

CORRECTING THE IMBALANCE

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Correcting the Imbalance:
Addressing the Feminist and the Postcolonial in
Kate Grenville's *Joan Makes History* and *Lilian's Story*

The incorporation of postcolonial and feminist elements allows Kate Grenville to provide a unique and contemporary perspective on the Australian cultural landscape in her novels. While clearly extolling feminist virtues in her heroine, *Lilian's Story* can be viewed as a decidedly postcolonial commentary on Australian society, with Lilian Singer embodying the postcolonial in a variety of ways. In *Joan Makes History*, Grenville continues the postcolonial focus while also embracing feminist ideals. By rewriting history from a female perspective in this novel, Grenville challenges conventional attitudes, and asserts the importance of the feminine within cultural and postcolonial studies.

Clearly, as a former (penal) colony of the British Empire, Australia qualifies as a nation caught up in the postcolonial experience. Within the Australian cultural milieu, Aboriginals, (non-British) immigrants and women find themselves on the margins of a society and a culture that, while looking to the future, clearly has not severed ties to its colonial, patriarchal past: "Post-colonial criticism (deriving from the work of Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha and others)...was used initially of colonised indigenous peoples, but more

recently, and rather disturbingly, it is being applied in an almost depoliticised sense to those descendants of the colonisers who are now trying to cut free of various imperial mother countries” (Gunew 13). It is these descendants of the colonizers that Grenville uses to populate her novels.

Postcolonial theory draws on the imbalance between the colonizer and the colonized. The experience in Australia presents a unique situation, wherein not only is the Aboriginal population resisting the white colonial “master” (English and Australian), but so too is the settler population. “In Australia the Aborigines emphatically distance themselves from multiculturalism, which they perceive as being predicated on various cultures of migration” (Gunew 2). In other words, the Aboriginal population chooses to remain apart from the evolution of Australian culture. As the original inhabitants – and the primary victims of Anglo-European colonization – the Aborigines find themselves on the fringes of Australian society. Remaining on the margins and refusing to be absorbed by the dominant culture, the Aborigines are a visible reminder of the nation’s colonial heritage.

Postcolonial theory also embraces several elements that acknowledge the colonial experience and its lingering aftermath, even as former colonies celebrate their independence. Indeed, “[i]t has been suggested that it is more helpful to think of postcolonialism not just as coming literally after colonialism and signifying its demise, but more

flexibly as the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism” (Loomba 12). One of the most notable legacies is the creation of the centre/margin binary, which is often still entrenched in the societal mindset, even after the demise of colonialism. Women and the indigenous population are the ones most frequently relegated to the margins of society; it is these marginalized people who must be included in the national voice:

Especially in 1988 (Australia’s bicentennial year and the year in which *Joan Makes History* was published), the settler nation must be made to remember the others who contributed in no small way to the making of Australia but about whom history has hitherto been silent. Women must recount an alternative history of Australia in which men are necessarily, albeit temporarily, “guest effects.” (Korang 5)

Feminist theory recognizes the glaring omission of women from the pages of history. While the very nature of patriarchy and its androcentric focus is at the root of the problem, it is important that women and their contributions be heard and analyzed:

A ‘history of women’, then, should do more than restore women to the pages of history books. It must analyse why public life has been considered to be the focus of history, and why public life has been so thoroughly occupied by men. (Curthoys 4)

As a feminist author, Kate Grenville not only to inserts a woman into the pages of history, but also illustrates the overwhelming male influence

that has become the accepted norm in Australian society, to the detriment of the female voice:

Given the absence of a self-defined female subject from history and culture, women need to formulate a positive image of female identity, not only to subvert, but also to create; such an attempt cannot create from a cultural void, but must necessarily draw upon and reappropriate existing images and symbols. The construction of mythologies and the idealization of a female principle serves as a strategy through which an oppositional group can articulate a coherent and fixed identity as the basis for a critique of the problematic features of modernity. (Korang 4)

“Feminist social theory has been concerned with understanding fundamental inequalities between women and men and with analyses of male power over women. Its basic premise is that male dominance derives from the social, economic and political arrangements specific to particular societies” (Jackson 12). Feminism’s rise, along with the women’s movement in the 1960s and 1970s, emphasizes the glaring reality that endemic patriarchy is the root cause of societal discrimination against women, “...the long tradition of male rule in society which silenced women’s voices, distorted their lives, and treated their concerns as peripheral” (Rivkin 765). It is this oppression – based on gender – that adversely affects the lives of women in a myriad of ways, many of which are explored in both *Lilian’s Story* and in *Joan Makes History*. In an effort to contrast this endemic oppression with a more egalitarian mentality, Grenville provides her heroines with the strength

and independence to withstand being subsumed by society's male-dominated attitude.

By recognizing and acknowledging the oppression and marginalization at the heart of patriarchy and imperialism, postcolonial feminist explores the relationship between gender and colonial oppression. "In many different societies, women, like colonised subjects, have been relegated to the position of 'Other,' 'colonised' by various forms of patriarchal domination... Feminist and postcolonial discourses both seek to reinstate the marginalised in the face of the dominant..." (Lawson 249) mentality of former colonies – including Australia – which still exhibit an entrenched patriarchal attitude that pushes women to the margins of society and, as Grenville so effectively illustrates, to the margins of history as well.

The "...literary text emerges as a powerful medium for the exploration of a cultural memory constructed in tension with the hegemonic narratives of the imperial past" (Huggan 152). It is the cultural memory – and its challenge to an endemic patriarchal mindset – which Grenville utilizes to great effect in her novels. Literature, history and theory are incorporated into historiographic metafiction, "...that is, its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (*historiographic metafiction*) is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past" (Hutcheon 15). *Joan Makes History* is an example of historiographic metafiction, wherein

Grenville combines actual historical events with fictional renderings, with an ultimate goal of including previously excluded voices in history's narrative. In effect, Grenville is creating another cultural memory, one based on fact and fiction and including disparate points-of-view. Even *Lilian's Story*, set in a slowly evolving colonial society, strives to present an "historical" account that fits the mold of collective memory. By expanding this collective memory to include the marginalized and Others, "[w]omen have helped develop the postmodern valuing of the margins and the ex-centric as a way out of the power problematics of centers and of male/female oppositions" (Hutcheon 16). Postcolonial feminist theory stresses the equality of all, and valuing the voices of Others certainly factors into the emphasis on addressing past imbalances.

Grenville's heroine in *Lilian's Story* is based on an actual figure from Australia the early 20th century – Bea Miles. As stated by Grenville herself, "What I found interesting in her [Bea's] story was not so much the real woman herself, but more the idea that, in a time when women were supposed to be the passive objects in the stories of men, she wrote her own story on the blank pages of her city" (Grenville, "The Novelist as Barbarian" 2). Born in 1902, Bea attended university for a time, before making her mark as a feminist and an eccentric in Sydney. "This great eccentric is probably best remembered for her addiction to taxi and public transportation travel, and more particularly her refusal to pay the

fares” (Wilson). In keeping with the eccentric and colourful model of Bea Miles, Grenville has made Lilian a larger-than-life persona, an independent woman who ultimately rejects her parents’ colonial world and confronts the new, postcolonial Australia on her own terms.

Lilian’s Story focuses on the postcolonial, with Grenville juxtaposing the birth of the Australian confederation with the birth of her heroine. Both the nation and the woman are desperate to throw off the colonial shackles and forge a unique identity. Lilian’s family represents the colonial, patriarchal society that accompanied the original British convicts and settlers to the new land. Her father’s very name – Albion – emphasizes the colonial presence in the new country. Lilian’s mother, rarely referred to by name, is the epitome of the Victorian lady, extolling such virtues as chastity and the lost art of conversation; she defers to her husband’s authority; she assumes the honourable mantle of procreation – and obedience – as part of the colonial wife’s expected duty: “As national emblems, women are usually cast as mothers or wives, and are called upon to literally and figuratively reproduce the nation” (Loomba 215).

The colonial attitude prevails throughout Lilian’s upbringing, wherein her mother carefully lays out the societal order for her young daughter: “*Alma is a maid*, she explained when I asked. *And I am a lady. You will be a lady one day, but now you are a little girl... Your father is a gentleman...*” (Grenville, *Lilian’s Story* 5). Lilian’s mother

misses no opportunity to school her daughter in the art of conversation and the desirability of modesty, as well as other traits deemed worthy of the lady of the house. These roles are confirmed on many occasions by both of Lilian's parents:

In particular, hierarchies of gender, wealth, age, and sexuality within actual family units correlate with comparable hierarchies in...society. Individuals typically learn their assigned place in hierarchies of race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, nation, and social class in their families of origin. At the same time, they learn to view such hierarchies as natural social arrangements, as compared to socially constructed ones. Hierarchy in this sense becomes "naturalized" because it is associated with seemingly "natural" processes of the family. (Hill Collins 158)

It is once she meets Joan that Lilian begins to revel in her difference. Joan is the daughter of immigrants from Eastern Europe, and the fact that they are not English – even though they are white – means they are nonetheless considered Others. Indeed, Joan's neighbourhood is bursting with foreignness: "There were no names here like the ones I was used to, no Greenwoods or Abercrombies" (Grenville, *Lilian's Story* 118). Joan's father displays a decidedly modern attitude: "*But your career*, he said, and the surprise in my face made him elaborate and chew a few more bits of English. *Your future. Your livelihood. Your prospects*" (Grenville, *Lilian's Story* 118). Contrast this with Lilian's father, who "...liked to return home in the evenings to an embroidering wife" (Grenville, *Lilian's Story* 36). Albion firmly believes

that “...*your future is in your hands... You will have to marry money*” (Grenville, *Lilian’s Story* 75). The outlook of the colonizer – Lilian’s own father – seems dated and sexist; it is the male Other who exhibits a more contemporary and feminist attitude.

The presumed superiority of the male is illustrated repeatedly in *Lilian’s Story*. Sexual stereotypes abound, especially in Lilian’s early years and in her encounters with the other children and their parents. Girls do not climb trees, as Lilian’s father reminds her on more than one occasion. Even her contemporaries have embraced these age-old sexual stereotypes. After Lilian has taken the tile from Miss Gash, Rick proclaims she could not possibly have done it, simply because “...*it’s man’s work, see*” (Grenville, *Lilian’s Story* 46). “However, in these and similar escapades, Lilian is still emulating the male reference point. Her criteria of success in proving herself are still male-dominated” (Haynes 64), reflecting how ingrained the male attitude is within society. However, Lilian rebels against these Victorian edicts, preferring instead to climb trees and stand on her head. She often earns the wrath of her father, who metes out punishment reminiscent of the whippings endured by disobedient slaves. “Power struggles, coercive authoritarian rule, and brutal assertion of domination shape family life so that it is often the setting of intense suffering and pain” (hooks 36). Even as a child, Lilian learns to resist the power and control her father seeks to exert over her – she eats and eats until she becomes fat, reasoning that “...there was too

much flesh now for Father” (Grenville, *Lilian’s Story* 19). Lilian exhibits resistance “...of ‘feminine’ roles through her fatness, a creation of her own in resistance to gender stereotyping” (Gelder 78). Unfortunately for Lilian, her size does not prevent Albion from exerting the ultimate control over his daughter.

Albion takes the patriarchal mentality to its colonial zenith, treating his daughter not only as a colonized female but also as a sexual object under his control. It becomes apparent that Albion’s preoccupation with Lilian’s sexuality is the motivating factor in his determination not only to crush her rebellious spirit, but also to bind her to him forever. This mentality ultimately results in the rape of Lilian by her father:

I could hear my voice, a thin reedy cry like something choking and not being rescued. Father said nothing at all, but the sound of his breathing was like a thudding machine in the silence. All around us the house stood shocked, repelling the sounds we made. My cries carried no further than the carpet of the stairway. The silent rooms would take no part in my struggle, but swallowed the sounds indifferently. *No!* I heard myself cry with a feeble piping sound. *No! No!* The house gave back only silence and the panting of the desperate machine that was Father.
(Grenville, *Lilian’s Story* 125)

The rape only leads to Lilian’s withdrawal from the colonial society in which she has been raised – and from the need to measure her success on male terms, as she has done previously. One of the only semi-positive

things to come from such a paternal violation is Lilian's newfound reliance on herself.

As Lilian grows more comfortable with herself and begins to move out into the world, Grenville introduces the postcolonial concept of nativism:

[Nativism is] a term for the desire to return to indigenous practices and cultural forms as they existed in pre-colonial society. The term is most frequently encountered to refer to the rhetoric of decolonization which argues that colonialism needs to be replaced by the recovery and promotion of pre-colonial, indigenous ways. (Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Studies* 159)

While Lilian is unable to return to pre-colonial indigenous ways because she is not an Aboriginal person, she chooses to experience life far from the restrictive and constrictive confines of her colonial upbringing:

“Under a country sky I needed to greet myself alone, like a stranger”

(Grenville, *Lilian's Story* 129). Lilian soon discovers that, even in the country, she is still different, still an Other. Women wearing trousers is anathema to the mentality of the time and place. However, with her newfound detachment from her colonial past, Lilian is confident enough to confront the country citizenry:

Who do you think you are, young lady? Said the publican, safe under his grey hat. *Just who do you think you are?* I told him, *I think I am Boadicea*, and watched him frown. *But in fact I am Lil Singer.* (Grenville, *Lilian's Story* 130)

Lilian's reference to Boadicea, who was considered a hero in early British history for her violent stand against the invading Romans, clearly has no meaning for the publican, who has no connection whatsoever to his ancestral British homeland. Lilian, however, is well-versed in British history, as befits a child of colonial parents, but again uses this knowledge to mimic those who would push her to the margins of society and to acknowledge a woman in a position of power.

Lilian adopts the concept of nativism by emulating the "native" on her nightly walking excursions:

My feet hardened quickly. Father said no more about shoe bills, and although I could never be some slim and glossy black person, eyes alone shining in the moonlight, or my teeth gleaming in a grin, my feet could pass as silently as theirs over stones and spikes. My feet renewed themselves endlessly. Such hide was enviable. I wondered if it could be encouraged to form all over a body such as mine, that had such need of armour. (Grenville, *Lilian's Story* 138)

Lilian recognizes her physical inability to actually become a native, but she nonetheless admires and emulates Australia's Aboriginal people.

"The idea of postcolonialism is not that you go back to a precolonialism...but that it is a return to something that was *occluded* in the first conceptual construction of colonialism" (Rajan 214). It is a return to the uncivilized landscape – in addition to an admiration for the Aborigine – that marks Lilian's desire to return to a state before colonialism and its attendant patriarchal attitude:

It is only in the wild, where pro- and prescriptive masculine authority is absent (though not always, even here), that Lilian finally moves toward a personal rebirth. Her return to the city, therefore, is followed by an outright rejection of patriarchal authorities such as her father and the university. (Turcotte, “The Ultimate Oppression” 76)

Upon her return to Australian society, Lilian finds the courage to challenge patriarchal authority: “*You are no daughter of mine*, Father shouted when I came back, thinner and browner from so much bush tucker and tramping over stones... *Then you are a cuckold*, I told Father, and laughed. *And mother is a whore*” (Grenville, *Lilian’s Story* 132). This defiance confounds her once-powerful father, who still attempts to exert his control by raising his wife’s belt and demanding that Lilian bend over. Momentarily harkening back to the incessant beatings of her childhood, Lilian slowly begins to move into the demanded position; however, even her slowness is seen as defiance of authority, and results in an unexpected response:

I did not move quickly, but was gathering myself to move when Father startled me by flinging the belt down between us. *Intolerable*, he shouted. *Vile, vile!* I was turning in my slow way to present my behind to Father at last, planting my fat legs apart to balance, when I saw that he had left the room. The belt lay on the floor in a great silence. (Grenville, *Lilian’s Story* 133)

Unwittingly, Lilian has stood up to her oppressor, and the result is the literal throwing down of the symbol of her father’s abusive authority.

Their relationship has changed forever.

Even Lilian's propensity to quote Shakespeare, that most British symbol, is done not to show respect or deference to the colonizing power, but to throw the master's words back at him. It is an act of mimicry, which:

...has come to describe the ambivalent relationship between colonizer and colonized. When colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to "mimic" the colonizer, by adopting the colonizer's cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values, the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits. Rather, the result is a 'blurred copy' of the colonizer... This is because mimicry is never very far from mockery, since it can appear to parody whatever it mimics. Mimicry therefore locates a crack in the certainty of colonial dominance, an uncertainty in its control of the behaviour of the colonized. (Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Studies* 139)

The concept of colonial mimicry illustrates "...the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite*" (Bhabha 85). Lilian's recitations of Shakespeare exemplify mimicry – she has not read the actual pages of Shakespeare since her father drowned her leather-bound book many years before. It is not difficult to imagine the changes – conscious and unconscious – she has made to the Bard's words over the years, but clearly her intent is to use the words of this British icon in ways not imagined by the author. As a postcolonial concept, "...mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power" (Bhabha

85). Indeed, “[i]t is a subversive mimicry of [the] imperialist position which appears to signify a secret, and perhaps widespread, resistance to English domination” (Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Transformations* 31), a resistance embodied by Lilian Singer. Lilian’s mimicry and resistance continues with her nightly walks in the park, where she encounters many lusty individuals who proposition her. She refuses, knowing “...if necessary William could be brought to warn off these hungry men, who could not stand having great poetry shouted at them, and would slink off in shame” (Grenville, *Lilian’s Story* 164). Even Albion cannot abide his female daughter speaking the words of Shakespeare:

Father did not stop laughing. *Oh, Lilian*, he crowed. *You are like one of those apes taught to do things*. Then I could not stop, but felt my mouth shaping word after word, faster and faster... *Shut up, Lilian*. His voice was only a distant interruption to the words it was vital to keep reading from the roses. (Grenville, *Lilian’s Story* 99)

Albion’s increasingly desperate attempts to exert control over Lilian continue into her adulthood, culminating with her committal to a mental institution. Lilian finally accepts her fate, rationalizing that “Father could stop me running wild but he could not stop me being alive and enjoying whatever was to be enjoyed” (Grenville, *Lilian’s Story* 149). She resists her father when he visits, doing her best “...to become stone, or sky, or anything that could go on living its own silent life...” (Grenville,

Lilian's Story 154). It is Albion who reacts to her silence in an erratic and irrational way:

Mother did not visit me in the loony-bin. *Your mother is a trifle indisposed*, Father boomed. I could see him believing his story as he invented it. *Your mother has been affected by the heat, and is gathering her strength*. I was not a satisfactory listener for his story, sitting so placidly on my chair, and I watched him invent more and more outlandish details. *Your mother has taken up epistemology*, Father said and waited for me to react. *Your mother is thinking of taking the veil. Your mother is becoming fluent in Swahili.*
(Grenville, *Lilian's Story* 154)

At court, Lilian risks losing her identity in the fact of colonial authority. She finds the authorities "...were making it hard for me to remember that I was Lilian Una Singer: no one cared, here no one knew my name, and the machinery of this court would roll on over any event or person, I felt, and I began to feel myself disappearing" (Grenville, *Lilian's Story* 191). However, in a manoeuvre of postcolonial resistance, Lilian reasserts her identity: "I hung on...repeating my name to myself, and reminding myself that out there in the real world there were people who knew me..." (Grenville, *Lilian's Story* 191). Naming is an important marker of identity in postcolonial theory; hanging onto one's name challenges the authority attempting to erase or minimize one's identity. The colonized lost their identity once the colonizer imposed his culture and identity on the colonial subject; Lilian is determined not to succumb to this typical colonial scenario.

As Lilian's eccentric exploits become common knowledge in her city, she discovers that her otherness is having an impact:

I was beginning to be a public figure and was enjoying it, the way people nudged each other and pointed. My story was beginning to have a small part in the story of others, and I was becoming a small part of history. (Grenville, *Lilian's Story* 201)

While once viewed as mad and her presence a public nuisance, Lilian Singer has found a place in the folklore of her city, much as Bea Miles did in her time: "Every Sydney cabbie, even ones who couldn't have been born when she was in her heyday, have their Bea Miles story... They all own her history, they've made it by a sort of historical sleight-of-hand their own..." (Grenville, "The Novelist as Barbarian" 2). She has become part of the collective memory of her community. Indeed, postcolonial novels such as *Lilian's Story* contribute to the creation and affirmation of the individual/collective memory process. After holding Dianne, much to the chagrin of the baby's father, Lilian remarks, "I knew that little Dianne would grow up listening to the telling and retelling of the story of the day she was dandled by Lil Singer, and might tell it herself at last" (Grenville, *Lilian's Story* 214). Thus it becomes apparent that:

Everyone in *Lilian's Story* is intent on telling the tale. It is only when they – women, race, culture, nation – have begun to 'take back the centre' and make it themselves, that they can become a part of history, or, more specifically, that they can *rewrite* it to include the excluded. (Turcotte, "The Ultimate Oppression" 81)

The “...insertion of contesting narratives, a ‘re-writing’ of history, is an important strategy in the process of discursive resistance” (Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Transformation* 102), brought about by the desire to expose the patriarchal mentality so endemic in modern society.

History texts are woefully deficient in women’s stories. In fact, it becomes clear that history is indeed “his” story, the recording of male accomplishments and perspectives. Few records attest to the presence of women through the ages: “Early feminist work in this area set about rewriting this history; it centred on recovering the history of women within the British empire, portraying them in a positive light, uninvolved with the oppression of colonialism, and in many cases trying to resist colonial rule” (Mills 105). This is one of Grenville’s most important accomplishments in *Joan Makes History*, wherein she gives women a positive voice in historical moments:

Australian history has been a history in the singular, filtered through a masculine gaze that has promoted the male, macho and falsely ascetic version of Australian nationality. In Grenville’s revised version, on the other hand, we learn that “there has been a Joan cooking, washing, and sweeping through every event of history, although she has not been mentioned until now.” (Korang 4)

While seeming to relegate Joan to a contented life as wife, mother and grandmother at the end of the day – which can be viewed as a very anti-feminist conclusion – Grenville celebrates the ability of women to *choose* such a life: “The person who ‘just’ brings up the kids and washes

the socks is as necessary to the whole picture as the kings and explorers. She, or he, is also making history in the sense that they are creating the climate in which humanity lives” (Turcotte, “The Story-teller’s Revenge” 152). In the past, feminist theory has extolled the virtues of competing head-to-head with men while encouraging women to forge careers outside the supposedly limiting and unfulfilling domestic realm. However, feminism has now evolved to the point where the domestic life of wife and mother is an acceptable option for women:

The implication that women (and men) should be free to take what they will from both male and female sources becomes a major preoccupation of *Joan Makes History...* Viewed in this light, Joan’s apparent capitulation to the pre-feminist stereotype of the woman’s place in the home can be read, rather, as a further stage of liberation. Having established her ability to succeed as a ‘male’ in a male world, Joan refuses to be typecast in that role and, instead, asserts her freedom to choose the interlocking roles of wife, mother and grandmother. (Haynes 77)

Grenville’s Joan re-defines the making of history, and focuses on the domestic realm:

Many feminists like myself are trying, somehow, to incorporate the fact that many of us want to lead this difficult life of motherhood and being a member of a family. Somehow our feminism has to change shape to absorb that fact. Feminism for me has always been about broadening options – it’s been a response to the gap between the real and the ideal and trying to bridge that gap. (Turcotte, “The Story-teller’s Revenge” 153)

By inserting Elizabeth Cook onto the *Endeavour* during the voyage that discovers Australia in 1770, Grenville not only adds a woman's observations and perspectives, but she challenges the patriarchal thinking that has omitted women from historical renderings in the first place. Joan, as the incarnation of the captain's wife, acknowledges "[t]here were those who thought that I, as his wife, should be languishing patiently in the Old Country for him" (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 17). She defies the conventions of the age, which "...has as its central focus the concept of patriarchy, which can be described as a system of male authority, which oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions" (Osborne 8). Interestingly, it is in the context of an earlier indiscretion on her part that this Joan exhibits a decidedly unexpected trait:

It was all the easier to resist the botanist because on another occasion I had failed to resist a man of the same lying and wheedling nature. I had betrayed the Captain once, and been forgiven, and I had seen with fear how close I had been to losing him. (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 21)

Joan's infidelity runs counter to the prevailing societal notion of the dutiful and faithful wife, one forgiving of male indiscretions while unwilling and unable to commit her own. In this instance, it is the male who forgives his wife's infidelity, a more modern turn of events.

Reminiscent of her reluctance to be born at the beginning of the novel, Joan pushes and squeezes herself out through the boat's hatch

and onto the pages of history as the convict ships land at Botany Bay in 1788: “Mine was not only the first foreign foot to step ashore; mine was also the first foreign laugh to sound out, sharp and rude, across the waters of Botany Bay” (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 40). Grenville’s novel reminds us that “[m]emory continually reinvents itself in a multiplicity of different representations, and these representations are at once a powerful creative force for the transformation of the past in the present, and a reminder of the large number of different positions we may inhabit in relation to our own, as well as other people’s histories” (Huggan 151).

In 1795, Grenville appropriates the Aboriginal voice, with Joan determined to make her mark on history, whether it be with the coloured mud drawings on the roofs of caves or in her encounter with the first Europeans mapping the coastline of the new colony. Grenville’s inclusion of the Aboriginal, especially in *Joan Makes History*, has resulted in accusations by her critics of appropriating the native voice. Being a white Australian, such “appropriation” by Grenville may be viewed as an example of the white race exhibiting colonial superiority yet again. Upon reflection, Grenville herself, upon reflection, has stated of her inclusion of the Aboriginal voice in *Joan Makes History*:

...I felt very strongly writing this history that I wanted to put in at least some of the groups that had been left out – mainly the women, but also the Aborigines... I didn’t want to leave the Aborigines out of the book because one of the things I was doing was putting back into a history book some of the groups

left out of other history books – among them women and the Aboriginal people. But I also didn't want to tell their story for them, or do any of that patronizing white-novelist-telling-the-story-of-the-Blacks thing. So I was in a bit of a dilemma, and the only way that I could see out of it was to write a totally subjective account that was shamelessly myself imaginatively projecting. (Turcotte, "The Story-teller's Revenge" 154)

The Aborigines exhibit no overt fear of the foreign-looking, invading strangers; likewise, the white leader "...had reassured our cautious menfolk of his friendly intentions by cutting their beards and hair" (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 56). Grenville envisions Aborigines calmly allowing strangers to use a sharp object – and a potential weapon – on their faces and heads, which is indicative of their acquiescence in the face of the overwhelming presence of the colonizer. The colonizers have already begun to transform the natives into something more closely resembling the accepted British standard: "The men sat gravely along the dune awaiting their turn, and were becoming huge of eye, seeing their familiar friends transforming before their eyes into bald strangers" (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 56).

Joan's view that the white strangers were greeted cautiously yet warmly and were allowed to even cut the hair of a woman – especially considering that, in actuality, "...the women were kept well away..." (Williams 39) – contrasts with historical records which portray the Aborigines in a negative light. The *Endeavour's* artist "Banks' verdict was that the Aborigines were 'rank cowards'; Cook put rather a different interpretation on the timidity of the Aborigines and their distant gestures

of defiance – ‘all they seem’d to want was for us to be gone’” (Williams 38). Indeed, Cook himself entered in his journal at the time: “...in a Word they are perhaps as miserable a set of People as are this day upon Earth” (Williams 36). This is, of course, the typical colonial view – anything or anyone foreign is inferior. Joan’s experience at this imagined first meeting paints the Aborigines in a more favourable light than history has allowed. She boldly takes the scissors from Flinders and proceeds to emasculate the colonizer in a scene reminiscent of Samson and Delilah: “I had taken this thing in my own hand, turned it against him, and stolen a little of his power” (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 58). Such a turnabout would certainly not make the history books.

Joan’s bold proclamations about her history-making destiny continue through to 1839, and sound eerily like male arrogance:

I was there with them, and I could tell you that if they had listened to me in their blind folly, they would not have had the troubles they did, of which children read with awe... Ah, if only they had listened to that Joan, instead of making sure she was left out of those lying books of history, they would be sleeping sound in their beds now, and not skeletons being mumbled at by desert winds. (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 75)

This settler Joan struggles with the hardships of a new country, and she retains her British homeland as a reference point: “However, at last there was a hut of sorts, a hut like those we had housed a pig or two in back Home... Our hut was like a tiny Stonehenge...” (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 81). Waxing nostalgic for the colonial homeland is a

common feature of the colonial/postcolonial experience, but Grenville illustrates it as a need and a desire to reproduce the English countryside in an inhospitable new land. Indeed, “[i]n Australia, the built landscape is (in)scribed in ways that mimic the built landscapes of the northern hemisphere” (Davies 65). The trees on Joan’s plot of land defy efforts to civilize or tame them, just as the land resists the colonizers’ attempts to tame it. “The Britons living in Governor Phillip’s Australia were confronted by what they construed to be ‘unwrought Nature.’ The continent could not be addressed and made sensible until it was incorporated into Culture” (Gibson 87). As a settler, Joan is confounded by the landscape of her adopted land:

My heart sank then at the possibility that all that heaving and grunting, that chopping and splitting and stumping and burning, had laid bare nothing but a patch of arid dirt in which any crop would wither. (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 83)

Joan works as hard as her husband in this inhospitable land, yet history only recognizes the accomplishments of men. Her abilities approach those of the male, reflecting one of feminism’s early tenets that women are just as capable as men – should society see fit to give them equal opportunities.

Likewise, when working for the convict-turned-feudal lord, Burchett, Joan witnesses the pretensions of the colonizers and their desire to recapture something of their English homeland in their new

country: "...they congratulated themselves that, thanks to them, civilisation had come to this valley. Civilisation was fine stone houses with lions and sundials, it was legs of mutton and tumblers of rum and water, and it was solid fences that left no doubt at all about ownership" (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 124). At this stage of Australia's colonization, the British tradition and even class system has been transplanted to Australian soil. Indeed, Joan observes that "...a fence gave a man like Burchett the courage to puff himself up and become righteous about thieves and robbers. By whom he chiefly meant the blacks, of course..." (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 124). The superior colonial attitude bodes ill for the Aborigines who, as Joan notes: "...had been there long before us, and had lived here for who knows how long without any assistance from sundials, lily ponds or stone lions, and seemed to have managed without two sets of themselves, one in chains and one in silk" (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 125).

The colonizer is completely ignorant of local customs and, seeing himself as superior to the "natives," would never dream of learning anything from the colonized. "What did they find here to eat, those skinny black folk, in these empty-looking hillsides of nothing in particular? What were they feeding on in the nights, that made them laugh so much?" (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 125). The natives are surely laughing at the idiocy of the supposedly superior colonizer, while "[m]any Europeans who penetrated inland in the 1800s...began to form

new opinions of the peoples they encountered...how skilful the Aborigines were at finding food..." (Urry 53). Joan breaks with British colonial tradition, which views the natives as inferior, and comments, "I knew they did not recognise pease as food, which personally I saw as one more sign of their intelligence" (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 125). Joan's propensity to break with traditional British thought illuminates her as something more than just a common ward of the British penal system. As a mere woman, she is able to see the reality of people like Burchett and his judgments, which is a decidedly postcolonial and feminist outlook:

My judgment on him [Burchett] was that he was the kind of person a new country did not need, in spite of his ability to *open up the land and make something of it and bring the wilderness to heel*, and all the other dubious things the assistant governor had praised him for, laying the foundation for Burchett's square house. (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 126).

In this same incarnation, Joan explores the countryside alone – a very unwomanly thing to do – and comes across an Aboriginal woman who, at first glance, exhibits the traits of one in labour. However, it becomes apparent that she is the latest victim of a campaign of poisoning the native population:

...I watched this metallic female coil over herself and retch, choking and bringing up long threads of yellow spit. She held her belly with both hands, hugging it, stilling it, crying in pain and something worse, grief and loss, and fell to her

knees, still embracing her round brown belly. (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 128)

Historical accounts allege that the poisoning of the Aboriginals with strychnine and other substances did indeed occur. However, Joan's fellow servants do not see anything wrong with the poisoning, indicative yet again of a superior colonial attitude and disdain for the indigenous people:

*Them dumb blacks... Three bags they made off with, plenty for all them thieving heathens to go to Kingdom Come and back!... They ate, and gulped at their tea, and were full of joy, knowing that out among those tiny lascivious flowers, under bushes full of thorns, in gullies of trembling ferns, that woman and her tribe, whose wallabies had made the saliva gush into our mouths, were in agony, with their bellies full of damper poisoned with our hatred and fear. (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 130).*

When Joan does look beyond the bounds of her conventionally upper class life, would she truly have embraced such a life as she envisions? “Could I perhaps have been another kind of Joan altogether, flat-chested on a prancing horse, speaking French as if born to it (well, I would have been born to it, in fact), leading men into battle behind me, and dying a glorious if dreadful fiery death in the end?” (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 148). Does dreaming of such a destiny illustrate the early stages of a feminist mindset? Would women of breeding have the desire

to live such a daring life? The upper-class Joan intimates that she is not alone in her daydreaming:

I knew other women had their secret lives, too, and there were times, with the other ladies of quality in this colony, when we tittered over the tinkle of teacups in saucers, and from below our fine eyebrows, and above our charming smiles and dimples, we would exchange a glance or two that said we knew, and shared, and were in the secret together. (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 148)

While this is, of course, mere conjecture on this Joan's part, it does hint that a feminist mindset – a wish to expand beyond society's rigid and narrow-minded conventions for women – is slowly but surely emerging. Even the notion that the women share a secret parallels feminism's notion of a shared sisterhood of experiences among women. This concept of shared experience is further illustrated in Joan's observation:

...and then a silence came over us, that Mrs. Miles had to break, by saying in a way that sounded rather loud in the silence: *But you know, I would love to have been able to go with them, or just go.* Then she laughed her studied silly laugh, and put a pretty little hand up in front of her mouth, as if shocked at the words, and keeping in others like them. We all laughed with her, but we all knew then what we shared, and it was not an interest in mauves or pinks or rosewater. (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 150).

These women may well share a desire to be someone else, to be somewhere else, but the British sense of duty – and of the female's place within this hierarchical society – is stronger and more ingrained than these women realize. Their dreams of freedom or, at the very least, of

accompanying their menfolk rather than dutifully remaining at home, must, of necessity, remain mere dreams.

In this same scene, when the hailstorm interrupts the all-too-familiar afternoon tea, Mrs. Beauman acts not like the fine lady she is, but in a passionate and spontaneous manner:

We watched the hail bouncing off the head and shoulders of this other Mrs. Beauman, watched her hold out her hands so her cupped palms made the hail bounce... The Mrs. Beauman we knew, the Mrs. Beauman of controlled laughs, of satire that made smaller souls laugh so loudly it was inelegant enough to raise the eyebrows of the servants: Mrs. Beauman who was never seen to move a muscle of that perfect face except in the precise way she intended – this was Mrs. Beauman standing like a monk, clothed in concentration under a hail of hail. (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 152)

Underneath the perfectly manicured, upper-class demeanour beats the heart and soul of a truly different sort – of a woman who admits “*Oh, hail, it brings me out in a rash of passion...*” (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 151). Perhaps all is not as it seems beneath the pinks and mauves after all. Mrs. Beauman is described as an “other”, and she appears to epitomize all that Joan aspires to and yet cannot actually bring herself to do – indeed, Joan is unable to even follow Mrs. Beauman out into the hail: “How could I have imagined myself in charge of platoons of swarthy men, battlefields, prancing horses? I was not brave enough even to risk the sniggering of a few silly servants: I was afraid! I, Joan, fearful of a bit of frozen water and what a few minions might

think!” (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 152). Joan has been revealed as one who only “lives” in her imagination; it is Mrs. Beauman who makes a statement by merely standing outside in the hailstorm:

I saw that Mrs. Beauman, even in my wrapper, was not me. She was making history in her own way as I had to find a way to make my own, even though mine, I now saw, was unlikely to have anything to do with hot-eyed poets, or cavorting horses, or even the ecstasy of ice against fevered flesh. (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 153).

In 1878, Joan defies the prevailing patriarchal attitude by going to work for Alfred the photographer, first as a model and then as his assistant. She notes that, “[i]n the back room mixing the collodion for the plates, I felt I had a hand in the machinery of life, as I never had as simply the wife of Henry” (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 205). Her independence and her feminist attitude is illustrated by the rare opportunity Alfred has given her:

I thanked Providence, for I knew that most employers feigned to think such a thing against nature and the laws of commerce, and claimed that the world would collapse forthwith if a woman were able to feed and shelter herself from nothing but her own labour. (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 206)

Feminism challenges patriarchy during this Joan’s incarnation, with the feminist ideal clearly emerging for Joan. Indeed, she “...counted myself absurdly lucky, knowing that without such an eccentric employer I would be slaving over needles and poor thread far into the night, and

slowly starving like most females without a man (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 206). Joan is making history simply by virtue of her fortuitous encounter with her employer, a man who does not follow society's belief that women are incapable of supporting themselves.

Interspersed with the preceding historical vignettes, the modern day Joan – born in the year of Confederation, 1901 – lives the life of a postcolonial feminist. Her parents have emigrated from “...that tiny country of werewolves and vampires...” (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 11), a land so unlike England and the New World of Australia, yet reminiscent of the foreignness of the transplanted Others. Joan is aware of her otherness, and is ashamed of it: “I was embarrassed too, by the way my skin was always brown, even in winter: all the other girls were pale puddings of people who made sure sunlight never darkened their skins, and they would not have wanted to be me” (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 44). Even at a young age, the other girls at school clearly recognize that Joan is not one of them: “So they mocked me, all those classmates, taunting me in the playground for the way my father was bald as well as foreign, and the way my mother looked funny with a scarf on her head” (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 45).

Despite the fact that all “whites” in Australia were originally immigrants – and that many of the colonials were descended from British convicts transported there in the late 18th century – “...the girls explained with satisfaction that they could not speak to me anymore because I was

a *filthy Hun*, and Australians were at war with *filthy Huns*” (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 47). Even though Joan and her family are not Huns, Joan’s father changes the family name from Radulescu to Redman. This is a rather ironic choice given its association with the slang for native Americans, another population of Others within their own land who were subjected to the attempts of the white man to wipe them out. However:

Those Abercrombies and Smiths were not fooled, though, by Miss Gibbs crossing out *Joan Radulescu* in the roll book and inking in *Joan Redman*. *It is not your real name*, they pointed out at wearisome length in the playground. *It can never be your real name*. (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 48)

As part of her sexual awakening and budding feminist sensibility, Joan explores the physical greatness that is Lilian Singer, whom she sees as a fit companion for a woman of destiny:

...I was moved to crave the creamy vastness of her body: I fell on her soft mounds and bunches, stripping the clothes from her, consumed with a craving to feel my flesh against another’s, to join skin with skin. She struggled, the boat tipped and sloshed, she cried *No! No!* in a feeble unconvincing way, and even as I cried back *Yes!* and wrestled with buttons, I was impatient at her coyness. Where was the spirit to match my own, that could stand naked, shameless and throbbing under a yellow sun, and lust for more? (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 66)

Joan’s forthrightness mirrors a very male attitude, while her actions are eerily reminiscent of Lilian’s rape by her father. Like a man, Joan seems to lose sight of her desire for greatness in the haze of lust: “I loved the black gleam of such outlandish skin [of foreign sailors], and I wondered if

my destiny was to give myself over to the caresses of such a one” (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 68). While embracing and celebrating sexual awareness is feminist in outlook, Grenville’s inclusion of the rather male nature of her sexual experience with Lilian illustrates the very fine line between these experiences.

Joan finds herself an outsider in Duncan’s world after their marriage: “Duncan, suddenly substantial, was no stranger, but he seemed strange to me, here in his world where I was the one who did not seem to fit” (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 111). Indeed, she confesses: “How could I tell him that I was in a foreign country under his arm and eyes, not close at all, but hemispheres, apart from him?” (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 113). Joan’s feminist beliefs rebel against the constraints imposed by her marriage and pregnancy: “I was a prisoner of the tadpole inside me. I tried to see this life as my destiny, this history as the one I would make... But I knew in my heart that I could not accept such a place, in the suburbs and far-flung colonies of history” (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 114). And yet this is precisely where she finds herself – in a far-flung colony. It is her home: where else would she go, back to a Britain she has never known? To her family’s homeland? Fate intervenes in the form of a miscarriage, leaving Joan to echo the early feminist lament, that becoming a wife and a mother signals the end of a woman’s freedom and independence:

Not so long before I had been a giddy girl with my life tame in my hand; a giddy girl spinning all alone with ribbons and scarves of infinite possibilities swirling around her in gaudy kaleidoscope patterns. Now, lying here nodding while Duncan comforted himself making plans for us, I saw that all those ribbons were anchored now: I would never again dance with my life on my palm like a jewel. I was attached now to this man, and to the short but significant history we shared.
(Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 141)

In this instance, “...women are shown as occupying a position of entrapment and subordination. The traditional picture of motherhood as a joyful altruism is deliberately deconstructed by the representation of pregnancy as an invasion by an alien, parasitic organism...” (Haynes 61). It is only by tearing down this traditional mentality – as shown through Joan’s ensuing experiences – that Grenville is able to lead Joan to the realization of the ultimate value and joy of motherhood.

Joan takes matters into her own hands – and in the process, exerts her own independence and identity – by leaving Duncan at the agricultural show. After considering many options, including returning to her parents’ home and standing for parliament or joining the circus, Joan decides to experience life as a man. “It was done, I was Jack, a woman of destiny” (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 190). Joan comes to realize that:

Pants altered my heart. The soul of Joan had always been above the frivolous distinctions of sex, as my domed father had known when he had provided me with encyclopedias and sets of black pens: all the same, pants changed everything.
(Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 190)

Something as simple as donning a pair of pants suddenly results in Joan adopting the male role: “Feminist activists now know that women are likely to exercise power in the same manner as men when they assume the same positions in social and political arenas” (hooks 87). As Joan/Jack eyes a woman across the tram aisle, the reaction is unexpected:

Such pleasure I felt at her awkwardness! I could barely contain a laugh of joy: the joy of power, of which I had known so little until now. In this case the power was hardly satisfactory, being achieved with so little struggle, and all I could feel was scorn for this frustrated woman, gripping her basket as if to strangle it, and I knew now how all silly creatures in skirts and blushes were of no account to the creatures in the pants, who had the power. (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 191)

The patriarchal reality finally sinks in for Joan, who has now seen the situation from both sides.

Ever mindful of her long-held desire to make history, Joan sees something of the historical in her new incarnation: “The bit of history I chose to make as a man was humble, but in my pants I was making history by doing nothing more than simply existing” (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 193). The unfair reality is that men, simply by virtue of being male, have their stories, their outlook, and their views included in HIStory.

Joan realizes that a reversal of stereotypical roles can teach one something of human nature: “It is women who are supposed to moon

and languish and fill their days with love and scheming, but it was as a man that I softened and grew fluid, reconsidering the notion of love” (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 198). Joan has inadvertently found herself in a situation that allows her to see both sides of the reality of gender. Women may feel they have been relegated to a lesser place in society, saddled with stereotypical characteristics that are used to “define” them as women, but Joan comes to realize that men are also endowed with emotion (including love) and yet are left to keep their own emotional (and thus “feminine”) traits firmly hidden inside. Joan has become an enlightened individual, one more appreciative of what truly matters in life. Suddenly, “making history” has possibilities that she has heretofore failed to acknowledge – she realizes that whatever women “choose” to do with their lives is worthwhile and of value.

Feminism recognizes gender fluidity and the blurring of the line between the sexes, as illustrated in Joan’s newfound realization that “...I was Joan now, and Joan was no more an impostor than Jack had been. Under all skirts and socks with clocks I was everyone who had ever breathed, sat, made errors of judgment...” (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 216). Maturity of attitude accompanies Joan’s realizations, and she is now ready to accept and appreciate the love of a man, the joy of having a family. Paralleling the evolution of feminism itself, Joan has moved from the female desire to assert independence and challenge male authority, to becoming equal to men, to appreciating and valuing the feminine and

the choices available to women. Joan has been everywoman and, in the process, has shown the value of all that women are and do, even if history has chosen to ignore it. She has become a contented woman, wise with experience, even if some of that “experience” was acquired through her dreamlike encounters throughout Australia’s history:

How different all things were now! I had looked into the face of destiny and found it cold: I envied no one now, hankered after no greatness, dreamed no dreams of crowds cheering my name, armies following where I led, the ardour of artists inspired by my face: all that was an empty mockery, while sitting with my feet up, dreaming away the days and nights in a smudge of sentiment, seemed a finer thing to do than any of those. (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 224).

Grenville ends *Joan Makes History* by posing some very thought-provoking questions: “*What of the others, the ones who are not in this hall... What of those who lived here before us? What of all the people who will melt away like mud when they die, remembered in no books of history?*” (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 258). Joan’s epilogue reaffirms the lessons that Joan has come to know through her life and dreams:

There was not a single joy I could feel that countless Joans had not already felt, not a single mistake I could make that had not been made by some Joan before me. There was a time when I would have raged against such a thought, or grown petulant. But now that I am such an old woman, and so many times a grandmother, I do not grieve, but grow pleased and plump at the idea. I swell like an egg: there is nothing I cannot claim as my own now, and although you may not think so to look at me, I am the entire history of the globe walking down the street. (Grenville, *Joan Makes History* 285)

Joan experiences cultural memories throughout her attempts to make history, just as she reworks and challenges these memories by inserting herself into them. She has the potential to become an iconic representation for women in and throughout history; however, while she dreams of grand and glorious destinies, Joan ends up living and revelling in a very ordinary life. It can be argued that the very fact of her dreaming raises her above the ordinary – she has “lived” history and touched a variety of watershed and ordinary moments, moments that are or have the potential to be national memories or narratives and all of which attest to the Australian national character.

Writers such as Kate Grenville give a voice to those who have been excluded from history’s recounting and who have been marginalized by society, thereby illuminating postcolonial and feminist ideals. Literature allows for the exposure of the lingering effects of colonialism, as well as provides an opportunity to tell the stories of women and Others:

The post-colonial task, therefore, is not simply to contest the message of history, which has so often relegated the post-colonial world to a footnote to the march of progress, but also to engage the medium of narrative itself, to re-inscribe the ‘rhetoric,’ the heterogeneity of historical representation... It is in engaging the strategy of narrativity that post-colonial discourse can interpolate history, turning its status as a record to the task of self-determination and cultural empowerment... The key function of the post-colonial interpolation of history is to subvert the unquestioned status of the ‘scientific record’ by re-inscribing the rhetoric of events. (Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Transformation* 92)

In both *Lilian's Story* and *Joan Makes History*, Kate Grenville illustrates the importance and the relevance of seeing the world from a female point-of-view. It is this feminist perspective that allows for the study of women's social and cultural issues within Australian society:

Feminist modes of theorising contest androcentric (or male-centred) ways of knowing, calling into question the gendered hierarchy of society and culture. Feminist theory is about thinking for ourselves – women generating knowledge *about* women and gender *for* women. (Jackson 1)

It is only when the experiences of women – even when presented in a fictional, historical and/or cultural context – are told that the prevailing cultural and social attitudes may begin to change.

An author such as Kate Grenville is important to the study of history, culture and Australia itself. As a postcolonial and feminist writer, one who, by virtue of her heredity and history, should be firmly entrenched at the centre of society, and yet who is, because of her gender, also relegated to the margins by the prevailing society mindset, Grenville is in a unique and potentially influential position:

The question of why history should be so exclusively 'his story' – a record of men's achievements and men's concerns – becomes not merely an affirmation that women have mattered but an assault on the very methodology and philosophy of the discipline. A feminist reading of Grenville's works immediately locates an exploration of the socioeconomic roles assigned to women, of the sexist structures of literature of the feminist movement itself, but these in turns are aspects of a more radical reevaluation of our customary modes of perception and the extent to which

the individual will may cast off society's 'mind-forg'd manacles'. (Haynes 60)

Grenville challenges the preconceived stereotypes based on class and gender; she emboldens her heroines with intelligence and determination not to fall into gender-based roles. Even in Joan, who finally comes to value the roles of wife, mother and grandmother, Grenville illustrates the value of the feminine. *Choice* is the ultimate freedom and the ultimate balance.

I'm interested in the storytelling process in general, the way that a story becomes a substitute for what really happened, and the fact that if you have control over the story, then you have control over the truth. – *Kate Grenville*. (Turcotte, "Telling Those Untold Stories" 295)

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