

'You're making it up.'

Am I?⁵⁷

Conclusion

Written on the Body represents an ambiguity, a tension between simultaneous treatments of both impure and dualistic understandings of the self. The text in general represented what we have previously defined as a 'writing through the body'. Through the use of a 'genderless' first-person narrator, the reader is placed ambiguously in relation to the text. No longer the passive recipient of authorial intent, the reader is at once omnipotent in her assignation of gender and brought short by the text assigning the context of gender. The reader's creative possibilities of multiplicitous gender positioning are still language locked. But the disruption that takes place means that author and reader no longer know themselves as subject and object but have to redefine their relationship in and through the text. In this sense, the subject has become 'impure', reading into a mirror of kaleidoscopic reflection.

However, the text also offers us examples of the kinds of disruptions/destabilizations of self (man)/other (woman) categories theorized and advocated by Irigaray, Cixous, Kristeva and Wittig. Her constant shifting between and reconfiguring of these seemingly natural categories can be read as a strategy aimed at challenging the fundamentality of phallocentrism's central dichotomy and, hence, phallocentrism itself, by positing unstable, supplemental forms of 'other' subjectivity. Phallocentrism remains, but the brush strokes of the prick are subject to the phantasmatic.

Women can rewrite the script of gender in unstable ways, destabilising. It is not from the ontologically secure site of the female body that they write, but in the sentient act of their writing. The significance of the title, *Written on the Body*, should not go without mention:

Written on the body is a secret code only visible in certain lights; the accumulations of a lifetime gather there. In places the palimpsest is so heavily worked that the letters feel like braille. I like to keep my body rolled up away from prying eyes. Never unfold too much, tell the whole story. I didn't know that Louise would have reading hands. She translated me into her own book.⁵⁸

Written on the Body represents both the possibility of a writing through the body, and a more dualistic, single-subject specific form. While this represents tangible proof of an impure subjectivity, it also evidences an understanding of the self as somehow necessarily dualistically defined, but infinitely disruptible.

⁵⁷ *ibid.* p. 22.

⁵⁸ J. Winterson, 1993, p.89.

Kate Grenville: Giving Voice to Women*

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In this essay we indicate some of the ways in which Kate Grenville's fiction is designed to suggest how women are oppressed by language and violence and how they might escape complicity in that oppression. Grenville's work is not feminist theory. Indeed, she has said that she writes to explore interesting hypotheses 'in a shamelessly subjective way — the way of intuition and empathy', rather than on the basis of theoretical assumptions, and she argues that the novel allows innovative approaches to hypothetical questions.¹ Yet her writing does have a high degree of coherence and consistency, and she does raise and explore issues of current interest in feminist theory. In this essay, we explore some of these issues, focusing on Grenville's four novels.²

Control takes a variety of forms, but useful here is Barbara Eckstein's definition of politics as the use of language, with or without violence, to produce power.³ Grenville takes this linking of language, violence and power a step further. In liberal expectations, language leads to coherence and communication, while socialisation also is functional to efficient social interaction. In Grenville's depiction, they do not work that way. Things fall apart, breaking down into violence. Language is used as a weapon, as a form of violence, and socialisation is used for control. Language is central to power — both in terms of who controls conversations and in terms of the structure of language itself. Voice becomes a form of violence, and rape and other forms of physical violence may be seen as part of patriarchal discourse.⁴

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¹ Kate Grenville, 'Why I Write', in Anna Rutherford, Lars Jensen and Shirley Chew (eds), *Into the Nineties: Post-Colonial Women's Writing*, (Armidale: Dangaroo Press, 1994), p.141.

² Kate Grenville's four novels are *Dark Places* (Sydney: Macmillan, 1994); *Dreamhouse* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1993 [1986]); *Joan Makes History* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1993 [1988]); and *Lilian's Story* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1986 [1985]). Her short stories, collected in *Bearded Ladies* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1993 [1984]), deal with similar themes but are not included in the discussion here. Future references are to these editions in brackets in the text.

³ Barbara Eckstein, *The Language of Fiction in a World of Pain* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1990), p.8.

⁴ See also Gerry Turcotte, "'The Ultimate Oppression': Discourse Politics in Kate Grenville's Fiction', *World Literature Written in English*, 29(1), 1989, p.76, on what he calls Grenville's 'speech/rape metaphor'. Grenville's fiction (before *Dark Places*) has been insightfully analysed by Turcotte and by Roslynn Haynes, 'Fatalism and Feminism in the Fiction of Kate Grenville', *World Literature Written in English*, 31(1), 1991, pp.60-79;

Socialisation and control, for Grenville, also take the form of bodily inscription, which may involve expectations based on representations of appropriate behaviour or may involve physical imprinting. At the same time, Grenville also attempts to demonstrate how women might overcome voice, violence, socialisation and inscription, even in the absence of effective agency, through resistance and the exploitation of 'always already' existing fractures in the patriarchal system. There are, then, a number of strategies that Grenville employs to depict control, expose its weaknesses, and suggest possible paths of resistance, including most importantly her demonstration of the absence of *male* agency and her depiction of the tactics adopted by her major female characters.

For Grenville the family is central, both as the site of individual socialisation and as a key institution in the patriarchal control of women and children. This is less the case with *Joan Makes History* which focuses more on historical and colonial events, but the various incarnations of Joan must deal fundamentally with what to do about family relations, and suggestions about the colonisation of women and the 'penetration' of a colonised country serve as linkage.⁵ The economic dependence of women that is part of the structure of marriage is important background, and Joan observes that employers think it is against nature to pay women enough to live on without financial assistance from a man [J 206]. It is probably important that part of Lilian's eventual release from incarceration includes a no-strings financial allowance from her father, but Grenville emphasises personal interaction within the family, particularly in terms of language, violence and the body.

For Grenville the family serves as an agency for socialisation and control. The family, in this reading, is seen as a social construction defined by males to serve males rather than as simply 'natural'. There is, then, an ideological orientation that links unexamined assumptions about the appropriateness of heterosexuality, marriage, motherhood, patriarchy and the privatization of women, and in Grenville's novels women are depicted as wives, mothers, paramours, domestics, secretaries, waitresses, washerwomen and junior clerks who are socially pressed to be and initially want to be heterosexual, married, mothers and home-makers.

Not only is the family depicted as a social construction, it is exposed as not being the happy haven of liberal ideology. The ideal family of four in *Lilian's Story* and *Dark Places* is revealed as a site of bullying and rape, while the handsome couple in *Dreamhouse* hardly conform to stereotype either. More specifically, Grenville focuses on how power and sex relations within these families socialise participants and serve to control women and children. These two are obviously related: the socialisation process includes preparing girls

Dreamhouse has been similarly served by Susan Midalia, 'Re-writing Woman: Genre Politics and Female Identity in Kate Grenville's *Dreamhouse*', *Australian Literary Studies*, 16(1), 1993, pp.30-7. We incorporate many of their perceptions in our analysis with different emphases and with somewhat different purposes. Susan Midalia also has analysed *Lilian's Story* as *bildungsroman* in 'Art for Woman's Sake: Kate Grenville's *Lilian's Story* as Female *Bildungsroman*' in Hilary Fraser and R.S. White (eds), *Constructing Gender: Feminism and Literary Studies* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1994), pp.253-68.

⁵ Albion, the name of the patriarch in *Lilian's Story* and *Dark Places*, is obvious. See Grenville's interview in Ralph Willbanks, *Speaking Volumes: Australian Writers and Their Work* (Hammondsville: Penguin, 1992), pp.97-110, and Gerry Turcotte, 1989, pp.64-85. On the general interdependency of imperialism, racism and sexism, see, e.g., Gayatri Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Methuen, 1987); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

to be 'feminine' women. Women are socialised to believe that appearance and compliance are central. Lilian is (unsuccessfully) trained to realise she must prepare her body and character to be a wife and lady, while Louise, the beautiful wife in *Dreamhouse*, is constantly aware of her appearance and can remember as a teenager having engaged, with her friends, in bust-enlargement exercises.

Socialisation is partly by language, and, as most commentators on Grenville have noted, language is central to her concerns. This does not mean contestation or dialogue, but rather the deployment of language to silence others. One major aspect of this is who controls conversations, while the other is the structurally patriarchal nature of language in our society. The most obvious example of the centrality of language in Grenville's work is the manner in which Albion uses language and voice to dominate his family. He talks and shouts and even uses deliberate silences to fill all space and maintain control [LS 21] — even when he is not there his silence 'roars' in Lilian's ears [LS 45]. Because he does not allow doors, there is no room of one's own, no respite from his voice ('sound was free to slide from one room to the next' [LS 11-12]). When he bullies Norah verbally, he thinks of it as penetrating with a knife (even if it is more like bludgeoning) [DP 192], and language and violence merge even more forcefully in his discussions of such topics as male pigs with knife-sharp penises who force their way into their partners [DP 294] or the frightening size of bulls' pizzles and horses' organs, and other verbal versions of the rape to come.

In *Dreamhouse* the point is organised somewhat differently. There is an overt 'language barrier' between Louise and the Italian wine merchant and between Louise and the tall Italian man with whom she dances, but the most important lack of communication is between Louise and her husband Rennie. Similarly, only male notions of sexuality are allowed, Rennie obliterating Louise's sexuality as Hugo obliterates Viola's, in both cases by allowing only sodomy, while Albion erodes Norah's entire personality.⁶ He insists that she stop painting, something she has taken seriously, and 'Norah's became a small life of no real event' [DP 108]. Not surprisingly, he then finds her shallow and becomes bored with her [DP 111].

Albion's efforts are reinforced by the patriarchal nature of language itself in our society — with terms referring to appearance, to the sexual and nurturing roles of women, and to their weakness, vulnerability and dependence. A major, if slightly tangential, example is the manner in which Albion uses role expectations to control his family and extends that to the young women who work for his company, as if that were a private domain. He uses stereotype to obviate the need for consent, believing that all women want sex but are teased who mean yes when they say no,⁷ and, indeed, believes that all the women he meets (and a male nurse with 'a quean's leering way' [DP 353]) are inviting his sexual attention. As an extreme, he thinks his daughter shameless and 'lewd' at birth and a flirt and a tease at the age of one [DP 132, 136]. While he contends that it is women's bodies and not their words that are reliable, he misreads their bodies. From within his perspective, however, questions

⁶ See Haynes 1991, p.62; she adds that all sexual activity in *Dreamhouse* avoids fertility, p.71.

⁷ The exceptions who do say yes are, in Albion's mind, either prostitutes or 'trollops' like young Dora Gibbs, who do not resist vigorously enough. Note also the character Barnaby in *Joan Makes History*, who cannot believe Joan is rejecting him and decides she is a slut and a tease [J 178].

of consent or 'rape' do not arise.⁸ In the mainstream society that Grenville deconstructs, women not only are denied the opportunity to tell their own stories, they are also assigned a role in the patriarchal and misogynist stories told by men, as evidenced in part by the stories that constitute Albion's education about women and about sex.

If most commentators on Grenville's fiction have noted the emphasis on language, less remarked has been her emphasis on the body. Everyone has noticed, of course, that Albion rapes Lilian (at least since *Dark Places* was published) and that Rennie virtually rapes Louise sodomitically. Two points to be made here are that Grenville's texts are saturated with references to the bodily, and that many of these references involve what has been called inscription on the body, or the body learning to interact with the world in certain ways.⁹ One of the results of effective socialisation is that victims internalise oppression and accept its appropriateness, and in *Lilian's Story* Lilian's mother, Norah, accepts and attempts to socialise Lilian to patriarchal expectations. The idea of inscription on the body suggests, in addition, however, that the body itself may be directly conditioned to respond to stimuli in certain ways, and in some circumstances may resist conscious socialisation. In this context we discuss in the next section of this essay Grenville's saturation of her texts with bodily references, the notion of socialisation of the body both by direct teaching and by representation, how people may (consciously or unconsciously) resist bodily socialisation, and how such resistance may provoke violence.

As with her use of Gothic imagery, Grenville emphasises the bodily by deliberately overdoing it, saturating the text with references. For example, Louise's relief when her blood flows, indicating that she is not pregnant, is a bodily relief [D 49], and when she finally lets herself go it is a bodily abandon as she runs after Viola [D 99]; Daniel literally cannot keep his hands off Rennie whenever they are together. In Joan's case it is her body that knows lust [J 71], and her feet that abandon Duncan [J 160], and the way that men 'walk and move their bodies about' [J 191] with a boldness unavailable to women is clearly ingrained in the bodies of men but must be learned by Joan.¹⁰ Symbolically, in *Lilian's Story* Rick explains that girls cannot throw properly like boys because they 'are missing a bone' [LS 53] (that is, are bodily different from men and, assuming the pun, different specifically because they do not have a penis).¹¹

Socialisation of the body may be by directly telling people how to control their bodies and to comport themselves, as her parents attempt with Lilian, or it may be by representations of bodies — the accepted conceptualisation of the 'normal' body or of the

⁸ See, e.g., Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), for a discussion of how this stereotype undermines notions of consent and rape.

⁹ For this formulation see Bronwyn Davies, 'The Concept of Agency' *Social Analysis*, No. 30, 1991, pp.42–53; more generally, see especially the various writings of Elizabeth Grosz and Judith Butler and the interactive *Feminist Contentions* by Seyla Benhabib, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell and Nancy Fraser (New York: Routledge, 1995). For a fascinating and celebrated fictional exploration, see Jeanette Winterson, *Written on the Body* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992) and the essay by Irvine and Zetlin in this issue of this journal.

¹⁰ For a depiction of a 40-year-old woman literally manifesting as the young male in herself, to somewhat similar point, see Nancy Springer, *Larque on the Wing* (New York: Avon, 1994).

¹¹ Evidence for the pun is that it is used openly in *Dreamhouse* [D 181]; compare also Iris Marion Young, 'Throwing Like a Girl' in Young, *Throwing Like a Girl and other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp.141–59, on the social significance of physiology, comportment etc.

attractive female body and their implications. Joan realises that Lilian's 'mountainous' flesh could be beautiful [J 66], but few others do. Joan also recognises her own deviation from 'beauty', and Kitty as a skinny and awkward child is rejected even by her own mother [DP 11]. Somewhat similarly, Louise is concerned that pregnancy will give her a distended stomach and brown and engorged nipples, changing her body radically and inscribing her as 'mother'.

While guarding against dualism, we might also say that Grenville demonstrates how the body may resist conscious socialisation or act on its own initiative. In *Dreamhouse*, Rennie's body reacts positively to Daniel's body (and to his own body in the shower) and with revulsion to Louise's — he cannot stand to touch her, is revolted by her genitals and only engages in sex with her from behind — but he cannot consciously admit his homosexual desire, something even Louise only realises when she sees him arm in arm with Daniel.

Lilian, on the other hand, consciously resists her parents' attempts to socialise her body. It would be incorrect to say that Albion's violence is provoked by Lilian's resistance, because his raping her is consistent with his behaviour toward others. He uses his position to have his way with his employees, including his maid, Alma, while his sexual activity with Norah from the wedding night until a son is born (when she escapes into invalidity) is tantamount to rape, and he must have active resistance from her to be sexually roused [DP 111]. But his relationship with Lilian is central. When verbal intimidation (including 'drowning' her volume of Shakespeare) fails, Albion attempts to control Lilian by spanking her, leaving the marks of his hands on her buttocks [DP 217], or by strapping her with a belt [LS 19].¹² He then resorts to rape, and finally to incarceration in an asylum. He rapes Lilian after he spies on her with Duncan and sees not only that she is someone in control of herself [DP 321] but also someone to whom he (Albion) is irrelevant [DP 325], emphasising that the purpose of the rape is to control and even to punish her.¹³

On each occasion he succeeds partially or temporarily. After Lilian is raped, for example, she cannot stand physical contact with Duncan or F. J. [LS 127,128], and she cannot communicate the rape to her mother or to her Aunt Kitty, nor is her mother able to let herself listen to what Lilian might have to say. But Albion thinks she is still 'running wild' [DP 302], so he has her incarcerated, the asylum serving as an extension of the family with the 'insane' being deprived of agency as are women and children. The (male) head nurse, Riser, parallels Albion by shouting at Lilian and depriving her of voice, as does also the (female) warder when Lilian later goes to prison for two weeks.

In Grenville's imagery, Albion's victims are suffocated and drowned, a directly physical as well as psychological experience. After Lilian is raped by Albion, she not only does not have the words to tell her mother what happened, she does not have breath to speak. In other

¹² Burchett, the convict-made-good in one of Joan's stories, 'birches' his female workers [J 127]. The cane inscribes, and usually with sexual connotations.

¹³ Marcus has identified rape as a major instance of inscription: 'generalized inequalities are not prescribed by a totalized oppressive language, nor fully inscribed before rape occurs — rape itself is one of the specific techniques which continually scripts these inequalities anew'. Sharon Marcus, 'Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words', in J. Butler and J.W. Scott (eds), *Feminists Theorize the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp.385–403, this quote at p.391.

examples of what Turcotte calls Grenville's 'suffocation metaphor',¹⁴ the two men who take Lilian away leave her 'no air to speak with' [LS 146], and 'the walls (of the asylum) swallowed (her) voice' [LS 151], while Joan finds insufficient air to breathe when living in Duncan's rural home [J 111], and a sudden and unwelcome embrace by Barnaby takes her breath away [J 178]. Even Albion had experienced intimidation by his father as breathlessness [DP 6].

In addition to depicting the silencing and control of women, Grenville also explores alternatives, ways in which women may have voice and agency. Davies defines agency in terms of having rational control over one's own decision-making, ideally from a feminist perspective including intuition as part of the meaning of 'rational'. If the subject is, however, primarily (or merely) the sum of discourses and social practices to which one is exposed, or even of old-fashioned socialisation, how then is agency possible? From a post-modernist position, agency is fundamentally impossible, but it may be possible to move between discourses to invent new positionings.¹⁵ For Grenville, however, agency does seem to be possible, and she depicts her major female characters as eventually finding sites of resistance in which voice is possible. She accomplishes this by deploying a number of strategies, the most important of which are the exposure of male characters as ultimately non-agentic and the depiction of the main female characters as deploying strategies of their own. Her parody of Gothic imagery, her use of comic grotesquery and the role of competing languages are worthy of brief mention before we discuss the major characters.

Haynes emphasises Grenville's use of Gothic imagery in *Dreamhouse* and, indeed, that novel abounds with decay, holes, the macabre, incest, entrapment, cruelty to animals, nightmares, etc., to the point where the Gothic is parodied.¹⁶ Further, if the Gothic is traditionally associated with the dark side of desire, for Grenville the dark side of desire is mainstream male desire, while marriage and motherhood may constitute the everyday 'gothic' of entrapment.

Comic grotesque is also employed. While Louise struggles with the Helen of Troy problem of always being seen only as 'beautiful woman', Lilian is a large, fat woman (cf., for example, Winterson's Dogwoman and Angela Carter's Fezzes) and Joan is plain and flat-chested, and they use their appearance to question conventional expectations.

Use of a foreign language or different discourse is another technique for confronting taken-for-grantedness or disrupting the dominant voice. The use of Italian in *Dreamhouse*

¹⁴ Turcotte, 1989, p.73, citing Gina Mercer, 'Newer Voices 2: Kate Grenville', *Southerly*, No. 3, 1985. Grosz, in a different context, notes that the common form of female hysteria in the nineteenth century was breathing difficulties, just as now it is eating disorders; Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p.40. Lilian does not have an eating 'disorder', but rather eats to (try to) protect herself, just as 'spectacle' can be appropriated as resistance, as argued in the text; similarly, relating these two points, Grosz argues that Foucault overlooks the possibility of hysteria being appropriated as resistance (pp.157-8).

¹⁵ For an argument along these lines, see Bronwyn Davies, 1991. On feminism and the discursive construction of subjectivity, see, e.g., Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), or, alternatively, the poststructuralist 'French feminists'.

¹⁶ Midalia, 1993, describes *Dreamhouse* as exhibiting elements of parodic romance and gothic tales, among other forms. Jennifer Strauss refers to 'comic Gothic' in *Lilian's Story*; Strauss, 'Are Women's Novels Feminist Novels?' in Raoul Granqvist (ed.), *Major Minorities: English Literature in Transit* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), pp.35-53.

has already been mentioned, and examples from *Joan* include Joan's inability to read the 'language' of Duncan's country or her father's misuse of English idiom as an indication of his cultural difference. The issue of female appearance and the technique of using a different language are combined in Joan's observation that having especially small breasts is a foreignness similar to her family's lack of English [J 45]. For Albion, women are a race apart [DP 35], childbirth is a women-only activity [DP 128], and a daughter is a foreign language [DP 242]. But use of a different language per se need not challenge the status quo; Albion cannot understand the discussions at ladies' tea parties, but they still uphold his patriarchal position and try to socialise Lilian to be a 'lady'.

Another strategy involves exposing male characters as themselves subject to the effects of socialisation — reminding us that gender is about the construction of masculinity as well as of femininity — and as ultimately fearful and non-agentic.¹⁷ As one example, in *Joan Makes History*, Joan actually tries living in the world as a man and realises that men also have limited control, and the final emphasis in that book is on the importance of what women have done historically rather than on their being able to emulate men. Second, in *Dreamhouse*, social constructions of the body are tested against lived experience, as in Rennie's inability to escape his socialisation and consciously recognise his homosexual desire, despite the clear messages of his body.

A third example is the central and extended examination of Albion in *Lilian's Story* and, especially, in *Dark Places*. There is an emphasis on Albion's socialisation, and even he sees himself as playing the constructed roles of 'husband' and 'father', exacerbated by his fear of being seen as a fool. Intimidated by his father, when he could not breathe he relied on facts to cover the void he felt at his centre [DP 6, 282], but still often thinks of himself as an 'empty husk'. As Grenville has indicated in interview, Albion is cut off from the female world and the female in himself, to his detriment.¹⁸ As a boy at school he was tempted by a homosexual relationship with Cargill, whom he 'adores', but he was too afraid of becoming vulnerable to rejection to respond [DP 20-5].

The exercise of physical sexual power over women not only serves the function of control, it also provides male confidence [DP 63]. Albion's socialisation concerning sex consists of ignorance, misogynist schoolboy mythology (Morrison's stories of female insatiability and intimations of vagina dentata [DP 18, 64]), and his single session with a prostitute. He assumes women are interchangeable [DP 88], with only the terms of exchange differing. He is both fascinated and disgusted by Lilian's body — the size of her breasts and the robustness of her pubic hair — as he is both obsessed with and repelled by female sexuality generally. One is reminded of Mary Russo's suggestion that women are eminently susceptible to 'making spectacles of themselves',¹⁹ with this expression having connotations of size and gaucherie in public in a somehow shameful way, because Albion is

¹⁷ This might be seen as part of a broader strategy of deconstructing underlying assumptions. The most obvious example other than those discussed in the text is the undermining of the ideology of motherhood by describing pregnancy as an alien invasion, as not 'natural' and therefore as involving a violent and unwelcome change to one's identity. See Haynes on Louise, and see *Joan* for descriptions of pregnancy in terms of 'tadpole' (J 89) and 'parasite' (J 138).

¹⁸ Rosemary Sorenson, 'Shine a Light [Interview with Kate Grenville]', *Australian Book Review*, No. 162, July 1994, pp.10-11.

¹⁹ Mary Russo, 'Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory', in Teresa de Lauretis (ed.), *Feminist Studies, Critical Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp.213-29.

particularly concerned with Lilian's behaving in what he labels a shameful manner and making a spectacle of herself in his consistent obsession with controlling female sexuality, and especially Lilian's.

Constantly preoccupied with sex, he also thinks in clichés about slime and 'the seamy femaleness beneath' [DP 247], and at the commencement of Lilian's menses, he thinks of her as no longer pure but as having joined women's 'secret dirty thing' [DP 240]. His fear of female sexuality and his ability to lie to himself about sexual relations cannot be fully apparent to Lilian, but they are evident to the reader and help prepare for the manner in which Lilian is able to escape and live outside of her relationship to him.

The final technique to be discussed here is the use of central female characters, which incorporates many elements of those techniques already discussed. If people are primarily the conflux of discourses and practices, how can they change and/or achieve agency to resist the roles planned for them? There is variation in Grenville's depictions, as already indicated. Vision and imagination are important, as is bedrock resistance, while exposure of the 'always already' existing cracks in the system also plays a central role.²⁰ It is worth a few comments separately on Louise, Joan and Lilian after noting that they all get to narrate their own stories, itself a form of agency.

Louise overcomes the problem of being exhaustively defined as a beautiful woman and, therefore, an accessory. She is able to escape Rennie and their marriage because she can imagine a lesbian relationship with Viola,²¹ but she is assisted in this by seeing Rennie's lack of agency. Since he clearly desires Daniel rather than her, he does not really 'need' her, and if he cannot accept and act on his own sexual desires, surely he can do little to effectively prevent her from leaving him.

Joan wants, from the outset, to make history. Once she has lived as a man and realises how limited that is, she is able to find contentment as wife and mother in the knowledge that that also constitutes making history. The focus is on demonstrating the importance of what women have always done — and, as Haynes indicates, the relative unimportance of 'wars, politics, power struggles'²² — with the competent, compassionate Amy, who acts as midwife for one of the historical Joans, as model hero.

Lilian's survival and emergence is perhaps the most difficult to explain, given the severity of her treatment by Albion. She exhibits a hardcore resistance from the outset, attempting to adjust in order to be loved by her father, and later by her peers, but only within set limits. She attempts to please and then to emulate Albion, and she attempts to win over her schoolmate Rick by emulating and even surpassing his activities, but these are forbidden 'male' areas and therefore not available to her, and she is left very much on the defensive. She refuses to be treated differently than her brother, and she will not take her school friend Ursula's advice to change her appearance — she resists being 'pretty' to demand other forms of acceptance, knowing she would make only a 'mediocre' pretty girl [LS 80–1]. She again takes the offensive by articulating Shakespeare's words to Duncan, but Albion rapes (and silences) her, and Duncan marries Joan. While Albion's actions have

²⁰ Moya Lloyd reading Foucault: normative systems operate to the benefit of some while silencing others (pp.456–7), but systems are always already fractured (p.445); Moya Lloyd, 'The (f)utility of a feminist turn to Foucault', *Economy and Society*, 22(4), 1993, pp.437–60.

²¹ Midalia, 1993, p.31.

²² Haynes, 1991, p.75.

a significant impact on her, she is also conscious of the need to resist their physical imprint, beginning by growing very fat to protect herself and then disassociating 'herself' from her 'mere flesh' when Albion straps her and even when he rapes her, refusing to accept her rape as a sexual act (continuing to think of herself as a 'virgin'). Joan encourages Lilian, but there is no moment of insight or turning point. Lilian is finally released from the asylum because her aunt Kitty blackmails Albion, so here again the pre-existing fractures in the system are relevant.

Lilian leaves the asylum and coincidentally re-establishes contact with F.J. (now Frank), with whom she develops a non-genital relationship which is therefore a mutually nurturing alternative to Albion's (and Freud's) obsession. Moreover, Lilian not only survives in a personal relationship, like Joan she makes history. Joan has expressed both her (traditional) fear of making a spectacle of herself [J 152] and her pleasure in being a spectacle at the centre of attention [J 64]. Making speeches at the domain and recitations in taxis, Lilian becomes a well-known eccentric and finds her own voice as a 'public spectacle'. As Russo notes, being a spectacle may be appropriated as a deliberate strategy to demystify the representations of appropriate female behaviour.²³ This may all seem little enough, but ultimately Lilian tells her own story and in some sense invents her own self [LS 207].

One effect of the family relationships Grenville depicts is to objectify women, leaving them without autonomy or agency. Denied participation in practices and discourses, women are denied a language and a self. Deprived of consent in sexual relations, they are denied the ability to consent that is central to effective participation in public life. In this broader respect also, then, the family is a key to control. But in the end Lilian, Joan and Louise all prevail, or at least find the 'agency' to move in that direction.

²³ Russo, 1986, p.217.