

GREATREX



THIEF. ADULTERER. LIAR. FORGER

Greatrex

Format: Historical Crime

Written By: Stephen Hall

Contact: www.hereandback.co.uk/contact

Transported to Australia in the mid-19th century, John Henry Greatrex arrives as a young convict determined never to be powerless again. Gifted with charm, intelligence, and a complete disregard for truth, he reinvents himself through a series of lies, petty crimes, and calculated betrayals, rising from destitution to respectability in colonial society. As Greatrex exploits opportunity wherever he finds it—on the stage, in business, and in intimate relationships—his appetite for wealth and status grows, pushing him toward increasingly dangerous schemes.

When Greatrex becomes entangled in a far-reaching banknote forgery operation alongside the Grimshaw brothers, his criminal ambitions expand beyond borders, drawing the attention of Detective McCall, a relentless investigator determined to expose the man behind the many masks. As the pursuit spans continents and years, Greatrex's double life begins to collapse under the weight of his own deceptions, forcing him to choose between self-preservation and accountability. In the end, his greatest con is not the crimes he commits, but the belief that he can outrun consequence itself.



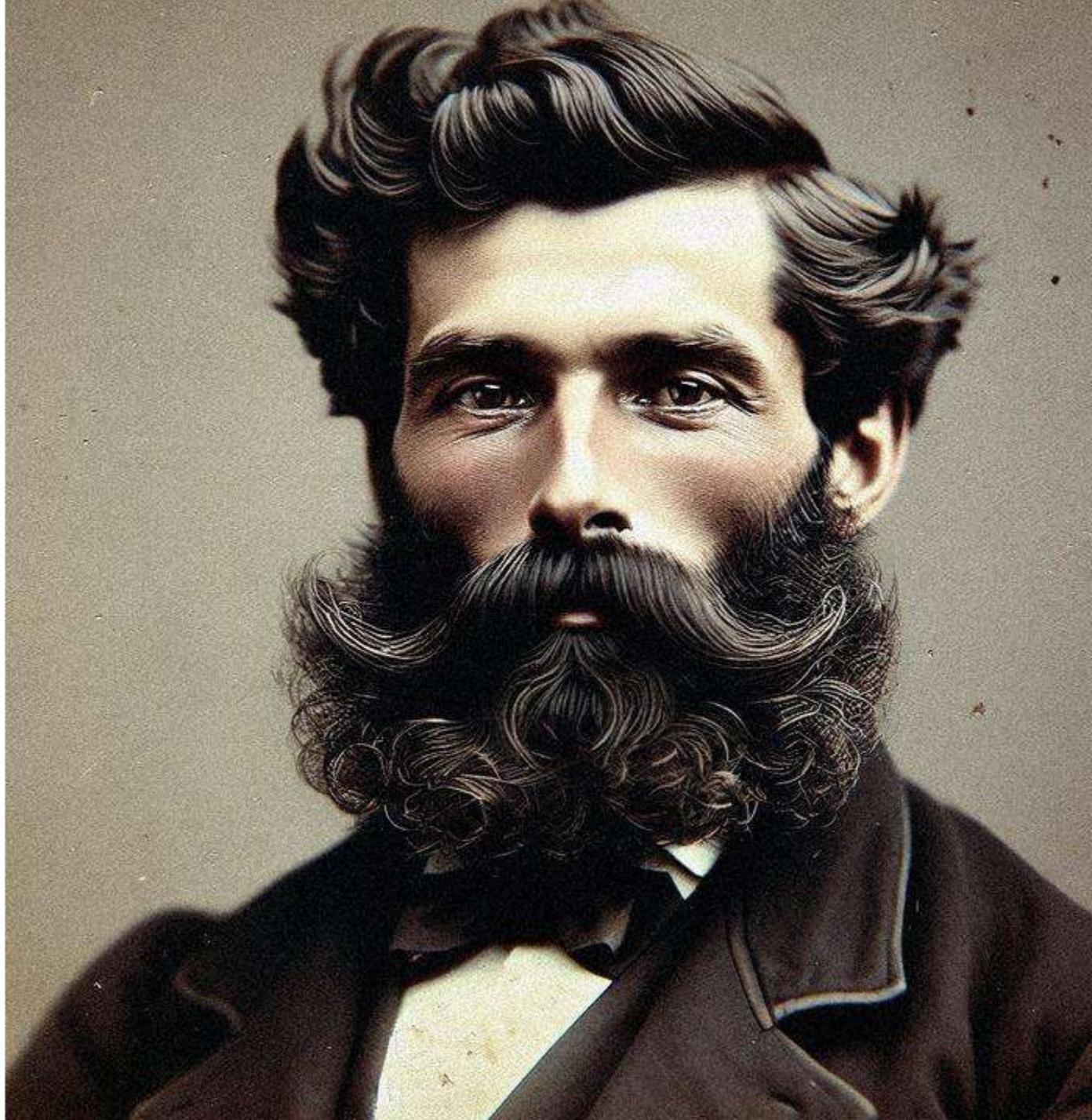
GREATREX



Logline

After arriving in Australia as a convicted thief, a brilliant and unscrupulous conman reinvents himself through lies, fraud, and forgery, but when his criminal ambitions expand across continents, a relentless detective closes in, forcing him to confront the cost of a life built on deception.

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Tone, Genre and Style

Genre: Historical crime/prestige drama

Tone: Taut, character-driven, psychologically sharp

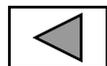
Visual Style: Evolving period realism — sun-bleached brutality to gaslit elegance to industrial chaos, reflecting identity in flux

Comparable Films: *There Will Be Blood*, *The Nightingale*, *Taboo*, *Mr. Turner*

Greatrex is a historical crime drama grounded in psychological realism, blending sweeping period storytelling with an intimate portrait of ambition and self-deception. The tone is taut, seductive, and steadily corrosive — beginning with restraint and confidence before tightening into moral unease as Greatrex's constructed identity fractures under pressure. Visually, the style favours evolving period realism: sun-bleached brutality in the penal colonies gives way to gaslit elegance in Victorian Britain, before collapsing into crowded, industrial chaos in New York — each environment reflecting the protagonist's shifting masks. Genre-wise, it draws from true-crime and prestige historical thrillers, but rather than centring spectacle or violence, the tension is driven by performance and intellect — a story where charisma becomes a weapon, progress enables crime, and the greatest forgery is the man himself.



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Themes

- **Identity as Performance** – Greatrex survives by becoming whoever the moment requires, until the act replaces the man.
- **Ambition Without Restraint** – Intelligence and charm, untethered from conscience, accelerate both success and collapse.
- **The Cost of Reinvention** – Each new identity offers escape, but erodes accountability and human connection.
- **Charisma as a Weapon** – Persuasion, trust, and belief are exploited as tools of manipulation.
- **Progress Enables Crime** – Photography, printing, banking, and travel advance faster than the systems meant to police them.
- **Order vs. Improvisation** – Institutional authority clashes with individual cunning in a world struggling to modernize.
- **Faith and Fraud** – Religion, respectability, and morality are adopted as disguises rather than convictions.
- **Freedom and Consequence** – Escape is always temporary; the past accumulates interest.

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The Characters

John Henry Greatrex – Charismatic, intelligent, and endlessly adaptable, Greatrex is a self-mythologising conman who believes reinvention is a form of destiny. A performer at heart, he exploits emerging technologies and social trust to stay ahead of consequence, mistaking ingenuity for invincibility as each success pulls him closer to exposure.

Jessie Greatrex – John’s wife, grounded and increasingly disillusioned, Jessie represents domestic reality and moral gravity. Her quiet endurance and growing resistance expose the emotional cost of Greatrex’s ambition, embodying the life he continually sacrifices in pursuit of escape and status.

Jane Weir – Young, idealistic, and drawn to Greatrex’s confidence, Jane becomes both accomplice and romantic escape. She believes in the future he promises, mistaking intimacy for partnership, and serves as a mirror to his capacity for manipulation disguised as devotion.

Detective Alexander McCall – Methodical, principled, and unyielding, McCall is the embodiment of emerging modern law enforcement. Where Greatrex improvises and performs, McCall observes and persists, representing inevitability rather than aggression—the slow, inescapable closing of the net.

The Grimshaw Brothers (Thomas & Sewell) – Skilled craftsmen driven by desperation rather than greed, the Grimshaws provide the technical means for Greatrex’s greatest fraud. Their loyalty is rooted in survival, and their moral compromise illustrates how systemic hardship can turn ordinary men into willing participants in extraordinary crimes.

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3-Act Structure Summary

Act I – Survival and Reinvention

Greatrex arrives as a transported convict and survives through performance, intelligence, and adaptability. Seizing opportunities in theatre and business, he constructs a new identity, discovering that reinvention offers both freedom and power.

Act II – Ascent and Deception

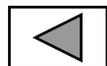
Now established and emboldened, Greatrex expands his ambitions through fraud and forgery, drawing others into his schemes. As his public respectability grows, personal relationships fracture and Detective McCall begins to close in, turning success into a precarious balancing act.

Act III – Exposure and Pursuit

With his crimes unravelling across borders, Greatrex flees across the United Kingdom, culminating in a transatlantic manhunt to New York City. The chase forces a final reckoning between ingenuity and consequence, as the identity he forged can no longer outrun the truth.



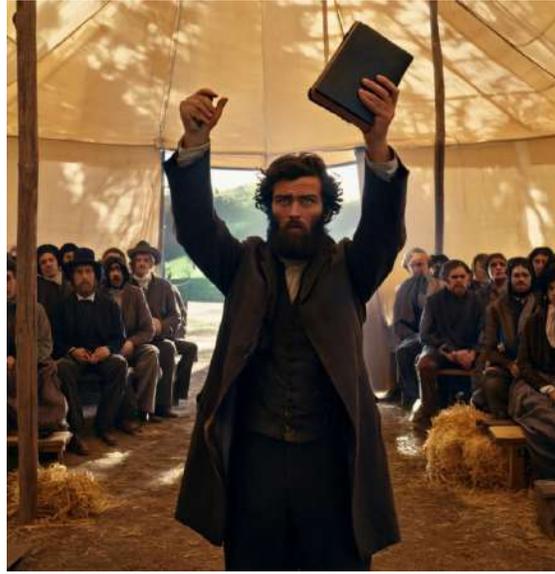
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Mood Board



McCall chases Greatrex through NYC



Greatrex preaches



Detective McCall is determined to capture Greatrex



Greatrex arrives in NYC believing he has escaped the law

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Why This Film?

Greatrex tells a true story that feels uncannily modern — a man exploiting emerging technologies, public trust, and the performance of respectability to stay ahead of accountability. At a time when identity, fraud, and self-reinvention are easier than ever, the film reframes a Victorian crime as the birth of contemporary deception. Its global scope, morally complex protagonist, and psychologically driven tension place it firmly in the prestige space, while its lean, character-led approach keeps it commercially viable. *Greatrex* is not just a period crime story; it is a cautionary portrait of ambition untethered from consequence — and a reminder that progress, without restraint, always leaves a trail.



GREATREX



Greatrex

Written By: Stephen Hall

Status: Complete Feature Screenplay – Seeking Representation / Development

Contact: shsc21441@gmail.com

“the idea is original, the premise is exciting, the atmosphere is great and the characters are engaging”

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The Writer

Stephen Hall is a screenwriter based in Edinburgh, Scotland. Since December 2021, he has completed nine screenplays, including eight feature films and one television project, reflecting a strong commitment to long-form, character-driven storytelling.

His work has received international recognition, with awards from the Cannes World Film Festival, the RED Movie Awards, and the Austin International Film Festival. His scripts often explore moral tension, identity, and the psychological forces that shape human behaviour.

His genre interests include historical narratives, crime stories, and period drama, with a focus on textured worlds and thematically ambitious storytelling.

Alongside screenwriting, he spent over 25 years as a web developer, a background that informs a disciplined approach to structure and long-form creative development.

www.hereandback.co.uk/screenplays

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