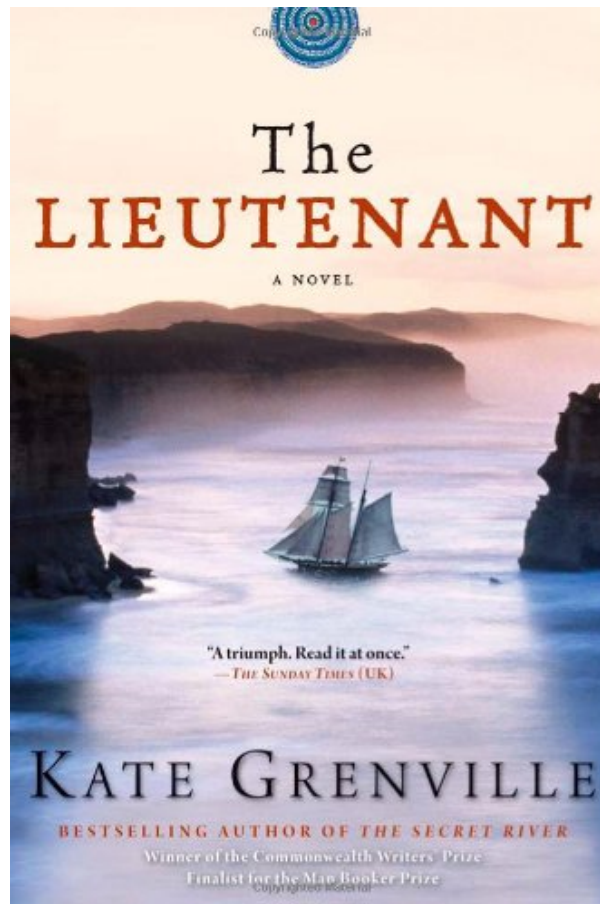
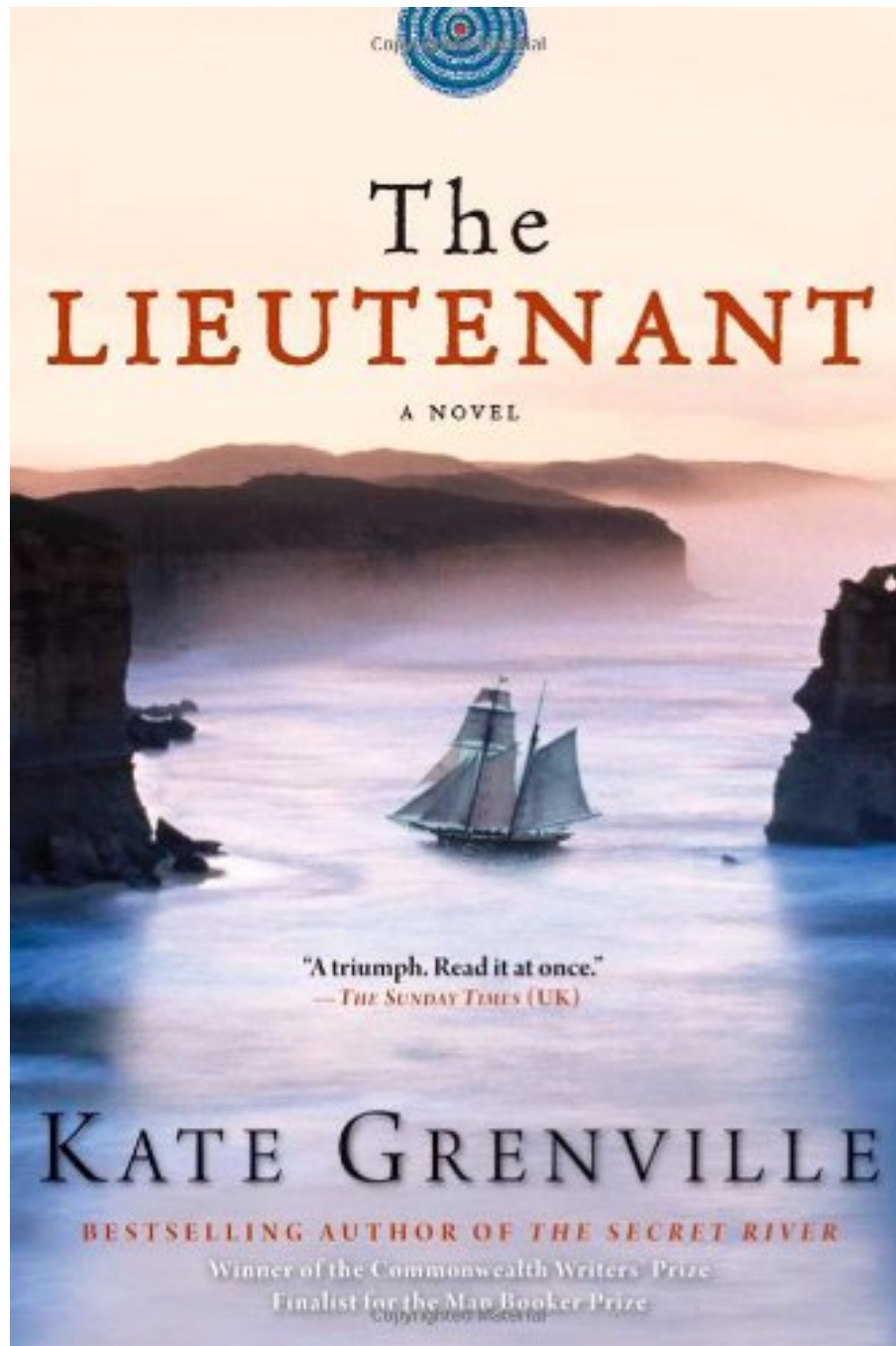


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# THE LIEUTENANT BY KATE GRENVILLE PDF

A stunning follow-up to her Commonwealth Writers' Prize-winning book, *The Secret River*, Kate Grenville's *The Lieutenant* is a gripping story about friendship, self-discovery, and the power of language set along the unspoiled shores of 1788 New South Wales. As a boy, Daniel Rooke was always an outsider. Ridiculed in school and misunderstood by his parents, Daniel could only hope, against all the evidence, that he would one day find his place in life. When he joins the marines and travels to New South Wales as a lieutenant on the First Fleet, Daniel finally sees his chance for a new beginning. As his countrymen struggle to control their cargo of convicts and communicate with those who already inhabit the land, Daniel constructs an observatory to chart the stars and begin the scientific work he prays will make him famous. But the place where they have landed will prove far more revelatory than the night sky. Out on his isolated point, Daniel comes to intimately know the local Aborigines and forges a remarkable connection with one young girl, Tagaran, that will forever change the course of his life. As the strained coexistence between the Englishmen and the native tribes collapses into violence, Daniel is forced to decide between dedication to his work, allegiance to his country, and his protective devotion to Tagaran and her people. Inspired by the notebooks of British astronomer William Dawes, *The Lieutenant* is a remarkable story about the poignancy and emotional power of a friendship that defies linguistic and cultural barriers, and shows one ordinary man that he is capable of exceptional courage.

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"To warm one's hands by the fire and then...

By Friederike Knabe

... to squeeze gently the fingers of another person." This is a long winded explanation for the word "kamara", the Cadigal expression for something like 'my friend'. The Cadigal are one of Australia's aboriginal 'tribes' who Daniel Rooke, astronomer by passion and soldier by necessity, encounters after landing in New South Wales with the First Fleet in 1788. Rooke, a loner since childhood, highly intelligent and curious about science, but awkward in his dealings with people, is an unlikely hero for an engaging gentle story of first intercultural encounters with aboriginals as the new British administration struggles to establish the first settlement in Sydney Cove. In her typical gentle and sensitive writing Kate Grenville has achieved something admirable and exciting with this novel: by recreating a fictionalized version of the actual events of the time, she has shown how human beings can succeed in interacting across any language and cultural divide and as a result can develop friendships that will change them fundamentally.

Daniel Rooke, similar to William Thornhill in *The Secret River*, her 2005 award winning novel, is loosely based on a real person: William Dawes, a little known soldier with an keen interest in the stars, the strange natural beauty of the local environment and, last but not least, a talent for languages. He inspired and informed Grenville's fictional treatment of a subject matter that has not lost its importance for Australians since. Beyond the specifics of historical events, Grenville has imagined a beautifully rendered intimate

account of "first contact" between two very distinct cultures realized by two unusual individuals, Rooke and a young aboriginal girl, Tagaran. In fact, Grenville came across Dawes' notebooks by chance while researching her earlier book. Whereas in *SECRET RIVER* the aboriginals are, while strongly in evidence, without a direct voice (because she refused to invent one for them), here Grenville has Dawes notes that describe his growing friendship with a group of Cadigals, and in particular Patyegarang, the model for the fictional Tagaran, and their, often playful, attempts at learning each others language. The fictional story is created around the unique direct dialog and Dawes/Rooke's reflections on language and meaning, clearly set off in the text by italic print.

Grenville evokes the calm that comes over the isolated outpost that Rooke has created for himself - a different world that makes him - and the reader - forget the reality of the early encounters between military and locals and the precarious situation the settlement finds itself in. Upon arrival Rooke had established a very basic observatory on a promontory close to, yet separated from, the new settlement at Sydney Cove. He had grown increasingly fond of this, his private space, "[a] place so strange [it] took a layer of skin off a man and left him peeled... where the solitude without matched the solitude within." Yet, it is also the starting point for a journey of discovery of his other inner self that will bring him both deep happiness and an existential, and unavoidable, moral dilemma.

Grenville does not ignore the "other world" beyond Rooke's hut and space: the tentative efforts by the Governor to establish communication with the locals, the military operations against prisoners and aboriginals, etc. She develops believable characters around Rooke, in particular Captain Talbot Silk, a friend of Rooke's from an earlier navy expedition. Based on the historical Watkin Tench, he is quite the opposite in character to Rooke: smooth talking, jovial and with a contract for a book chronicling their early experiences in the settlement. Events are not going well and, in the end, like Dawes himself, Rooke is confronted with a moral choice and his decision will decide his life's path from then on.

For me Grenville's novel came dramatically alive in the encounters between Rooke and the aboriginal group. The importance of that section carries through to the end. Anybody who has ever been an outsider within a completely foreign culture will relate to the hero's experience: the first efforts at communication, the misunderstandings, the children's whispering and repeating of words and phrases, reflecting their complete lack of experience with a person not familiar with their language, their gestures and customs. Grenville captures this combination of awe and elation on both sides magnificently. [Friederike Knabe]

20 of 22 people found the following review helpful.

Profound issues, but never really grabbed me

By Daffy Du

I had decided on three stars (three and a half, to be fair) for this book before I read the other reviews, and now that I have, I'm a bit perplexed as to why I'm so out of step with the apparent consensus of the other reviewers. Kate Grenville is clearly an accomplished writer, and the book's subject is intriguing, with great potential to develop into a powerful story. But *The Lieutenant* never really escapes the detachment of the title character, Daniel Rooke, who despite his appointment as a British officer, is a man of science more than war. Only fairly late in the narrative does he begin to wrestle with the fundamental issues of culture, conscience, identity and chauvinism that underpin the whole adventure and that could have made for an extraordinary read had they been developed more fully. As a consequence, it remains an arm's-length story and never packs the emotional wallop it could, or should, have.

Most of the story centers around Rooke's transplantation to New South Wales as part of Britain's grand plan to empty its overcrowded jails by dumping its convicts onto another continent (which, inconveniently, happens already to be inhabited). While he's excited about the exotic nature of his new surroundings, his



main interest is in making a name for himself by mapping the heavens in the Southern Hemisphere. Instead, he finds himself befriending a handful of Aborigines and in particular, a young girl, who begins to teach him their language, which, being a scientist and linguist, he dutifully records.

Grenville does a fine job of describing Rooke's early life as a prodigy who never fits in with his peers, as well as the hardships everyone endures once they land in Sydney Harbor. There are hints of the culture clash to come, but but there's little sense of momentum building to the central tug of war Rooke must ultimately settle between his duty and his conscience. I kept feeling as if there was something missing--some depth, some insight, some drama. In its place was an episodic series of cross-cultural encounters, with mere glimmers of Rooke's emotional awakening. (In another era, he'd have probably been diagnosed with Asperger's.) Even when he comes to realize how much the girl means to him, the scene is anticlimactic. And the final part, essentially an epilogue, ends up raising as many questions as it answers. I almost found myself wishing Grenville had extended the story to cover the intervening years in the detail, except by then I was mostly glad to be finishing the book so I could move on to something more compelling.

Ordinarily, I have no problem with "small" stories--in fact, really enjoy them. But this was a small story that was screaming to be a big one, and I was, frankly, disappointed. For a more gripping story with similar themes, I highly recommend Andrea Barrett's superb *Voyage of the Narwhal*.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

A Quiet Hero

By Smith's Rock

For many American readers, the most pleasurable part of reading *The Lieutenant* will be exposure to Australian author Kate Grenville, rather than the unfolding of the plot. Very popular (beloved is not too far a stretch) in Australia, the quality of Grenville's work, including her previous novel *Secret River*, is easily high enough to make the trans-Pacific journey to American shores.

Grenville's considerable skill as a writer, and her uncommon ability to achieve cross-cultural perspective, is no accident: she teaches creative writing, and she has lived in Europe, the United States, and Australia.

*The Lieutenant* is fiction, but based on the life of William Dawes, a lieutenant in the First Fleet that brought convicts to Australian shores in 1788. The main character, Daniel Rooke, is a bit odd, scientifically and mathematically gifted, with extraordinary linguistic talent. This constellation of characteristics, when encountered today, is often categorized as in the higher functioning autistic spectrum. Rooke, often painfully aware of his own limitations, works hard to establish a relationship with, and learn the language of, the Cadigal, natives that inhabit New South Wales. His growing respect for, and love of, the natives is transformative for Rooke. The conflict between the values that Rooke brings to Australia, and his deep attraction to the Cadigal, brings the story to a climax in which he has to choose between loyalty to his nation and allegiance to his own moral principles.

Kate Grenville's strength is in the details, and in her refusal to descend into literary soap opera. Reportedly, Grenville researches a book for at least a year before she pens it, and the result is highly pleasurable to any reader with a hunger for knowledge about other cultures, as well as those that take pleasure in accurate history coming to life. Grenville draws natural scenery with a sure and creative hand; some of her scenes depicting the Australian coast and sky at night make the novel worth reading even if she included nothing else. Grenville does include much else, though, and her posing of the moral dilemmas facing those first white settlers of Australia is deeply thought-provoking.

Grenville has a talent for describing the human body, and the nakedness of the natives gives her ample

opportunity for doing so. Portraying the human form without salaciousness, and describing physical intimacy without resultant sexuality, Grenville makes a gift to the reader of an almost Eden like innocence and purity.

What you won't find in this book is pitched action and unrestrained physical passion. The pace of the book is almost meditative, dream-like, more geared to the exhaled cleansing breath than the thumping heart or the gasp of surprise. Distinctly foreign, but readily readable, *The Lieutenant* will be a pleasure to those that like to take literary trips to times long gone and places far away.

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