have been used by the Kray twins.⁷⁹¹



On a point of note, the Kray twins were featured in the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussauds in London between 1980 and 1985. However, the image portrayed by Madame Tussauds was not in keeping with the *right image* which the twins sought to portray even though they were serving a minimum of thirty years in prison for murder at this time. Madame Tussauds confirmed the waxwork images of the Kray twins were therefore “[R]emoved in 1985 after threats from their family who did not wish them to be displayed in the Chamber of Horrors”.⁷⁹²

12.2.3 Avengers

Penfold-Mounce acknowledges that her above classifications of criminal celebrities are not rigid, and specifically in respect of the Kray twins that they were an admixture of social bandit, criminal hero and underworld exhibitionist.⁷⁹³ To the extent that the Krays fell within the social bandit and criminal hero classification of Penfold-Mounce,

⁷⁹¹ Image of crossbow seen on display at Littledean Jail.

⁷⁹² Email dated December 10, 2018. Case reference[#-4029353-] from Zoe Richards, Curator, Madame Tussauds London (Archives and Heritage Collection).

⁷⁹³ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 108.

this chapter now turns to what Hobsbawm refers to as avengers as a sub-variety of the social bandit. Hobsbawm starts his chapter concerning avengers by saying “Moderation in killing and violence belong to the image of the social bandits...whose terror actually forms part of their public image”,⁷⁹⁴ and continues “They are heroes not in spite of the fear and horror their actions inspire, but in some ways because of them. They are not so much men who right wrongs, but avengers, and exerters of power; their appeal is not as agents of justice...but of men who prove that even the poor and the weak can be terrible”.⁷⁹⁵ To the degree Penfold-Mounce sees the Kray twins as comprising both social bandits and criminal heroes, it is argued that the Kray twins, and certainly their public image, also identified at least in part with Hobsbawm’s avenger.

Hobsbawm gives an example of an avenger remembered for his good deeds, and another of an avenger remembered for his cruelty, but adds that the image can combine both. This fusion of images identifies with that portrayed by the Kray twins. In giving examples of avengers, Hobsbawm notes that it does not matter whether tales of the avenger are true or not, and that it is the image rather the reality which is important.⁷⁹⁶ This principle holds good for the Kray twins whose philanthropic image which portrayed them as good people bore little relation to the reality of their criminal lives.

12.3 The rise of the Kray twins

Several factors serve to explain the rise of the Kray twins and their subsequent rise in popularity as criminal celebrities. This study identifies three such factors which will now be discussed in turn.

12.3.1 The Betting and Gaming Act 1960

One of the factors which it is argued was instrumental in the rise of the Kray twins and which in turn was instrumental in their celebrity and rise in popularity, was The Betting and Gaming Act 1960.⁷⁹⁷ (the 1960 Act). There was a flaw in the 1960 Act which proved to be a boon for the twins. The flaw is explained by James Callaghan the then Secretary of State for the Home Office in a debate in the House of Commons in 1968

⁷⁹⁴ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 63.

⁷⁹⁵ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 63-64.

⁷⁹⁶ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 64.

⁷⁹⁷ Citation: 8 & 9 Eliz.2 c. 60

immediately prior to the Second Reading of the Gaming Bill which sought to address the flaw in the 1960 Act. Callaghan said:

The origin of this Bill is the failure of The Betting and Gaming Act 1960 to achieve its purpose. That purpose was to prevent the exploitation of gaming by commercial interests. The 1960 Act was a thoroughly well-intentioned Measure and the authors must be astonished to find the consequences of their actions are so different from their intentions, for the Act precipitated the very evil it was meant to prevent.

The 1960 Act benefitted the Kray twins in two particular ways. It spawned many new gaming clubs in London which expanded the protection racket side of their business activities. However, more significantly, the twins bought *Esmerelda's Barn*, a nightclub in upmarket Knightsbridge in the West End of London. The West End of London is a relatively short distance from the East End of London as the crow flies, and yet it was (and arguably still is) a considerable distance in terms of social cachet. Not only was the nightclub licensed as a gaming club under the 1960 Act, but it also became renown for high-profile celebrity guests who would mingle with the Kray twins and be photographed with them, including Frank Sinatra, Diana Dors and George Raft. This practice, it is argued, identifies with the underworld exhibitionist classification of Penfold-Mounce in the respect of “criminals who actively manufacture a celebrity career”.⁷⁹⁸ “Hobnobbing” or “basking in reflected glory” by the Kray twins with celebrities was part of the process which resulted in the Kray twins themselves becoming celebrities in their own right.

12.3.2 Basking in reflected glory

Basking in reflected glory (BIRG) refers to the tendency of individuals to associate themselves with the successful, the famous or the celebrated.⁷⁹⁹ An article by Robert. Cialdini et al refers to the tendency to bask in reflected glory by publicly announcing one's association with successful others. As part of their research, Cialdini et al developed a model asserting that the BIRG response represents an attempt to enhance one's own public image. In support of this assertion, Cialdini et al found that the

⁷⁹⁸ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 86.

⁷⁹⁹ Rosanna E. Guadagno, "Basking in Reflected Glory (Birging)," in *Encyclopedia of Social Psychology*, ed. Roy F. Baumeister and Kathleen D. Vohs (Thousand Oaks City: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2007), 2.

tendency to proclaim a connection with a positive source was strongest when one's public image was threatened.⁸⁰⁰ The Kray twins were keen to foster the *right* public image to give them acceptance both in the community and in society. Associating themselves with the rich and famous therefore helped them to cultivate this image of what is argued was success, wealth and power.

In mingling with celebrities, it is argued the Kray twins in terms of class structure, became both one of us and one of them. Hobsbawm explains the social bandit is an outsider and a rebel:

[A] poor man who refuses to accept the normal roles of poverty, and establishes his freedom by means of the only resources within reach of the poor – strength, bravery, cunning and determination. This draws him closer to the poor: he is one of them. It sets him in opposition to the hierarchy of power, wealth and influence. He is not one of them...At the same time the bandit is inevitably drawn into the web of wealth and power, because unlike other peasants, he acquires wealth and exerts power. He is “one of us” who is constantly in the process of becoming associated with “them”. The more successful he is as a bandit, the more he is *both* a representative of the poor *and* a part of the system of the rich.⁸⁰¹

And so it is by analogy that the Kray twins managed to straddle both camps, beloved by their very own “East Enders” and by their new circle of the rich and the famous in whose reflected glory they basked. Further, a passage from Jenks and Lorentzen in respect of the Kray twins neatly epitomises the essence of social change in Britain in the 1960s and how the twins were accepted by their own indigenous people and by celebrities alike. Jenks and Lorentzen say the Kray twins enhanced their appeal as being not only “their own men”, but also “men of the people” with their “seeming capacity to overcome this marginality⁸⁰² and thus, in a symbolic sense, to transcend their City’s “great divide”. Jenks and Lorentzen continue by saying:

⁸⁰⁰ Robert B. Cialdini, Richard J. Borden, Avril Thorne, Marcus R. Walker, Stephen Freeman, and Lloyd R. Sloan, "Basking in reflected glory: Three (football) field studies," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 34, no. 3 (1976): 336, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.34.3.366>.

⁸⁰¹ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 95-96. Under pressure from his critics, Hobsbawm conceded that his original thesis based on peasants was too limited, and that the social bandit should be considered in wider socio-economic circumstances.

⁸⁰² Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative geographies of modernity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991). See page 3 which refers to “marginality” as those towns and regions which have been left behind in the modern race for progress – including Bethnal Green where the Kray twins were raised.

They gained support for this artfulness and collusion in its goals from the emergent values of an epoch which now stands as a popular metaphor for social change – the 1960s. Whatever the economic, political, social and moral realities of this period of contemporary British history, it gave rise to a series of new narratives concerning social mobility, egalitarianism, tolerance, affluence, consumption, style, sexuality and opportunity, many of which were purely ideological, but many of which suited the aspirations and trajectory of the Kray twins and served to integrate them quite effectively into the hearts and minds, and society and pockets of the mandarins of the emergent popular culture, and through the mass media, into the reach of the populace also.⁸⁰³

Jenks and Lorentzen then add,

A continuous montage of press photographs depicted the twins in the company of sports personalities, actors and actresses, entertainers, pop singers, models, fashion photographers, media personalities and politicians. Sometimes these scenes, which were for the most part strategically stage-managed, by the twins themselves, occurred in nightclubs (their own and others), sometimes at charity events, and, on one occasion in a Tory peer's drawing-room. They were clearly becoming benefactors of the poor and friends of the famous – as Ronnie shouted at his trial when losing patience with the proceedings, “If I wasn't here now, I'd probably be drinking with Judy Garland!”⁸⁰⁴

12.3.3 David Bailey images

It is argued that a defining moment in the celebrity profile of the Kray twins was when, as already mentioned in chapter 2, society photographer David Bailey took photographs of all three Kray brothers in 1965.⁸⁰⁵

This image of the Kray brothers was part of a “Box of Pin-ups” featuring such figures as Paul McCartney, Mick Jagger and Rudolf Nureyev. The effect of the juxtaposition of these images of the Kray brothers with iconic figures of the day was to glamorise crime and at the same time give the Kray brothers a certain respectability as well as a social and cultural acceptance. The David Bailey image is significant in

⁸⁰³ Jenks and Lorentzen, "The Kray Fascination," 99.

⁸⁰⁴ Jenks and Lorentzen, "The Kray Fascination," 99.

⁸⁰⁵ David Bailey, David Bailey's Box of Pin-Ups, 1965. Photographic portraits, 32x37cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

the history of the Kray twins. The menacing image has been reproduced by the press time and time again over many years whilst the Kray twins were languishing in prison; it is how the public remember and relate to the Kray twins. It is as if time has stood still and their lives have been preserved in aspic for posterity to sustain and indeed cultivate their myth.

12.4 Cultural shift

This case study will now look at the depths of the depravity of the Kray twins at one end of the spectrum (to the extent their crimes saw the light of day) and the height of their celebrity at the other. It will do this in an attempt to get a measure of the extent of the cultural shift from one extreme to the other. This shift will be measured by the apparent legitimisation of the twins' crimes in the eyes of the community and the acceptance of the Kray twins themselves in the community – that is to say the East End of London in a narrow sense, but in society itself in a wider sense. To get an indication of the extent of the twins' depravity this chapter will consult transcripts from the Old Bailey murder trial in 1969, whilst the impending media review will seek to identify the high point of the twins' celebrity.

Whilst indeed many of the crimes of the Kray twins may never have seen the light of day, certain extracts from transcripts of their murder trial will be considered by way of consulting the bare truth, that is to say, the facts as they were, as against selective or mediated or even sensationalist accounts which might have put a different gloss on events.

The trial of Ronnie and Reggie was in respect of two separate but in some ways, connected murders. Ronnie Kray was found guilty of the murder of George Cornell at the *Blind Beggar* public house in the East End of London, and Reggie Kray was found guilty of the murder of Jack “The Hat” McVitie. The point of connection between the murders, according to the Crown prosecution was that having murdered George Cornell in March 1966, Ronnie Kray some nineteen months later, incited his brother Reggie to murder Jack McVitie so that Reggie could be his twin even in murder.⁸⁰⁶

⁸⁰⁶ Transcript of Proceedings, *Regina v Ronald Kray and Others*, (Central Criminal Court, Justice Melford Stevenson, Monday, February 17, 1969), 58.

The trial was something of a media circus. It is argued the media's involvement had the effect of adding an exotic sheen to the proceedings which belied the seriousness of the allegations. This chapter will now report verbatim from some of the trial transcripts. As well as laying bare the truth of the murders by the twins and the depths of their depravity, the verbatim reports will bring into sharp relief the incongruence of the murders and the extent of the twins' celebrity. This incongruence, it is argued, is itself a measure of the extent of the cultural shift witnessed in 1960's Britain by which even murderers in the celebrity age were able to transcend their criminality and become not only accepted in society, but elevated to celebrity status.

Describing the scene leading to the murder of George Cornell, prosecuting counsel Howard Jones in his opening address to the jury on the second day of the trial on January 9, 1969 said:

On Wednesday evening, the 9th of March 1966, a man by the name of George Cornell went to have a drink with two friends in a public house in the East End of London. As he was sitting at the corner of the bar he looked up, and saw before him a man holding a pistol, the pistol was fired, and Cornell crashed to the ground mortally wounded in the head, murdered by that gun. Having committed, say the prosecution, that cold and deliberate murder with such horrifying effrontery, the gunman left the public house and went round the corner to another public house to his brother, who immediately arranged his escape.⁸⁰⁷

Howard Jones added that a post-mortem showed the bullet entered through the very centre of Cornell's forehead, passed through his brain and emerged through the back of his skull.⁸⁰⁸

Later that same day Howard Jones also described to the jury the final scene which led to the murder of Jack "The Hat" McVitie. Jones said:

That scene was enacted in the living room. McVitie was at last fully aware of what was happening to him, that this was no party, and he was terrified, bathed in sweat and like a caged animal he tried to escape. He threw himself at the window which you have seen in the photograph, smashing it

⁸⁰⁷ Transcript of Proceedings, *Regina v Ronald Kray and Others*, (Central Criminal Court, Justice Melford Stevenson, Thursday, January 9, 1969), 4.

⁸⁰⁸ Transcript of Proceedings, *Regina v Ronald Kray and Others*, Thursday, January 9, 1969, p10.

as he did so, but Reginald Kray and Ronald Kray pulled him back and started to belabour him with their fists. Then Ronnie Kray held McVitie from behind, pinning his arms, and Reginald Kray picked up the knife and stabbed McVitie in the face, punched him over the heart, and plunged the knife repeatedly into McVitie's body, with his twin brother Ronald shouting over and over again "Kill him Reg". McVitie fell to the floor near the window gravely wounded and gasping for breath, but the butchery was not complete. Reginald Kray stood astride him, and plunged the knife into McVitie's neck, twisting it to make sure that its deadly work was done.⁸⁰⁹

The trial judge Mr Justice Melford Stevenson in sentencing Ronald Kray said "I am not going to waste words on you. The sentence upon you is that you will go to life imprisonment. In my view, society has earned a rest from your activities and I recommend that you be detained for thirty years. Put him down".⁸¹⁰ In then sentencing Reggie Kray, Mr Justice Melford Stevenson said, "For reasons I have already indicated in the case of your brother Ronald, – I don't propose to repeat them – I recommend that you be detained for thirty years..."⁸¹¹ Had hanging for murder not been abolished by the Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act 1965,⁸¹² the Kray twins would probably have received the death sentence. In the event, their thirty-year prison sentences only served to mark another chapter in their celebrity lives.

The fact that the celebrity of the Kray twins continued after they were found guilty of murder, let alone that their celebrity arguably increased after their convictions, is evidence of how the Kray twins were (in the words of Leigh Straw) able to successfully "manipulate their public image in an effort to legitimise their activities and gain acceptance in the community."⁸¹³ In this connection, it is argued that such is the power of the "right image" that even murder can become "acceptable", or at least "justified". As the legend of the Kray twins goes, murder was justified on the basis the twins apparently only killed other criminals.

⁸⁰⁹ Transcript of Proceedings, *Regina v Ronald Kray and Others*, Thursday, January 9, 1969, pp26-27.

⁸¹⁰ Transcript of Proceedings, *Regina v Ronald Kray and Others*, (Central Criminal Court, Justice Melford Stevenson, Wednesday, March 5, 1969), 3.

⁸¹¹ Transcript of Proceedings, *Regina v Ronald Kray and Others*, Wednesday, March 5, 1969, p6.

⁸¹² Citation:1965 c71

⁸¹³ Straw, Leigh, Celebrating Kate: The Criminal-Celebrity of Sydney Underworld Figure, Kate Leigh," *Journal of Australian Studies* 40, no. 1 (2016): 59.

12.5 Media review

This media review will consider several newspaper reports in relation to the Kray twins. It will do so in chronological order, as it is argued this will help plot the rising arc of their celebrity. To the extent that media coverage is a measure of and indeed evidence of the extent of celebrity, the media review will show that the celebrity arc of the Kray twins actually rose after they were found guilty of murder in their 1969 trial. In this connection, the trial Judge Mr Justice Melford Stevenson may have been correct when handing down his sentence that society had earned a rest from the twins' activities. However, the ever-rising celebrity arc of the Kray twins shows that even whilst they were in prison, the public's insatiable appetite for news about the Kray twins remained undiminished.

Because many of the crimes of the Kray twins may never have seen the light of day, it follows that there is a relative dearth of stories about the criminal activities of the twins until their murder trial in 1969. However, one such story which appeared in the *Daily Mail* in January 1965 involved a court case where the Kray twins were alleged to have demanded money with menaces. The headline read "Kray case court told of threats" and spoke of witnesses being intimidated by known colleagues of the Kray twins.⁸¹⁴ In the event, the Krays were acquitted after the jury said they did not want the trial to continue. A further edition of the *Daily Mail* in April that year referring to the aborted trial showed an image of the jubilant Kray twins outside their parents' home in Vallance Road in Bethnal Green being "[H]ugged and cheered by neighbours".⁸¹⁵ The edition was at pains to comment as much on the boxing prowess and charitable credentials of the twins as it was on the aborted trial. *The Sunday Times* was quick to follow with a story a matter of days later, using the aborted trial as an opportunity to run something of a rags-to-riches story, headed "The long, hard climb from Bethnal Green". The article said that "the Krays' prowess and business deals have become "part of London folklore", adding that "the Kray myth has always been potent", before further adding "they still spend much of their time at parents' tiny

⁸¹⁴ "Kray case court told of threats," *Daily Mail*, January 16 1965, 15.

⁸¹⁵ Owen Summers, "Kray twins go free," *Daily Mail*, April 6, 1965, 11.

home in Vallance Road Bethnal Green” – which was arguably a reference to their caring East End image.⁸¹⁶

There was little media activity concerning the Kray twins following their above acquittal in 1965. The media coverage now moves forward to October 1968, and to an article in the *Daily Mail* reporting on the twins’ arrest following a police swoop. This was the arrest which led to their murder trial the following year, but even at that the article did not fail to mention the boxing prowess of the Kray twins and how they supported “many children’s charities”.⁸¹⁷

It was following the trial and imprisonment of the twins that the media floodgates opened and the marketing of the Kray twins as East End legends started in earnest. Such was the interest in the Kray twins that a television documentary in November 1969 was said to have attracted seven million viewers.⁸¹⁸

Just three years into their prison sentences in 1972, the biography of the Kray twins by John Pearson was published to great acclaim.⁸¹⁹ It was this book on which the subsequent film *Legend* released in 2015 was based. The film, together with the earlier film *The Krays* released in 1990, went some way towards securing the immortality of the twins.

Since there are so many media outlets in the celebrity age, and because the public is more connected than ever by new technologies, media and public attention is short, and celebrated cases have to be presented more frequently to keep the public’s attention as if by a process of osmosis. And so it was with the Kray twins, with the media running a story on almost any pretext invariably dredging up the past to keep the myth alive, but invariably showing the Kray twins in a good light.

Seventeen years into their prison sentences and the media was still going strong. “Rubbing shoulders with the stars”, said the *Daily Mirror* in 1986. This article was extolling the virtues of the Kray twins. “Everyone has a good side to their personality – and the twins had, too”, said the article. “It was not unusual to see Ronnie Kray

⁸¹⁶ Lewis Chester, "The long, hard climb from Bethnal Green," *Sunday Times*, April 11, 1965, 5, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5kVBN8>.

⁸¹⁷ Daily Mail Reporter, "Kray twins arrested in 6am police swoop," *Daily Mail*, May 9 1968, 9.

⁸¹⁸ Our Television Staff, "ITV claim bigger share of audience," *Daily Telegraph*, November 8, 1969, 2, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5kEYD8>

⁸¹⁹ John Pearson, *The Profession of Violence* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1972).

handing a couple of quid to elderly East Enders who told him they were short of cash”, the article said, adding “If the twins were asked for a donation to charity, they would give freely”. The article continued by waxing lyrical and promoting the twins’ *good criminal side*.⁸²⁰

Still 1986, and the *Sunday Times* runs an article in December that “Calendars, T-shirts and badges that glorify the notorious East End Gangsters Ronnie and Reggie Kray are on sale this Christmas. They are part of an attempt to market the twins and wins them early parole”. The article also mentions “The growing commercialisation springing up around the Krays”.⁸²¹

It is now 1989 and the commercial bandwagon is still rolling, and even gaining pace. “Show business makes a killing out of the Krays” trumpets the headline of an article in *The Independent*. “Ronnie Kray once walked into a London pub in broad daylight and blew off the top of a man’s head with a pistol”, said the opening paragraph before continuing in a sensationalist fashion that “He and his twin brother Reggie killed another man and had his body sliced into salami sized portions”. “But there really is no business like show business”, continued the article, and “being carried along on a recent flood of nostalgia for the 1960s, the gruesome twosome from the Mile End Road are becoming a major entertainment industry. The Kray nostalgia industry has now reached a new level. The boys, it seems, are using a company called Progress Management – and Ron is pleased to announce his forthcoming wedding”.

⁸²⁰ "Rubbing Shoulders with the Stars," *Daily Mirror*, October 9, 1986, 19, Mirror Historical Archive, 1903-2000.

⁸²¹ Maurice Chittenden, "Fury as twins become faces for sale," *Sunday Times*, December 21, 1986, 4, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5kAj21>

Figure 12.2

*The calling card of the Kray twins' manager*⁸²²



The following year, in 1990, the *Daily Mirror* ran a story of the impending film premiere of *The Krays* featuring Martin and Gary Kemp. The author of the article says the film goes on release on April 27, “[A]nd the legend takes another step forward”. The article carries the headline “Krazy after all these years”, with a sub-heading in bold type bearing the words “Gangland killers turned into cult with new movie”. Inset is the image of the Kray twins from David Bailey’s 1965 Box of Pin-ups, with the twins still frozen in time.⁸²³

A further review of the film *The Krays* appeared in *The Economist* in May 1990 with the heading “Tea, biscuits and butchery”. The article is not particularly relevant to the film review itself but is worthy of mention in other respects. In particular, the article says that “[P]rison has hardly slowed the Kray publicity machine”, adding that “A formidable personality cult has sprung up around the brothers, growing stronger as memories fade”. The article continues by saying “Older folk round Bethnal Green fondly recall the twins’ generosity to charities and courtesy to women, but forget that

⁸²² James Dalrymple, "Show business makes a killing out of the Krays," *The Independent*, September 29, 1989. <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5nKB73>

⁸²³ Colin Wills, "Krazy after All These Years" *Sunday Mirror*, March 11, 1990, Mirror Historical Archive, 1903-2000.

they also liked slashing people's faces with sabres. The fact that the twins only hurt other criminals is held up by their apologists as almost praiseworthy"⁸²⁴

The Listener also reported in 1990 on the impending release of the book *Born Fighter* by Reggie Kray, with the clever title for aficionados of Oscar Wilde of "Ballad of Reg in Gaol" which, as with other books and newspapers articles before it, again dredged up the well-worn past. The article refers to the "enduring legend" of Reggie Kray, noting that the celebrity of the Kray twins lives on and "the newspaper column inches continue to mount up".⁸²⁵ It was Boorstin who said much the same many years earlier: "You can judge a man as a celebrity – all you have to do is weigh his press clippings".⁸²⁶

This media review now moves forward to 1993 and a *Daily Mail* article in October that year with the headline asking "Why are the stars still dazzled by the Krays?" The article tells of a proposed protest march in London to be supported by celebrities petitioning for the release of Reggie Kray on parole. The article is of note on a number of fronts and plays to the image of the twins in saying "[T]he Krays' cause is being espoused by people who choose to see them as some kind of East End benevolent society which existed to keep muggers away and help old ladies across the street". More importantly, it acknowledges the proposed march in London as being about "the oxygen of publicity – the very commodity on which the brothers' empire was built", adding that the twins "were always careful to maintain their image as criminal celebrities". The article further acknowledges that "With most criminals, their convictions would have been the last we heard of them. But from HM Prisons and Broadmoor, they have continued their extraordinary career as the great self-publicists of crime, and that they are now big business". Finally, the article makes the perennial media reference to Robin Hood in saying "The twins were almost like Robin Hoods, stealing from the rich to give to the poor".⁸²⁷

⁸²⁴ "Tea biscuits and butchery," *Economist*, February 5, 1990, 156, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5n6T9X>

⁸²⁵ Tim Hulse, "Ballad of Reg in Goal," *The Listener*, October 11, 1990, 30, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5KEHK3>.

⁸²⁶ Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 58.

⁸²⁷ John Pearson, "Why are the stars still dazzled by the Krays?," *Daily Mail*, October 5, 1993, 9, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5kAVa9>

As of 1993, and into the twenty-fourth year of their prison sentences, yet another book is published with *The Sunday Telegraph* running an article headed “Showbiz gangsters”. The article quotes biographer Pearson as saying the twins “were not ordinary criminals, but criminal performers acting out the crazy drama of their lives”. The name Robin Hood appears yet again in seeking to draw an analogy between Robin Hood and the Kray twins.⁸²⁸

Stories in the press continued relentlessly, interspersed with news of the twins’ weddings and divorces and the inevitable selling of stories to the tabloid press. Roberta Kray who married Reggie Kray in 1997 also benefitted financially from the name of Kray in writing a book about Reggie first published in 2002 by the title *A Man Apart*. In relation to a discussion about the twins, Roberta Kray asks “How many books have been written about them?”, adding “You have only to walk into any bookshop and scan the shelves to witness the enduring fascination. It has become almost an industry in its own right, annually spawning new myths and legends with all the reality of a bad soap opera”.⁸²⁹ Even eighteen years after the death of Ronnie Kray, and with press reports continuing to re-live the past on the slightest pretext, an article in *The Independent on Sunday* in 2013 invoking the name of Robin Hood is worthy of note. The article refers to “[T]he mythologising, and thereafter sneaking admiration of the outlaw, and that part of that process is to sanitize their activities”, adding that the Krays’ behaviour “was so ugly close-up, but so entertaining when reconstructed and served up several decades later”.⁸³⁰ Whilst press reports continue to this day, the last word goes to James Morton who, as already noted in chapter 8, was the author of an article in *The Times* in October 2000. The article headed “The cult of the Krays lives on” culminates in Morton saying “The public has always liked to be titillated and to live dangerously but vicariously and I see no reason why it should change”.⁸³¹ This reference by Morton to public titillation and to living dangerously but vicariously supports the notion of an alternative life of escapism articulated in chapter 5.

⁸²⁸ “Showbiz gangsters,” *Sunday Telegraph*, October 10, 1993, 23, link.gale.com/apps/doc/IO0701310996/GDCS?u=blibrary&sid=GDCS&xid=553c7c71.

⁸²⁹ Roberta Kray, *Reg Kray: A Man Apart* (London: Pan Books, 2002), 7.

⁸³⁰ David Randall, “The unlovable truth about these rogues,” *The Independent on Sunday*, June 16, 2013, 40-41, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5kUU28>.

⁸³¹ Morton, “The cult of the Krays lives on,” 3 (S1).

This media review, it is argued, shows the strength of the public image of the Krays and how this was reinforced time and time again by an accommodating press. The review also shows the rising arc of the celebrity of the twins which led to their commodification and commercialisation, thus further enhancing their celebrity. Significantly, the review shows how the recurrent motif of Robin Hood adds weight to a cultural explanation of how the Kray twins achieved celebrity as criminals. In this connection, a succinct passage written by Penfold-Mounce considers a cultural explanation with specific reference to the Kray twins. Penfold-Mounce says: “Resonance with criminality leading to the attainment of celebrity through a cultural explanation ties in neatly to anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss’s argument of how criminality plays a key role in enabling traditional figures to be revived and reinterpreted. This argument highlights that new versions of traditional individuals’ lives are being told, which leads to old tales being given new life by inserting contemporary figures into them.”⁸³² Penfold-Mounce continues, “For instance, the beloved and traditional English figure of Robin Hood has re-emerged in a corrupted form in contemporary society through individuals such as the British gangsters Reggie and Ronnie Kray in the 1960s. These two men were interpreted as Robin Hood-esque characters due to fulfilling many of the facets of the traditional cultural figure”. Significantly, Penfold-Mounce adds that the Krays possessed glamour, cunning and daring, and despite not fighting a specifically dictatorial state or giving all their gains to the poor, they resisted and eluded the law for a long time, were reputedly generous to charity, and were self-professed protectors of their local community.⁸³³ This latter point about protectors of their local community is reminiscent of Hobsbawm’s historic social bandits protecting their own community. The crux point made by Penfold-Mounce is that she posits criminals such as the Kray twins marked a merger of contemporary individuals with traditional figures providing the public with a point of cultural familiarity.⁸³⁴

The media review not only portrays the Kray twins as criminal celebrities and cultural heroes, but arguably also demonstrates how they have latterly become part of London’s folklore. An article by Jeremy Clarke in *The Spectator* makes the point. The

⁸³² Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 268. Cited in Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 76.

⁸³³ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 76.

⁸³⁴ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 76.

article opens with a paragraph in which Clarke says “When I was six or seven, I went up to London with my father in his car. As we passed through Whitechapel in the East End, he pointed out a pub called the *Blind Beggar*. “That’s where Ronald Kray shot George Cornell’, he said. “There was an element of something approaching pride in his voice, as if the grim-looking pub set back from the road was a significant cultural landmark of which I ought to take note”.⁸³⁵

Even though George Cornell was shot dead as long ago as 1966, the public house as well as being a tourist attraction, is arguably a shrine – not to George Cornell, but to the memory of the Kray twins. It is also part of London’s cultural history and its folklore.

Figure 12.3

*Image of the Blind Beggar public house, with an image of the Kray twins inset.*⁸³⁶



⁸³⁵ Jeremy Clarke, "Local heroes," *The Spectator*, June 23, 2007, 51, <http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/23rd-june-2007/51/local-heroes>.

⁸³⁶ The image of the Blind Beggar Pub is reproduced by kind permission of Mike Brooke of the *East London Advertiser*

12.6 The influence of gangster films and the Kray twins

This chapter now moves from the media review to discuss a particular genre of the media, that is to say, the gangster film. Whilst this chapter has discussed the rise of the Kray twins to celebrity status, there is a further dimension which has added to their popularity and in turn to their celebrity. This further dimension does not directly concern the Kray twins; rather it concerns their audience, but in turn impacts positively on the celebrity of the twins.

This chapter recalls chapter 5 which discussed crime as entertainment, and now seeks to build on and extend the discussion in that chapter in respect of the blurring by the audience (in that instance, the reader) of the boundaries between fact and fiction, by considering the blurring of identity as between the gangster actor and, specific to this case study, the Kray twins as real-life gangsters. Not least, this chapter seeks to build on the argument of Ruth Penfold-Mounce as discussed in chapter 5, namely that “[T]he public perception of criminal celebrities can be manipulated by a combination of fact and fiction, reality and unreality, allowing resonance and subsequently celebrity status for the criminal.”⁸³⁷

An important factor in the rise of the celebrity of the Kray twins was that their celebrity arose on the back of a rising genre of gangster films. To the extent censorship allowed (see references to the Production Code below), gangster films increasingly glorified, glamorised and romanticised crime. Moreover, they encouraged the public’s appetite for crime – or at least crime films – with the cinema audience vicariously participating in the gangster’s rise to power and heroic status. These films were sometimes based on true life. The original film *Scarface: The Shame of a Nation* (1932) (re-made under the title of *Scarface* in 1983) based on the life of Al Capone is an example. Other examples of pre-war gangster films are *Little Caesar* (1931) and *The Public Enemy* (1931). Amid criticism concerning the morality of such films and particularly concerns that they glorified crime, censorship in the form of what was known as the Production Code (also known as the Hay’s Production Code) came into effect in the early 1930s. Although the Production Code was American and sought to censor only American films, the Code was still relevant to Britain (and particularly 1960’s Britain for the purposes of this chapter) in that

⁸³⁷ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 107.

such films were also shown in British cinemas where the specific influence of gangster film is germane to this chapter argument.

The preamble to the Code identified the need of the film industry to recognise their responsibility to the public, given that entertainment (including crime as entertainment) are “important influences on the life of a nation”.⁸³⁸ This was followed by general principles of the Code, the first of which said: “No picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence, the sympathy of the audience shall never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin”.⁸³⁹

The Production Code was amended in 1938 to include Special Regulations on crime in motion pictures. Of particular note are:

Special Regulation 1:

Details of crime must never be shown, and care should be exercised at all times in discussing such details.

Special Regulation 2:

Any suggestive or wholesale slaughter of human beings, either by criminals in conflict with the police, or as between warring factions of criminals, or in public disorder of any kind, shall not be allowed.

Special Regulation 3:

There must be no suggestion, at any time, of excessive brutality.

Special Regulation 8:

The flaunting of weapons by gangsters, or other criminals, will not be allowed.

Special Regulation 13:

No picture shall be approved dealing with the life of a notorious criminal of current or recent times which uses the name, nickname or alias of such notorious criminal in the film, nor shall a picture be approved if based upon the life of such a notorious criminal unless the character in the film be punished for crimes shown in the film as committed by him.⁸⁴⁰

⁸³⁸ Thomas Doherty, *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), Appendix: The Production Code, 1.

⁸³⁹ Doherty, *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration*, Appendix, 2.

⁸⁴⁰ Doherty, *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration*, Appendix, 5-6.

The Production Code was in effect a censor of morality which sought to oversee and promote wholesome entertainment, and in this connection, gangster films were emasculated to comply with the Code. The Code was introduced in 1930 and was largely effective. However, an ever-changing moral climate challenged the efficacy of the Code which petered out by 1968. A summary by Steven Jay Schneider of the 1949 gangster film *White Heat* sounded the death knell for the Code. The summary said, “The 1930s gangster movie sought constantly to justify itself against a prevailing climate of moral censure: now, with censorship somewhat liberated after the war, it was free to let rip again”.⁸⁴¹ In this connection Schneider said of the 1959 film *Al Capone* that “[T]aking into account the date of the movie’s release, there are some very violent scenes on display here, such as the Saint Valentine’s Day Massacre sequence and other showdowns between the gangsters”.⁸⁴² However it was the 1967 film *Bonnie and Clyde* which left the Production Code in its wake with Schneider commenting that “Although changes in the Production Code made extreme violence more accessible in American cinemas, the film was the first to really push those limit in a mainstream Hollywood studio picture”.⁸⁴³

With specific reference to gangster films, the Code had sought to clamp down on the glorification of crime and to quash or at least diminish any opportunity of vicarious identification by the audience with gangsters. However, once the Production Code was no longer effective, and notwithstanding that one of the central planks of the Code had been for the film industry to recognise their responsibility in respect of the influence of entertainment (including crime as entertainment) in the life of a nation, the new wave of gangster films glorified crime with a vengeance, thus creating a climate of entertainment by which the audience could identify with the glorified screen gangster.

This study sees the audience as identifying with the glorified screen gangster in the sense of vicariously participating in the gangster’s rise to power and heroic status. As well as the propensity of the audience to blur fact and fiction in relation to the gangster film itself in the name of crime as entertainment, this study argues that the audience at a given level of resonant engagement also blurred the identity of gangster

⁸⁴¹ Steven Jay Schneider (ed.), *101 Gangster Movies You Must See Before You Die*, (Australia: Harper Collins), 137.

⁸⁴² Schneider, *101 Gangster Movies You Must See Before You Die*, 181.

⁸⁴³ Schneider, *101 Gangster Movies You Must See Before You Die*, 205.

actors and the Kray twins as real-life gangsters. The attraction of the Kray twins in the public imagination was therefore based on a curious cocktail of the twins as both glorified, glamorised and romanticised movie gangsters and real-life gangsters, and where the on-screen glorification of the gangster followed the Krays twins off the screen. In doing so, it imbued them with qualities assumed by their fictional counterparts from gangster films. This in turn courted admiration from their followers, further adding to their celebrity.

This argument in relation to the blurring of identities as between gangster actors and the Kray twins, brings into relief the above argument by Penfold-Mounce that the public perception of criminal celebrities can be manipulated by a combination of fact and fiction, reality and unreality, allowing resonance and subsequently celebrity status for the criminal.⁸⁴⁴ In the event, the two films made in respect of the lives of the Kray twins after their conviction for murder in 1969, that is to say, *The Krays* (1990) and *Legend* (2015) enabled the public to resonate with them directly rather than through a blurred identity with gangster actors. The celebrity of the twins was of course already established by this time, and the release of the films simply renewed resonant engagement with their audience as well as perpetuating their criminal celebrity and adding yet further to the Kray myth.

It will be readily seen that the above argument identifies with chapter 4 in respect of the fascination with and interest in crime, chapter 5 in respect of crime as entertainment, and chapter 7 in respect of heroes. It also identifies with one of the main themes of this thesis, namely that of those who follow criminal celebrities entering into an alternative life of escapism. Furthermore, the discussion of gangster films and in particular the strength but ultimately the weakness of the Production Code, is evidence of a cultural shift in America (and also in 1960's Britain) in such films being censored and then not censored in relation to the glorification of crime. This had the effect of fostering in the public imagination a nexus between film gangsters in all their glory and the Kray twins. Indeed, it was the gangster mode of dress of the Kray twins coupled with Reggie Kray as a self-confessed reincarnation of Al Capone which made this blurring of identity as between the film gangster and the Kray twins all the more plausible.

⁸⁴⁴ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 107.

12.7 Conclusion

This chapter briefly discussed the family background of the Kray twins as well as the historical backdrop of the East End of London, so that their lives could be considered in context. The chapter showed how changing social and cultural attitudes to class structures in 1960's Britain helped the Kray twins rise above their poor background and working-class station in life. This was initially achieved when the twins became professional boxers, providing a pathway for them to become working-class heroes within their own community. This, in turn, led to their later celebrity not as boxers, but as criminals.

The chapter focused on the image of the twins, that is to say, an image which was essentially crafted and honed by the twins' themselves as self-publicists and reinforced by an accommodating press. The chapter identified external factors which aided the twins' rise to celebrity, but it is the strength of their image which was always fundamental to their celebrity. The gangster image of the twins as discussed in this chapter was part of their celebrity image, paradoxically instilling in the public a combination of both fear and admiration.

The chapter considered the depths of depravity of the twins by reference to extracts from their murder trial, and then paradoxically and as convicted murderers, showed through a chronological media review covering much of their prison years, how their celebrity arc rose. This brought into relief the extent of the cultural shift on two levels – firstly the acceptance of the twins' crimes and the acceptance of the twins within both their local community and wider society, and secondly the extent of the cultural shift in the Krays being accepted as murderers, whilst at the same time being celebrated.

The chapter concluded with a discussion of how gangster films free from earlier moral censorship have glorified crime. The chapter discussed how the public in consuming crime as entertainment blurred not only fact and fiction in respect of the film itself, but also blurred the gangster actor with the Kray twins as real-life criminals, showering yet further stardust on their criminal celebrity.

13

Thesis Conclusion

This conclusion will firstly comment on the cultural impact of celebrity criminals which is one of the central tenets of this study. It will then secondly, and on a wider note seek to bring together the various strands of the thesis which help explain the emergence of criminal celebrities in Britain in the 1960s and their subsequent rise in popularity.

13.1 Cultural impact of criminal celebrities

As mentioned in chapter 1, Graeme Turner acknowledged that the cultural impact of certain criminals remains an undeveloped part of celebrity studies.⁸⁴⁵ This study has sought to address this deficiency by considering certain criminals in a celebrity light with specific reference to the case-study subjects. In doing so, it has aided a better understanding of the cultural impact of such criminals. This better understanding is demonstrated by now re-visiting the significance of the thesis section as outlined in chapter 1, and in considering the ways in which the deficiency has been addressed.

The study has highlighted, in different degrees, the extent of the cultural shift in terms of acceptability of certain criminals in society as exemplified in the individual case studies. The study has identified that this cultural shift, and in turn cultural impact, has been borne out of changing social values and attitudes as discussed in chapter 2, and not least the concomitant changing notions of crime and criminality witnessed in Britain in the 1960s. A further cultural impact of the criminal celebrity and as discussed in chapter 7, is that criminal celebrities in the celebrity age are perceived as a new breed of cultural hero who have, at least in part, replaced the traditional hero of old. The final point of cultural impact has been to identify those who follow criminal celebrities by entering into an alternative life of escapism. The notion of an alternative life of escapism is that those who enter into such a life do so in order to transcend their own limited personal experiences. They vicariously attain the gratification of those they follow and in doing so consume and enjoying crime as means of entertainment.

13.2 Bringing together the various strands of this thesis.

This conclusion will now discuss the various strands of the thesis and will seek to pull these strands together to help address the thesis title of *Villains to Heroes: Criminal Celebrities in 1960's Britain and their Subsequent Rise in Popularity*

⁸⁴⁵ Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, 26.

13.2.1 Criminal celebrities as a product of their time

It was mentioned in the Introduction that this thesis would seek to establish the extent to which criminal celebrities are a product of their time. It follows from this that if a particular time in history has shaped the existence of the criminal celebrity, this shaping needs to be considered against the ever-changing social, cultural, political and media landscape of the time. For the purposes of this study, this includes changes witnessed in Britain in the 1960s, including changes in attitudes to crime and criminals. It was such changes which laid the foundations for the emergence of criminal celebrities in that decade and their subsequent rise in popularity.

As noted in chapter 7, Hook says much the same of heroes in acknowledging the needs of the period in which the hero appears.⁸⁴⁶ Hook notes that the hero must fit in at a certain stage in historical development⁸⁴⁷, and that if we want to grasp the source and reason for the greatness of a hero, his biography and purely personal traits are relatively unimportant; it is to the society and culture of his times that we must turn.⁸⁴⁸ These same considerations are also relevant to the emergence of criminal celebrities at a certain stage in historical development, that is to say, Britain in the 1960s, not least as certain criminals were elevated to celebrity and even heroic status during this decade as the case studies have demonstrated.

Based on Hook saying that it is society and culture to which we must turn to grasp the source and reason for the greatness of a hero, it is necessary, as Kooistra has advocated, to consider that “[O]ver time new meanings and values are given to the heroic criminal (including criminal celebrities for the purpose of this study) which [have] transcended the social context that initially provided meaning for his criminality.”⁸⁴⁹ To this end, this study has sought to plot the journey of villain to hero in 1960’s Britain by charting the rise of certain criminals not only to celebrity status, but to that of icons of popular culture. In doing so, it has identified new social and cultural meanings and values in respect of such criminals, which in part helps explain

⁸⁴⁶ Hook, *The hero in history: A Study in Limitation and Possibility*, 59.

⁸⁴⁷ Hook, *The hero in history: A Study in Limitation and Possibility*, 65.

⁸⁴⁸ Hook, *The hero in history: A Study in Limitation and Possibility*, 66.

⁸⁴⁹ Kooistra, "Criminals As Heroes: Linking Symbol to Structure," 227.

their emergence in 1960's Britain and their subsequent rise in popularity, and which against a broader backcloth sees them as part of an ever-unfolding cultural script.

13.2.2 Comparing and contrasting criminal celebrities – old and new.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the emergence of criminal celebrities in Britain in the 1960s and their subsequent rise in popularity arises out of a number of disparate factors which ultimately coalesce. In addition to considering the ever-changing form of criminal celebrity consequent on changing public meanings and values and times, other factors need to be taken into account as will now be discussed. This involves a consideration of constant factors concerning the emergence of criminal celebrities and their rise in popularity which have not changed, coupled with a consideration of factors which have changed.

Chapter 5 acknowledged that the criminal celebrity is nothing new. What is new is the means by which criminal celebrity can be achieved. This conclusion will therefore consider the celebrity of criminal celebrities of old on the one hand and case-study subjects Howard Marks, Ronnie Biggs and the Kray twins on the other. The purpose of this exercise is two-fold. The first purpose is to identify constant factors which are common to criminal celebrities of old and the individual case-study subjects. The second purpose is to identify new factors in the celebrity age which perforce did not aid criminal celebrities of old, but which help explain the emergence of the case-study subjects as criminal celebrities in 1960's Britain and their subsequent rise in popularity.

Constant factors which are common to criminal celebrities of old and criminal celebrities in the celebrity age include the public's enduring fascination with and interest in crime as discussed in chapter 4. Allied to this is the glorification and glamorisation of crime and criminals by both the media and the public, and which can be traced back to the behaviour of scaffold crowds glorifying and glamorising criminals about to be hanged as also discussed in chapter 4. Yet a further and constant factor is the consumption of crime as entertainment as discussed in chapter 5.

It is the factors *which have changed* which lie at the heart of this study in helping to explain the emergence of criminal celebrities in 1960's Britain and their subsequent rise in popularity. Whilst chapter 3 identified it was the existence of certain structural or market conditions which gave rise to the social bandit (in whose shoes the criminal

celebrity in the celebrity age can now be recognised as discussed in chapter 6), this study casts the net much wider in identifying factors which help explain the emergence of criminal celebrities in 1960's Britain and their subsequent rise in popularity. In this respect, this study distinguishes between new factors which contributed to the emergence of criminal celebrities in 1960's Britain and those which contributed towards their subsequent rise in popularity. It is the constant and new factors working in tandem which created market conditions for the emergence and subsequent rise in popularity of criminal celebrities in 1960's Britain. By way of consolidation, these new factors will now be highlighted under two separate headings.

13.2.2.1 New factors which contributed towards the emergence of the criminal celebrity in 1960's Britain

It has previously been argued that the criminal celebrity is in part borne out of and influenced by celebrity culture itself. However, it was the underlying prevailing social and cultural conditions which comprised the new factors most relevant to emerging criminal celebrities in 1960's Britain. The foremost of these factors was a general liberalisation of attitudes as discussed in chapter 2, not least to criminals. This was coupled with and led to the public's desire to identify new heroes of consumption in the guise of criminal celebrities as new cultural heroes, as discussed in chapter 7.

13.2.2.2 New factors which contributed towards the subsequent rise in popularity of criminal celebrities in 1960's Britain

As mentioned in chapters 3 and 8, Braudy notes "As each new medium of fame appears, the human image it conveys is intensified and the number of individuals celebrated expands".⁸⁵⁰ Chapter 3 discussed several developmental stages as a backdrop to the rise of celebrity culture and the rise of the individual celebrity (including the criminal celebrity) within that culture. These included the mass circulation of newspapers, the invention of films, the radio, television, and the advent of new media. They all considerably post-dated criminal celebrities of old, but did benefit the individual case-study subjects by providing mass media platforms into which their stories might be transferred and disseminated.

⁸⁵⁰ Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and its History*, 4.

New media, in particular, opened the floodgates in terms of potential for the dissemination of celebrity content in general, and specific to this study in respect of criminal celebrities in particular. The effect of new media, be it, for example, Facebook, Twitter or other internet-connected platforms, is to enable celebrity content to be instantly disseminated to a mass audience in all corners of the globe at the click of a button. This has created greater exposure, that is to say, greater visibility of the celebrity which this study contends is a factor in the rise in popularity of the celebrities in general, and for the purposes of this study, the rise in popularity of criminal celebrities in particular.

13.3 Celebrity culture as a commercial enterprise

Chapter 3 maintained that the above developmental stages created conditions conducive to an ever-increasing and spiralling cycle for the supply and demand of celebrities in general and likewise criminal celebrities. However, this study sees these developmental stages as no more than the infrastructure in relation to celebrity culture, and that it is only on looking at celebrity culture and the celebrity industry as a commercial enterprise, that the rise in popularity of celebrities in general and criminal celebrities, in particular, can be truly appreciated. Indeed, and as already noted in chapter 3, Turner adopts this same position in seeing celebrity as a commodity which is produced traded and marketed by the media and publicity industries, and whose primary function is commercial and promotional.⁸⁵¹ This commercial enterprise in respect of criminal celebrities has spawned a large consumer market. This is a market in which they are commodified and then packaged and sold to a receptive audience in the name of crime as entertainment to the financial benefit of those with vested business interests, not least the media and criminal celebrities themselves. As discussed in chapter 8, this commercial enterprise is further assisted with the emergence of public relations personnel, and indeed the ability of criminal celebrities themselves by or through their own agency to fashion their own image and promote their own celebrity, as was amply demonstrated with all three case-study subjects.

⁸⁵¹ Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, 10.

13.4 Visibility

The effect by divers means of relentless marketing and promotion of both celebrities in general and criminal celebrities, in particular, is to increase their visibility. In a culture defined by celebrity, it is argued that celebrity when distilled down, is about nothing more than visibility, and the greater the visibility, the greater the celebrity. In this connection, this study recalls Hobsbawm suggesting that the effectiveness of the image of criminals is achieved not so much through their actions, as their success in making headlines.⁸⁵²

An argument was advanced in chapter 1 that the divergent histories of celebrities in general and criminal celebrities not only converge, but intersect. This point of intersection which lies at the heart of this thesis, and which supports the argument that the criminal celebrity is in part borne out of and influenced by celebrity culture itself, is when media attention and levels of visibility afforded to the criminal celebrity reach the same or even greater heights than is afforded to celebrities in general. Following on from this and recalling Boorstin's dictum that a celebrity is a person who is well-known for their well-knownness,⁸⁵³ it may equally be said in the celebrity age that a criminal celebrity is a person who is well-known for their well-knownness.

Within the context of visibility, and as mentioned in chapter 3, Schmid notes "When the essential factor about stars is whether they are broadly known, the way is open for notoriety to fill the gap left open by the disappearance of merit in definitions of fame"⁸⁵⁴. It follows from this according to Gitlin, as also noted in chapter 3, that values dissolve in "an acid bath of fame"⁸⁵⁵. It is this acid bath of fame which this study sees as the melting pot which has blurred right and wrong and fame and notoriety; a melting pot in which celebrities in general on the one hand and criminal celebrities on the other in the celebrity age, are simply referred to under the umbrella term of celebrity without distinction.

⁸⁵² Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 196.

⁸⁵³ Boorstin, *The Image : A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, ppvii-viii.

⁸⁵⁴ Schmid, *Natural Born Celebrities: Serial Killers in American Culture*, 9.

⁸⁵⁵ Gitlin, "The Culture of Celebrity," 81-83.

13.5 Comparison between the case-study subjects inter se

This part of the conclusion now turns to a comparison of the three case-study subjects. The three case studies are different and yet in many ways similar, and a number of commonalities can be identified as between them. The foremost commonality is that they each in their own separate ways defined and personified the spirit of their times. In this connection, each of the case-study subjects, but arguably Ronnie Biggs and the Kray twins more so than Howard Marks, have written their own important chapter in the social and cultural history of Britain of the 1960s.

In any discussion of criminal celebrities, the name and image of Robin Hood are never far from the surface. So it is with all three case studies where, as will be seen, popular culture has imputed the image of the *good criminal* to each of the case study subjects in different ways to give them credibility and to help foster their acceptance.

All three case studies show their subjects as having a strong resonant engagement with their audience by reference to crime type, context and image as articulated by Penfold-Mounce.⁸⁵⁶ Likewise, all three case studies show their subjects as having strong charismatic appeal which chapter 9 argued is an essential component of resonant engagement. This charismatic appeal was manifested in remarkably similar ways in relation to each of the case-study subjects by reference to the quality of colour within the meaning ascribed by Klapp as previously mentioned.⁸⁵⁷ A further feature common to all three case studies as previously mentioned is, according to Leigh Straw, the ability of the case-study subjects to “[M]anipulate their public image in an effort to legitimise their activities and gain acceptance in the community”.⁸⁵⁸ Furthermore, and common to all three case studies, is/was the ability of the subjects to market a favourable image through an accommodating press – a press which is wont to present criminal celebrities with an air of intimate familiarity, as was illustrated in the case studies of Howard Marks and Ronnie Biggs in particular.

Each of the case-study subjects sought the limelight. In relation to Howard Marks and by reason of the clandestine nature of his criminal occupation, this was necessarily not until after his release from prison. However, for Ronnie Biggs and the Kray twins,

⁸⁵⁶ Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression*, 97.

⁸⁵⁷ Klapp, "The Creation of Popular Heroes," 137.

⁸⁵⁸ Straw, *Celebrating Kate*, 59.

high visibility was integral to the building of their celebrity images. In respect of image, that is to say both the creation and maintenance of their celebrity images, what all three case-study subjects had in common was that each of them were able self-publicists, and furthermore, each had a strong entrepreneurial streak. It will be recalled that in the case study of Ronnie Biggs, reference was made to an article published in December 2013 bearing the headline “The Fabulously Entrepreneurial Life of Ronnie Biggs”. As mentioned in that case study, the article says that Biggs did what all marketers do: He sold his brand. Likewise, the case studies of Howard Marks and the Kray twins showed how they created and sold their particular brand of criminal celebrity which helped perpetuate and maintain their celebrity.

One further commonality is worthy of note, namely that once the celebrity of the individual case-study subjects was established, such celebrity took on a life of its own, growing exponentially and floating free from their criminality.

What is different about the individual case studies and yet with a common thread, is the extent of the cultural shift in terms of the social acceptability of the individual case-study subjects from criminals to criminal celebrities and with particular reference to their crimes. In this connection, it is argued the cultural shift in respect of Howard Marks travelled the least distance, and that he can most closely be identified as a latter-day social bandit in the guise of Robin Hood in standing up to what was perceived as oppressive authority. In this case, the oppressive authority was the legislature, who criminalised cannabis against a tide of relaxed public opinion which prevailed in 1960's Britain. Such opinion did not consider cannabis any more harmful than alcohol, and Howard Marks was cast in the role of Robin Hood as the *good criminal* in making cannabis available on a black market outside the law.

Ronnie Biggs, it is argued travelled a greater cultural distance than Howard Marks, but less than the Kray twins. Biggs was an amalgam of social bandit and criminal hero. He was seen as a social bandit to that the extent the Great Train Robbery was perceived as a crime against *The Establishment* and therefore justified – that is to say at least morally justified in the eyes of those who saw (and see) *The Establishment* as oppressors of society. Just as Robin Hood was seen as justified in the eyes of his adherents in standing up to oppressors symbolised by the Sheriff of Nottingham, Ronnie Biggs can be identified with this same ideal of the *good criminal* in standing

up to *The Establishment* symbolised by the theft of a vast amount of government money – even though there is no evidence to show Biggs’ crime was in any way altruistic. The heroic status of Biggs is also a measure of the cultural shift borne out of changing social attitudes to criminals witnessed in 1960’s Britain, and where certain criminals including Ronnie Biggs became new cultural heroes of the celebrity age.

The Kray twins, it is argued, have travelled the greatest distance in the cultural shift from criminals to criminal celebrities. It might be argued that the crimes of Howard Marks and Ronnie Biggs were as nothing compared with the macabre crimes of the Kray twins, not least that of murder, and yet this was no bar to their acceptance in society and indeed their elevation from criminals to celebrities and heroes and even icons of popular culture. Even allowing for changing attitudes to crime over the sands of time, it is more difficult, it is argued, to make a case that the Kray twins as convicted murderers were imbued with the notion of the *good criminal* which attached to Robin Hood. The altruistic image of the Kray twins credited to them by virtue of their support for certain charities is, it is argued, of itself insufficient to warrant the label as a *good criminal* when considered alongside their convictions for murder, albeit this was the public perception as cultivated by the press. This, therefore, begs the question of why the Kray twins were “accepted” by society to the point of being venerated, and how did popular culture come to embrace them as murderers? This question, it is argued, can best be addressed by considering the Kray twins as capturing something of the zeitgeist of 1960’s Britain. As noted both in chapter 7 and earlier in this conclusion, Hook has argued that the hero must fit in at a certain stage of social development.⁸⁵⁹ And so it was that the Krays as both celebrity criminals and heroes in the eyes of many fitted into a cultural space created by the spirit of 1960’s Britain where they could be seen in the public imagination swaggering down Carnaby Street alongside other iconic figures of the day. This was a cultural space reflecting the spirit and mood of the times, where Victorian values were turned on their head, where moral laxity became acceptable, where crime was glorified and where certain criminals who caught the public imagination were elevated to celebrity status and even revered as heroes.

⁸⁵⁹ Hook, *The hero in history: A Study in Limitation and Possibility*, 65.

13.6 Cultural shift revisited

Consequent on changing attitudes to both crime and criminals, this study has demonstrated a cultural shift over time, especially through the individual case-study subjects. This cultural shift is one in which criminal behaviour in Britain in the 1960s was rewarded with celebrity, to the extent of villains being made into celebrities and even heroes. The extent of this cultural shift is brought into stark relief by reference to the Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act 1965.⁸⁶⁰ Before the effective date of the 1965 Act, murderers could be hanged. After the effective date, convicted murderers – and with specific reference to the case study of the Kray twins – could be (and were and are) celebrated. This celebrity, as already argued, has in part been influenced by the rise of celebrity culture itself. However, this study sees criminal celebrities in general, and specifically criminal celebrities who emerged in 1960's Britain, not simply as an extension of celebrity culture, but rather as an identifiable and independent sub-genre of popular culture in their own right. Criminal celebrities are now an entrenched part of celebrity culture and in turn of the entertainment industry. They are another type or genre of popular culture alongside the latest excess in avant-garde art, music or literature, and their rise in popularity in 1960's Britain can be explained by reference to their rise as a sub-genre of popular culture.

13.7 The last word

The last word in relation to this study goes to Neal Gabler. As previously mentioned, Gabler said that judged by traditional values criminals are objects of reproach and scorn, (but as now qualified by shifting notions of crime and criminals in 1960's Britain as evidenced by this study) but judged by the values of entertainment, which is how the media now judge everything, the perpetrator of a major or even a minor but dramatic crime is as much a celebrity as any other human entertainer.⁸⁶¹ In the final analysis, it is, therefore, the mass media which feeds the public appetite for crime as entertainment. This in turn has helped foster and indeed institutionalise a culture in respect of criminal celebrities.

⁸⁶⁰ Citation: 1965 c.71

⁸⁶¹ Neal Gabler, *Life the Movie: How Entertainment Conquered Reality* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York., 1999), 181.

13.8 Answers to the research questions

For ease of reference, the research questions set out in chapter 1 are now repeated together with answers:

13.8.1 What explanation can be offered for the paradox of criminals becoming celebrities or heroes in Britain in the 1960s?

It was mentioned in the Introduction that the emergence of criminal celebrities in Britain in the 1960s and their subsequent rise in popularity arose out of a number of disparate and yet inter-connected factors which ultimately coalesced. This study sees the coming together of these factors as helping to explain the paradox of certain criminals becoming celebrities or even heroes during this period. The factors now discussed are not exhaustive, but are, it is argued, the most salient.

One such factor as argued in chapter 3, is that the emergence of celebrity criminals in 1960's Britain and their subsequent rise in popularity was borne out of and influenced by celebrity culture itself, and not least by the rising tide of celebrity culture in the celebrity age.

The second and inextricably connected factor is the relaxed social and cultural attitudes which emerged in 1960's Britain as explained in chapter 2. This included changing attitudes to criminals coupled with a change in public sympathy from the victim to the criminal.

A further factor, and with specific reference to criminal heroes, is the ever-changing nature of who is perceived as a hero. Chapter 7 identified this cultural shift as including criminals upon whom celebrity status has already been conferred, but where their celebrity has risen to a yet higher plane of adulation as befits heroic status.

The final main factor is the expansion of agency of criminal celebrities witnesses in 1960's Britain. Here, the celebrity age afforded criminal celebrities the opportunity of unashamedly promoting their own celebrity and of portraying themselves in their best light. This is clearly demonstrated by the promotional and often entrepreneurial initiatives highlighted in the individual case studies.

The coming together of the above factors set the stage for the emergence of celebrity criminals in 1960's Britain and their subsequent rise in popularity. A select

few criminals were no longer viewed as criminals per se, but rather as celebrities in their own right where their celebrity floated free from their criminality.

13.8.2 Are criminals who rose to celebrity status in 1960's Britain a product of their time?

Britain in the 1960s was a fertile period for certain criminals who achieved celebrity and even heroic status. This was no coincidence. Hobsbawm's social bandits were a product of their time, that is to say, they emerged against the backdrop of perceived oppression and social injustice of the time. This study likewise sees criminals who rose to celebrity status in 1960's Britain as a product of their time – or more accurately as a product of the social, cultural, and political climate from which they emerged.

In considering whether criminals who rose to celebrity status in 1960's Britain were a product of their time, it is necessary to look firstly at the reasons for their underlying criminality. Criminality does not in itself confer automatic celebrity; it is only the platform on which the celebrity is built. It is therefore necessary secondly, to consider factors which gave rise to the celebrity of such criminals.

Of the three case-study subjects, Howard Marks (at least at surface level) best identifies with Hobsbawm's model of the social bandit and with the prevailing social, cultural, and political climate of Britain in the 1960s. The ostensible basis of Marks' drug-dealing empire was that the law, in criminalising cannabis, was out of step with public opinion and that in supply cannabis he was performing a public service. Marks, therefore, had public support for his activities which were seen as criminal in the eyes of the law, but laudable in the eyes of his followers. It was the criminality of Marks which provided the platform for his ensuing celebrity. In this connection, it is argued that it is the self-same factors which were peculiar to 1960's Britain as referred to answer to thesis question 1 above which helped to foster this celebrity. Criminals who rose to celebrity status in 1960's Britain were, therefore, a product of their particular time in its social and cultural history by reason of the crimes being committed against the backdrop of a cultural ethos conducive to celebrity.

13.8.3 What role did the media play in influencing the rise in popularity of criminal celebrities in 1960's Britain?

The media influenced the rise in popularity of criminal celebrities in 1960's Britain in manifold ways. It was argued in chapter 3 that the greater the visibility, the greater the

celebrity, thus identifying a causal link between visibility, celebrity and popularity. Chapter 3 also identifies the point at which the divergent histories of celebrities in general and criminal celebrities not only converge but intersect. This point of intersection, which supports the argument that the criminal celebrity has in part been borne out of and influenced by celebrity culture itself, is when media attention and levels of visibility afforded to criminal celebrities in the celebrity age reach the same or even greater heights than is afforded to celebrities in general.

Evidence of the role the media has played in promoting the visibility of criminal celebrities is amply demonstrated by the media treatment of the three case-study subjects and the ways in which they have variously been glamorised, glorified, sensationalised and romanticised.

As to the role of the media in influencing the rise in popularity of criminal celebrities, this study recalls the words of Paul Kooistra. Kooistra opined that technical developments, and not least that of mass media, greatly expanded the possibility for the existence of criminal celebrities by reason of the opportunity of greater visibility. The rise of the tabloid press with its penchant for crime and sensationalism has also been instrumental in the media (and certainly the press) stoking the fire of criminal celebrities and in turn in influencing their rise in their popularity.

Eric Hobsbawm asserts that the effectiveness of the criminal's image is achieved not so much through their actions as their success in making headlines. In the light of this, this answer goes full circle: Success in making headlines gives rise to greater visibility. Greater visibility gives rise to greater celebrity which in turn fosters an increase in popularity of the criminal celebrity.

13.8.4 Has the expansion of agency afforded to criminal celebrities in the celebrity age increased their visibility and in turn their rise in popularity?

This study identifies an expansion of agency afforded to criminal celebrities in the celebrity age as a consequence of a change in focus from stories *about* celebrity criminals, to stories *by* them. The effect of this change is that celebrity criminals have been allowed to take control of their own narratives, and have thus been able to manage and promote both their visibility and their image to the best advantage. This is achieved in part through the concept of *re-storying* which includes an opportunity for

entrepreneurial or poetic licence, enabling celebrity criminals to cast their images in the mould of Robin Hood and the ‘good criminal’. Moreover, given the expansion of the Public Relations industry in the celebrity age, criminal celebrities are able to avail themselves of professional services in managing and promoting their own celebrity, as is shown in Figure 12.2 by the Kray twins employing Progress Management as Publicity Agents. An expansion of agency in the celebrity age, therefore, allied to the growth of public relations, allows for greater visibility of the criminal celebrity. On the premise of the greater the visibility the greater the celebrity, this, in turn, helps stimulate a rise in their popularity.

13.8.5 To what extent is the commodification of criminal celebrities in the celebrity age a factor in their rise in popularity?

As mentioned in this thesis, Yvonne Jewkes acknowledged that the reporting of crime news is shaped by a mission to entertain. Further, and as also mentioned in the thesis, Mike Presdee acknowledged the need for a criminology that understands crime has become a valuable consumer entertainment commodity to be enjoyed and consumed daily through modern media and communication processes. Yet further, and on a more general note, the thesis refers to Bob Franklin saying that the task of journalism has become merely to deliver and serve up whatever the customer wants, rather like a deep-pan pizza. And so it is with particular reference to criminal celebrities that the laws of supply and demand are at play which sees them packaged and sold in the name of entertainment to a receptive audience in a never-ending upward spiral.

This commercial enterprise benefits the media, the criminal celebrities themselves and the audience in a symbiotic relationship, which serves to increase the popularity of criminal celebrities. According to Allison and Goethals, it benefits the media which has a vested commercial interest in promoting criminal celebrities in the interests of increased newspaper and magazine circulation, digital viewership, television ratings and Internet site visits. The commercial enterprise also benefits the criminal celebrities themselves. In this respect, a common feature of all three case-study subjects is the entrepreneurial manner in which they commodified and sold their celebrity and in the process heightened their popularity. Moreover, the commercial enterprise benefits the public, that is to say, the audience. In this regard, it is the audience who add to the heightened popularity of criminals with the ever-increasing

consumption of crime in the name of entertainment, which is packaged and sold to them in a commercially driven marketplace.

13.9 Original contributions

The original contributions this thesis makes are manifold. The following points are not exhaustive but serve to address the main aspects of originality.

The study has articulated the originality of the approach to the topic by considering criminals not in a criminal light, but in a celebrity light. Within the field of celebrity-criminal theory, this has provided a framework for understanding why criminals are celebrated in society.

This study is believed to be the first to consider criminal celebrities who emerged in 1960's Britain with the focus on crime as entertainment as the central plank of the study. It does this by reference to detailed illustrative case studies set against the backdrop of the celebrity age.

This study is also believed to be the first in the field in identifying cultural shifts in attitudes to certain criminals in the celebrity age which is allied to the changing nature of heroism. Following on from this, the study recognises the impact of these cultural shifts and attitudes as demonstrated in different degrees through the three case studies. These studies have primarily highlighted the extent of the cultural shift in terms of the acceptability of these criminals in society, against a backdrop of changing social values and attitudes which have transcended the social context that originally provided meaning for their criminality.⁸⁶² A further cultural impact has been to elevate certain criminal celebrities who attained celebrity status in the celebrity age (and certainly all three case-study subjects) to the status of a new breed of cultural heroes. These new cultural heroes have, at least in part, replaced the traditional hero of old. Criminal celebrities as new cultural heroes convey value in much the same way as the traditional heroes they have supplanted. They offer a window on changing social and cultural values and can be seen as a statement of both continuity and change. The values and attributes ascribed to criminal celebrities or criminal heroes tells us what society prizes, and which is reflected in celebrity culture itself.

⁸⁶² Kooistra, "Criminals As Heroes: Linking Symbol to Structure," 227.

On a point of originality, this study suggests a new interpretative framework in respect of deviants as so labelled by Becker. Instead of deviants being labelled as such and thus being seen as ‘outsiders’, this study introduces the idea of criminal celebrities in the celebrity age being labelled as ‘insiders’ by virtue of their celebrity. They thus become ‘one of us’ and not ‘one of them’ giving rise to a resonant engagement as between the criminal and the public. Moreover, the new interpretative framework is taken a step further. Instead of ‘deviance amplification’ within the meaning recognised by Stanley Cohen this study suggests that the media treatment of criminal celebrities is such as to give rise to ‘criminal celebrity amplification’.

This study makes an original contribution in making a case that the criminal celebrity in the celebrity age is, in the public imagination even if not in fact, the evolutionary and cultural successor of the social bandit of old.

A final point of originality concerns the impact of criminal celebrities on popular culture. Just as Richard Crepeau (as discussed in chapter 7) argues that there are no universal heroes, but that each has their own ‘constituency’ (that is to say public or electorate), this study sees criminal celebrities or heroes as having their own constituency giving rise to a new and distinct genre of crime as entertainment within popular culture.

Appendix: Permission to Reproduce Images

The following four images have been reproduced in the thesis:

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The image in Figure 12.1 appeared in an English daily newspaper, *The Independent*, dated 29th September 1989. The newspaper and image were in the public domain and no consent to reproduce the image is believed to have been required.



Richard Nixon

October 2021

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- Calling card of the Kray Twins as contained in newspaper: James Dalrymple, "Show business makes a killing out of the Krays," *The Independent*, September 29, 1989. <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5nKB73>.
- Collage featuring Ronnie Biggs. Image reproduced by permission of the owner Kerry Sibly of Cowaramup, Western Australia.
- Crossbow on display at *Littledean Jail* said to have been used by the Kray twins. Image reproduced by permission of Andy Jones, owner of Littledean Jail.
- The Blind Beggar Pub. Image reproduced by permission of Mike Brooke of the *East London Advertiser*.
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