Voicing the "Great Australian Silence": Kate Grenville's Narrative of Settlement in The Secret River

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Abstract
This article examines the competing narratives of settlement in Kate Grenville's 2005 novel, *The Secret River.* On the one hand are Aboriginal stories of violent encounters with settlers that are transmitted orally and are unwritten and, on the other, are those European historical accounts that seek to legitimate Australian settlement. In this novel, Grenville is trying to reconcile her own convict ancestor's implication in acts of Indigenous dispossession, while simultaneously acknowledging the strength and courage of such acts of settlement. This paper argues that any such reconciliation is fraught with complexities, as a contemporary perspective on the past attempts to balance blame and admiration. Grenville's novel itself is thus open to ambiguities and to accusations of "whitewashing" the past.

Keywords
Australian literature, Kate Grenville, *The Secret River*, narrative of settlement, writing the past

Kate Grenville's major Australian novels have all explored the complex entanglements of personal and national identities, particularly within the context of a gendered national mythology. Her novels have therefore addressed the processes by which myths of nation are constructed, whether in historical discourses that traditionally excluded women (as in

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her 1988 novel, *Joan Makes History*, published in the year of Australia's bicentenary celebration of nationhood) or in discourses of "the Bush", in which specific and limiting gender roles are culturally assigned and determined (as in her 1999 Orange Prize-winning novel, *The Idea of Perfection*). The clichés of Australianness are ironically undermined in her often searing narrative critiques of such concepts as mateship and "Australian values", especially when viewed from the perspective of the marginalized outsider figure excluded from national belonging.

It is only, however, with the publication of *The Secret River* (2005)[1] that Grenville tackles the foundational anxiety of settler belonging, what Hodge and Mishra term "the dark side of the dream" of Australian national identity, the "occluded but central and problematic place of Aboriginal Australians in the foundation of the contemporary Australian state and in the construction of national identity".[2] There are two competing narratives in collision in uncovering this occluded place: the Aboriginal stories of violent encounters with settlers that are transmitted orally and are unwritten and those European historical accounts whose "primary object is not to understand or to interpret" but to "legitimate" thereby demonstrating "the emergence of order from chaos".[3] What Grenville is trying to reconcile in her novel is her own convict ancestor's implication in acts of Indigenous dispossession and an acknowledgement of the strength and courage of such acts of settlement. This paper argues that any such reconciliation is fraught with complexities as a contemporary perspective on the past attempts to balance blame and admiration. While the space of the settler colony can be viewed, from the distance of today, as a place of opportunity and egalitarianism where convicts were able to transform themselves into landowners, it was also necessarily a place of violent encounters that left scars on the land and on the psyche of the people, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

These two seminal ideas are immediately engaged in examining the implications of the title of Kate Grenville's Commonwealth Writer's Prize-winning novel, *The Secret River*: that is, a past history of colonial violence in the "contact zone" of settlement and a history that has deliberately been silenced in a national "cult of disremembering". Both of these notions – the violence and the silencing – were articulated in Prof. W. H. (Bill) Stanner's Boyer lectures entitled *After the Dreaming* (1968) in which he asserts that "there is a secret river of blood in Australian history" that has been suppressed by what he terms "The Great Australian Silence".[4] Grenville has acknowledged the influence of Stanner's lectures not only by quoting his words in her title but also in a number of interviews. She uses the term "the great Australian silence" in a newspaper interview in which she suggests, too, that "until we go back and retell our stories and put the shadows in we won't grow up as a society".[5] In another interview,

she acknowledges the phrase as coming from a line in Stanner's Boyer lecture, emphasizing her decision not to give "the wrong impression" by calling the book "The River of Blood", but, instead, focusing on the "fact that Australian history does have a series of secrets in it".[6] She has also described her novel as articulating "a reassessment of what it means to be a white Australian".[7] In so doing, she is situating her novel as a re-working of the narrative of settlement with a contemporary sensibility. In expressing her desire to "know what circumstances would make it possible for ordinary people to be able to go out and shoot other human beings" considering that "most of the settlers weren't bad people",[8] she is voicing the moral ambiguity of settler positionality and the burden of the past carried by non-Indigenous Australians.

However, by dedicating her novel to "the Aboriginal people of Australia: past, present and future", Grenville could be seen to be offering this account of the early settlement of the Hawkesbury region as an apology. In a contemporary Australian political context, "saying sorry" is a deeply politicized act, one that places Grenville in the middle of the so-called History Wars in Australian cultural life.[9] In this ongoing debate, historians have argued about the "black armband version" of history (where contemporary cultural historians seek to apologize for the violence of a colonial past) as opposed to a version of history that sees it as the responsibility of forebears who were facing very different moral questions, what Inga Clendinnen terms "triumphalist white-out history".[10]

Based as it is on her own family history and the experiences of her ancestor, Solomon Wiseman, after whom the place Wiseman's Ferry was named, there is a sense throughout the novel of a double perspective: that of the contemporary author casting a critical eye on the proceedings and that of its protagonist, William Thornhill, bound in his own historical time-frame and yet sensitive to many of the repercussions of his actions (as indeed is his wife, Sal). There is an ambiguity that arises from this dual sense of admiration for the settlers' survival skills and simultaneous criticism for the relative ease by which even enlightened men like Thornhill were persuaded to join in a massacre of local Aborigines. This moral ambiguity inherent in settler identity, then, persists even in twenty-first century Australia and Grenville's revisiting of the site of early colonial settlement in her narrative serves to highlight the ongoing ambivalence of this space of settler identity with its mixture of guilt, pride, resistance and complicity.

By using her own family history, in which she confronts the "taking up" of land on the Hawkesbury River by her convict ancestor as a lens through which to examine Australian national memory and its implications for a contemporary Australia that is still coming to terms with

a process of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, she is able to correct what she sees as a short-sighted view of Australian history. In her account of the researching and writing of her novel, Grenville's *Searching for The Secret River* (2006) uses this metaphor of sight a number of times to suggest a "re-visioning" of history.[11] When her mother first takes her to see Wiseman's Villa at Wiseman's Ferry, the place at which her ancestor had settled, she is, she remembers, "short-sighted, but nobody knew" so that her memory is "a series of close-ups and details" in which "nothing hangs together" because her myopia results in distant views being "a blur" (p. 5). This can, of course, also be regarded as a trope for a myopic national view of the past. The idea of a deliberate refusal to see clearly is encountered again in her description of her mother's version of the family history which, she discovers, is "full of gaps": "I realised that, like Lord Nelson, the family story had been holding the telescope up to its blind eye" (p. 19). On revisiting Wiseman's Ferry as an adult, her vision corrected by spectacles, she can, she asserts, now see clearly. This retrospective desire for understanding her own ancestors clearly has both a national and a personal dimension for Grenville. Encountering an archival painting of Wiseman's Villa, she notes the absence of any Aboriginal people in the carefully executed picture of an orderly and ordered gentleman's residence in the cleared space of the bush. This novel represents her effort to "re-frame the scene" and "put them [Aborigines] back into the picture" (p. 97).

The journey to reconciliation, though, is, as Grenville acknowledges, one fraught with ethical and personal difficulties. She describes two seminal moments in her thinking about the past that encapsulate this. The first is her recognition, having taken part in the walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge as part of "Sorry Day", a day of national recognition of the importance of reconciliation, that she needed to do more than "stroll" towards reconciliation if she was to participate in building bridges between herself and Indigenous people – "what I had to do was cross the hard way, through the deep water of our history" (p. 13). The second moment of enlightenment occurs during a conversation with Aboriginal writer, Melissa Lucashenko, in London during the Centenary of Federation celebrations in 2000. In describing for Lucashenko her research on her family history in London, Grenville sums it up in this way:

> "'My great-great-great grandfather was born in London … [he] was freed and took up land on the Hawkesbury.'
>
> 'What do you mean "took up"? she [Lucashenko] said. 'He took'." (p. 28)

Acknowledging and naming the act of settlement as an act, also, of dispossession reminds Grenville of the coercion involved in her own family

history. Whereas she had been focussing on the history of the struggle to survive by the convicts, debased and outcast from their mother country, Lucashenko reminds her of the destructive nature of the colonial enterprise, what Mary Louise Pratt has described as the "contact zone":

> the space of colonial encounters, … in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict … A "contact" perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other.[12]

The "small and harmless" words – "family", "from", "took up" – used by Grenville in her unthinking repetition of the formulae of her family stories had, from Lucashenko's Indigenous perspective, become "grenades" (p. 29).

This awareness of the mutually constitutive nature of the colonial encounter results in Grenville's attempt to convey a double perspective in her narrative of settlement: to show both the destructive effects of "cultures in collision", but also the beginnings of a mutual understanding, one that is ultimately destroyed by the lure of ownership of the land. Thus, in *The Secret River*, Grenville writes of the shared history of suffering in a "town of scars" by showing an awareness by William Thornhill (the character based on Solomon Wiseman) of this simultaneous difference and similarity. A brief moment of enlightenment occurs to Thornhill when he compares the scars on convict Daniel Ellison's back with those on the chest of Aboriginal man, Scabby Bill:

> On a lag's back the point about the scars was the pain that had been inflicted, and the way they marked a man to his dying day. The scars on Scabby Bill's chest were different. It seemed that the point was not so much the pain as the scars themselves. Unlike the net of crisscross weals on Daniel Ellison's back, they were carefully drawn. Each scar lined up neat next to its neighbour, a language of skin. It was like the letter Sal had shown him, bold on the white face of the paper. (p. 91)

Here Thornhill is showing a sensitivity to an Indigenous "language of skin" as a type of history, a writing on the body that tells as important a story as those on the convict's back. Despite being blocked out from understanding their meaning, much as he was from reading itself by his illiteracy, he does, at least, understand the intentionality of the scars as a language with a cultural significance comparable to writing.

But such moments of cross-cultural understanding are rare, subsumed by the narrative of settlement and "progress" that is summarized in the novel's chapter headings: Strangers, London, Sydney, A Clearing in the Forest, 100 Acres, Drawing a Line, The Secret River, Thornhill's Place. The teleological movement towards naming and possession overwrites

and displaces the story of Indigenous dispossession. The lie of *terra nullius* conveniently enables the clearing of land and setting up of borders and boundaries that signal European ownership. The first encounter between Thornhill and an Aboriginal man (whom they later call "Scabby Bill") in Sydney Cove described in the chapter, "Strangers", is an eerie foretaste of the misunderstandings and misreadings in such cultural negotiations between Indigenous people and settlers. Stepping outside his makeshift hut early on in his banishment to Sydney, Thornhill tries to frighten off an Aboriginal man who appears out of the darkness by shouting the words "Be off!". The man echoes his words exactly "in his own tone", an act of mimicry that Thornhill finds decidedly menacing, "as if a dog were to bark in English" (p. 6). By echoing his own attempt to protect his wife and children, the Aboriginal man is also threatening Thornhill's sense of self. Who, one asks, is the "stranger" here? Who is trespassing on whose land? From the beginning, then, the settler's hold on the land is undermined by an uneasy awareness of the other dispossessed people in the new colony, its Indigenous inhabitants, even as he is proclaiming his ownership. This is an echo that haunts Thornhill throughout the novel.

Grenville uses Thornhill's focalized narrative to chart his changing perceptions to place and its native people, highlighting the sense of dislocation that early settlers must have felt when transported (in Thornhill's case as a result of his conviction for a crime in London and his subsequent transportation to Sydney Cove in 1806) to the bush of Australia from the highly urbanized and built-up streets of London. Initially, the darkness and space of Sydney as opposed to the light and confinement of London cause Thornhill some confusion in a landscape he finds "unreadable, indifferent" (p. 4). As in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, it is the vastness and unfamiliarity of the forest beyond the settlement that expresses the strangeness of the place: its tangle "seemed to make the eye blind, searching for pattern and finding none" (p. 88). The landscape of grey-green forest is "exhausting to look at: different everywhere and yet everywhere the same" (p. 88). Thornhill's sense of displacement is expressed in his initial inability to relate to his surrounds:

> Never having seen anywhere else, Thornhill had imagined that all the world was the same as London, give or take a few parrots and palm trees. How could air, water, dirt and rock fashion themselves to become so outlandish? This place was like nothing he had ever seen. (p. 80)

Yet it is the harbour itself, the body of water, and the watermen who ply it, that provide Thornhill with an immediate point of recognition, seeing as he does the similarity with the Thames (as, indeed, Joseph Conrad's Marlow recognizes the link between the Thames and the Congo Rivers).

Only the names have changed – "it made little difference whether the water on which he did it [worked] was called the Thames or Sydney Cove" (p. 82).

Grenville's novel, like Conrad's, has a river at the heart of its representation of settlement. The Hawkesbury River is a trope of movement and incursion, a channel that enables ticket-of-leave convicts to become settler farmers by providing them with access to the fertile reaches of the Hawkesbury area. But it also takes them closer to the local Indigenous inhabitants whose way of life is disrupted by the settlers' desire to cultivate the land. The contact zone that is established as a result of these competing claims to the land and incompatible notions of ownership reveals the source of contemporary conflicts about land rights. When Thornhill sees the river as "a place of promise", a passageway to the "blank page on which a man might write a new life" (p. 130), the river operates in the text as a paradoxical space of opportunity and destructiveness, where two different cultural attitudes towards the land collide. While for Thornhill, "what marked a man's claim was a rectangle of cleared and dug-over dirt and something growing that had not been there before" (p. 139), he does not recognize the prior claim to the land of the Indigenous people who "did not plant things" (p. 141) but lived off the land. The linking of cultivation with progress and civilization is made clear when the narrative links this "failure" to plant crops with savagery.

The cultivation of the wilderness in the form of a garden is often an important trope in narratives of settlement. In *The Secret River,* Sal's garden, described towards the end of the novel, is designed to provide a refuge from the wilderness beyond but, in Grenville's text, the garden is not a symbol of growth but rather of cultural dislocation. Because she is unable to think herself into the Australian landscape or climate, Sal's garden is doomed to failure. It needs particular protection from uninvited intruders and, like Sal herself, is a symbol of the fragility of an imported dream. Thus, it has a high wall "with only one gate in its perimeter" (p. 318) and it is planted "along English lines", divided into squares with a lawn imported from Ireland. Basing it on the template of Cobham Hall, an English manor house where her mother was in service, Sal has the driveway lined with English poplars. Predictably, however, Sal's vision of an English garden withers and dies in the harsh Australian climate as do the roses, daffodils and grass, and only three of the poplar saplings survive. Faced with the unreadability and seeming undifferentiated otherness of the landscape of the settler colony, Sal's attempt to reconstruct her idea of "home" in the form of the English garden is doomed to failure in the new space of the colony, whose physical conditions and environment are so hostile to the imported plants.

Unlike Sal, Thornhill realizes that there is no return to an originary identity once the journey to the new colony has been made. While Sal hankers for a return to London, Thornhill realizes that he will always be tainted with the label of a convict in the old country, a judgement that will not be made on him in Australia. As he muses:

> The Hawkesbury was the one place where no man could set himself up as better than his neighbour. They were all emancipists in that private valley. There, and only there, a man did not have to drag his stinking past around behind him like a dead dog. (p. 176)

Thus, he could reinvent himself in the space of the new colony. This "re-badging" is represented, quite literally in Thornhill's case, in the two portraits he commissions in order to memorialize himself as part of the settler equivalent. [13] The first is painted by a new arrival from Cambridge who was clearly sneering at Thornhill's attempt to pass himself off as a gentleman, because he painted him holding a book upside down – "the scoundrel had tried to make a monkey of him" (p. 322). Thornhill therefore commissions another portrait, this time painted by Upton, an "old colonialist like himself", in which he is holding a telescope. The look on his face is one of "bafflement … the picture of a man puzzled by what life could turn up" (p. 322). Alongside this visual evidence of transformation from convict to landowner, Thornhill's family history is reinvented, so that he is said to have been "not born in dirty Bermondsey but in clean Kent"; this new version, borrowed from another convict, forming "a well-made story, every corner of its construction neatly finished" (p. 321). All the elements of his new identity, then, the Villa, the portrait and the family history, are inventions, based on other people's more respectable pasts in order to suppress the dark side of his own past. This sanitized version of settler identity is, of course, the equivalent of the version of her own family's past that was narrated to Grenville by her mother.

But while he can escape from his convict past in this new Eden, Thornhill becomes increasingly aware of the tenuous nature of the settlers' ownership of the land. The seeming emptiness of the landscape – the *terra nullius* – masks the hidden presence of the Indigenous owners of the land. Thornhill becomes aware of this absent presence even in the settlement of Sydney Cove, early in the narrative:

> The darkness in front of him whispered and shifted, but there was only the forest. It could hide a hundred black men with spears, a thousand, a whole continent full of men with spears. (p. 6)

In recognizing the always unseen presence of the Indigenous people, Thornhill, even as he believes himself to be "Adam in Paradise" (p. 135), has to admit to his increasing sense of insecurity on his hundred acres on

the Hawkesbury. The "darkness" of the Aborigines becomes for him "an extension of bark, of leaf-shade, of the play of light on a water-stained rock" (p. 198). Despite his clearing of what he calls Thornhill's Point, and despite the "progress" he measures by the number of trees cut down and fences erected, he comes to see that whatever he did to clear the place, "the everlasting forest could not be got rid of, only pushed back" (p. 250). Ironically, the more he feels at home in the landscape, the more aware he becomes that his position there is only temporary and that, if they left, "it would not take long for Thornhill's Point to melt back into the forest" and that, "in no time at all, it would be as if the Thornhills had never called it theirs" (p. 295). Indeed, even as Thornhill, during the height of the routing of the Aborigines from their camp, shoots at Long Jack, he realizes the pointlessness of his action:

> The forest gave nothing, only the shadow of one tree moving against the shadow of another. The puff of blue smoke floated away on the air. When the rumbling echoes had faded away, a silence settled … It had been a good noise … But it left an emptiness, too. (p. 281)

As in Conrad's text, the forest and its Indigenous occupants have an ability to remain impenetrable and impervious to this notion of progress. Like the French man-of-war ship "shelling the bush" in *Heart of Darkness*, futilely "firing into a continent",[14] Thornhill's gunshot floats away as a "puff of blue smoke", leaving only an emptiness.

Indeed, as the novel progresses, Thornhill is forced to reformulate his preconceptions about the nature of "civilization" and "savagery". He becomes increasingly aware of the highly sophisticated nature of the Aborigines' relationship to their land, one that belies the idea of them as "idle savages". Despite Sal's assurances that it is nakedness that marks the difference between savages and "civilised folk", William comes to realize that the boundaries between the two terms are far more subtle and fluid. Despite their nakedness, nomadic lifestyle and the fact that they "made no fields or fences, and built no houses", the fact that they "did not seem to have to work to come by the little they needed" (p. 229) gradually comes to signify not savagery but sophistication to William. He suggests to himself that "the blacks were farmers no less than the white men were" (p. 229) and that they were "like gentry" (p. 230) who were able to work very little and enjoy their leisure time, unlike the settler families who were "up with the sun" and worked relentlessly and seemingly pointlessly to clear the forest "that hemmed them in" (p. 229). Thornhill even comes to see nakedness itself as a matter of perspective when he realizes on visiting the Aboriginal camp that "it seemed that they did not even feel naked. They were clothed in their skins, the way Sal was clothed in her shawl and skirt" (p. 194). Despite these intimations

of the potential for learning from Aboriginal culture, as his own son, Dick, does, Thornhill realizes that his own future prosperity and security depend on his joining with the other men of the area to "disperse" the local Indigenous people. The savagery of the massacre at the local camp by the settlers – a massacre in which women and babies are ruthlessly killed – belies their protestations of their own standards of civilized behaviour.

Transcultural relations between the settlers and the Indigenous people are an index in the novel of an individual's sensitivity to place. Despite Thornhill's awareness of the "*outrages and depredations*" (p. 95; italics in original) – as Aboriginal "raids" are termed in the local paper, the *Gazette* – that were frequent along the "unmapped reaches" of the Hawkesbury River, it was here on this "hidden river" that Thornhill fell in love with the idea of owning a piece of land. While the landscape itself seemed "the emptiest place in the world" (p. 101), Thomas Blackwood, a neighbour on the Hawkesbury, warns Thornhill that the Aborigines are everywhere and are only seen when they choose to be seen.

Contact with them ranges from Blackwood's unspoken-of Aboriginal wife and child and his ability to balance "give-and-take" in his relationships with the local Indigenous people to Smasher Sullivan's habitual savage mistreatment of Aborigines and his cruel enslavement of an Aboriginal woman. The Thornhills' attempt to "domesticate" the local Aborigines by giving them names that remind them of people from their London past fails to make "their difference less potent" (p. 198). In each meeting with the Aboriginal people, Thornhill feels ignorant rather than knowledgeable, powerless rather than powerful, lacking the understanding to translate either their words or their culture. Yet Thornhill does reach some limited understanding when he comes across the rock-art and the corroboree, realizing that both these forms of expression are languages that tell stories that are equivalent to maps and history. Sal, too, when she eventually visits the deserted Aboriginal camp, realizes that the women, before they were "dispersed" by the settlers, had been carrying out much the same domestic duties as she was. Both, however, know that the security of their ownership of Thornhill's Point is dependent on this "native dispersal". Thus both are silent about the atrocities in which Thornhill had participated – "the shadow … that lived with them" – and the land itself at the site of the massacre remains impervious to any new vegetation, signifying the silence of the historical record: "Nothing was written on the ground. Nor was it written on any page. But the blankness itself might tell the story to anyone who had eyes to see" (p. 325). The "blankness" here represents the deadly and ongoing effects of colonization on the land and its people but also the gap in history that enabled the massacre to be suppressed.

So Thornhill, despite gaining a foothold on the land and giving his name to a piece of it, remains an "unsettled settler"[15] whose sense of security is always fragile and under threat. Even with his substantial manor-house with its high wall and estate that was a "version of England", he is always aware of the forest and of "another world, where the cliffs waited and watched … unchanged by the speck of New South Wales enclosed by William Thornhill's wall" (p. 331). Unlike the only Aboriginal man to survive the massacre, Long Jack, he, Thornhill, did not have a "place that was part of his flesh and spirit" (p. 329) the way Long Jack did. The final image of Thornhill is of a vigilant man, with a telescope to his eye, trained onto "that intricate landscape that defeated any white man". The final words of the novel describe him as "watching, into the dark", not understanding why his wealth and success "did not feel like triumph" (p. 334), still painfully aware that his hold on the land is tenuous as it waits patiently for its Indigenous owners to return.

The process of migration and settlement, then, and the narratives of displacement and belonging that chart this passage between cultural identities, can be likened to a "liminal space, in-between the designations of identity".[16] That this process has the potential for positive transformations and the construction of new culturally hybrid or hyphenated identities is clear, but so is the contemporary recognition that the contact zone established in the history of settlement was more often than not a space of misrecognition and misreadings, a clash of cultural expectations and assumptions. In this novel, Grenville draws attention to the ambivalent nature of this settler culture, haunted as it is by a paradoxical mix of affiliations, of resistance and complicity. She sees her novel as standing "outside that polarised conflict" of right and wrong by providing instead an empathetic and "imaginative understanding of those difficult events".[17] It is only by uncovering the painful scars of the past, the text suggests, by voicing the "Great Australian Silence", that a process of reconciliation and shared belonging can begin. But even then, from her own positionality as a "white" Australian, it is hedged about by moral ambiguities.

NOTES

1 Kate Grenville, The Secret River, Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2005. Subsequent references are to this edition and will be cited in the text.

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3 Paul Carter, The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History, London: Faber, 1987, p. xvi.

4 For details of the Boyer lectures, including a short extract from Stanner's 1968 lecture, see the Radio National website, http://www.abc.net.au/rn/boyers/index/BoyersChronoIdx.htm

5 Interview with Susan Wyndham, "A Woman with a Past", Sydney Morning Herald, 9–10 July 2005, p. 20.
6 Interview with Ramona Koval, Radio National's "Books and Writing", 17 July 2005. Available at: http://www.abc.net.au/rn/arts/bwriting/stories/s1414510.htm
7 Susan Wyndham, "River of Champers for Grenville Opus", Sydney Morning Herald, 16 September 2006. Available at: http://www.smh.com.au/news/books/river-of-champers-for-grenville-opus/2006/09/15/1157827158915.html
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9 For an account of the Australian "History Wars" between historians Keith Windschuttle and Henry Reynolds, see Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark, The History Wars, Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 2003; repr. 2004. For discussion of the competing claims of history and fiction in relation to The Secret River, see Mark McKenna, "Writing the Past: History, Literature and the Public Sphere in Australia", The Humanities Writing Project, 2005, http://www.humanitieswritingproject.net.au/mckenna.htm; and Inga Clendinnen, "The History Question: Who Owns the Past?", Quarterly Essay, 23 (2006), 1–72.
10 Inga Clendinnen, "What Now?", Boyer Lecture 6, 19 December 1999, Radio National transcript, p. 3, : http://www.abc.net.au/rn/boyers/stories/s74430.htm
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12 Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation, London and New York: Routledge, 1992, pp. 6–7.
13 Grenville bases her descriptions of these on the original portrait of her own ancestor, Solomon Wiseman, reproduced in Searching for the Secret River, p. 94.
14 Conrad, Heart of Darkness, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980, p. 20.
15 This is a term used by J. M. Coetzee in his White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa, New Haven and London: Radix, Yale UP, 1988, p. 4.
16 Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture, London and New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 4.
17 Interview with Ramona Koval, Radio National's "Books and Writing", 17 July 2005. Available at: http://www.abc.net.au/rn/arts/bwriting/stories/s1414510.htm