

9. FABRICATING RECONCILIATION: HOWARD'S FORGETTABLE SPEECH

We live in an inherently unstable and disabling post-ideological and post-historical period. Since the collapse of communism, any rival ideology that poses a serious challenge to the hegemony of the market is either discredited or held to be dangerous. Perhaps even more ominously, since the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States the global security landscape has been radically transformed and there is little room left for widespread resistance, opposition or subversion (McLaren and Martin, 2004). Capitalism, particularly in its neoliberal form, is heralded as able to solve the problems of state failure and social inequality. Yet, it should be clear now that there has been no triumph of capitalism. At the end of a prolonged period of economic upswing, it is now possible to discern that the contemporary model of neoliberal capitalism has produced geographies of uneven development and specialised disadvantage. Indeed, the unfolding global financial meltdown has brought renewed attention to the inherent failures of capitalism. Today, there is a growing sense of unease and anxiety around the world that has led to vigorous debates about economic ideas and policy agendas. Despite the optimism of true believers, as the bolt is slid against the door of social mobility, the everyday reality of uneven development and inequality is reflected in Australian society.

Averting its eyes from such collateral damage (suffered unevenly in the lead up to the financial crisis now sweeping the world), the Howard Conservative Coalition government followed the neoliberal template to create the conditions for prosperity. But as successive generations are sucked into the propellers of the economy, there is always the danger of discontent and conflict. Leaving nothing to chance, the role of the capitalist state is to reconcile these inherent contradictions, tensions and antagonisms across both ideological discursive and geographical space in order to promote the health and well being of the accumulation process. Confronted with new global realities, it seeks to promote a sense of belonging and attachment that is compatible with desired ideas, values and beliefs. Rolling back the historic gains of social struggle that underlay the post-war consensus and the Keynesian era of social democracy, the emphasis is on production of ideal citizen-subjects who are self-calculating, self-regulating and self-sufficient. Subjected to an intensive and continual neoliberal expectation, this is the form of self-governance, empowerment and democratisation that is valorized as a virtue or public good in itself. It is at that point that the present plight of Indigenous Australians and the wider inequities rife in the landscape challenge the meritocratic myth of the Australian Dream.

In this chapter, John Howard's policy speech to The Sydney Institute, a conservative think tank, on October 11, 2007 as the Australian Prime Minister of the day, is analysed within the frame of discourse analysis to make visible how the speech works in old ways to dress up neoliberal policy as new and reformist. Taking centre stage, Howard pointed to concrete steps undertaken to achieve what he called a "new reconciliation." This cynical manoeuvre, which put reconciliation back onto the election agenda (after it was earlier derided for its divisive and muddle headed symbolism), constituted a "neoliberal quickstep" (Reiger, 2006) or quickfix of sorts. The speech was also used as a place to reintroduce the Northern Territory Intervention, which at the time was purported to be a response to child abuse and Indigenous community dysfunction.

On June 21, 2007, the former Prime Minister John Howard and his Minister for Indigenous Affairs Mal Brough, announced at a press conference that the government had decided to put "boots on the ground" with a police-military style intervention in the Northern Territory (NT)¹. The justification for the intervention was the *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle*, or 'Little Children are Sacred' report (Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal children from Sexual Abuse, 2007) which documented the appalling living conditions Aboriginal children suffer in the Northern Territory. Using the report as a political tool in an election year, Howard declared a "national emergency" and announced that he wanted the army, police and business managers to take control of NT Aboriginal communities (Pilger, 2008; Robson, 2007)². Exposing this heavy-handed charade and its overarching paternalism, Behrendt (2008) notes that "As details of the intervention plan emerged, one of the first things that became apparent was that the intervention strategy made no reference to the *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle*, 'Little Children are Sacred' report on which it purported to rely. It has followed none of its recommendations" (p. 15).

In a speech to The Sydney Institute on June 25, Howard (2007) even justified the NT Intervention by comparing the situation in Aboriginal communities to the Hurricane Katrina disaster in the United States. Despite the small government ideology of his Liberal conservative party, Howard said,

Many Australians, myself included, looked aghast at the failure of the American federal system of government to cope adequately with Hurricane Katrina and the human misery and lawlessness that engulfed New Orleans in 2005. We should have been more humble. We have our Katrina, here and now. That it has unfolded more slowly and absent the hand of God should make us humbler still. It's largely been hidden from the public - in part by a permit system in the Northern Territory that keeps communities out of view and out of mind.

Clearly, the Howard government was not entirely to blame. Australia has a long history of racist policy and public and political disregard that can also step up to take some responsibility. However, no matter what had been done in the past, the status of a "national emergency" gave Howard just cause, in the name of innocent children, to suspend the Racial Discrimination Act and implement

"special measures" including taking control of Aboriginal lands (Behrendt, 2008).³ What matters here, as Hinkson (2007) argues, is that "the discourse of a national emergency also works very effectively to ground the crisis firmly in the present, severing the issue of child abuse from any consideration of the quagmire of past governmental neglect" (p. 7).

Spurred on by the *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle*, 'Little Children are Sacred' report, Howard's speech at the Sydney Institute on October 11, 2007 details a new approach to Indigenous affairs in Australia, a looking forward and no longer to the past (Hinkson, 2007).⁴ Here, an analysis of how the language of Howard's policy speech develops binary divisions and calls on rhetorical devices of political talk identified by Wetherell and Potter (1992) in their seminal work on racism talk within the speeches of New Zealand politicians, demonstrates that little has changed in the content and approach. It was indeed a neoliberal dressing up of the old as new. Without appearing visible within a regime of Whiteness (McLaren, 1995), Howard's speech offers a contemporary example of how the new racism of the liberal state is performed through discourses of denial and moral panic. In this chapter, then, we explore the discursive fabrication of Howard's 'new reconciliation' and its policy implications in Australia.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The linguistic turn evident as an influence in the social sciences for more than four decades, has resulted not just in an increased interest in the significance of language and discourse in social life, but also in the development of a collection of analytic 'techniques' focussed on discourse and text. In this chapter we call on techniques of analysis from the family of discourse analysis to unpack the framing of traditional neoliberal responses to policy – in this case that policy specifically related to Indigenous affairs in Australia – as 'new' and different.

Defining discourse is difficult with the term being used very differently within different disciplines. We take discourses to be forms of representation. Discourses construct and define individuals as they interact within them. This notion of discourse moves away from definitions that take account of discourse as language only and toward a broader notion that encompasses much more than language or text (Foucault, 1972). So for us discourses become actualised as social practices. Texts and language are only elements of discourse. Discourse is somehow more than language. And it is this 'more' that governs who will speak, and about what, with what authority, within which social contexts (Foucault, 2000). Discourses support statements of truth that "found, justify, and provide reasons and principles" (Foucault, 2000, p. 231). Individuals have access to certain discourses to make sense of the social realities in which they engage. Miller (1997) describes an individual's balance sheet of discourses as "conditions of possibility" which enable certain actualities and deny access to others (p. 33).

So discourses do much more than represent reality, they also constitute reality (Foucault, 1972). As individuals we are not free to express any thought, our ideas and thus ways of thinking about and knowing things are constrained within

discourses. A discourse excludes ideas which are outside its boundaries, and in this way allows us to represent objects, events and concepts only in particular ways – according to particular regulated ways of doing things and talking about things.

Based on this definition of discourse, discourse analysis then is about representing language use as social practice. The task of such an analysis must be “to see how broader formations of discourse and power are manifest in the everyday quotidian aspects of texts in use” (Luke, 1995, p. 8). In describing the task of analysis of discourse, Foucault states:

A task that consists of not - of no longer - treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this more that renders them irreducible to the language (*langue*) and to speech. It is this ‘more’ that we must reveal and describe. (1972, p. 49)

Critical discourse analysis, as presented by Fairclough (2001b) consists of three interrelated processes of analysis allied to three dimensions of discourse. This model, and subsequent versions of it, (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2001a) has become popular within education research, and is used extensively within the field. Such a model “attempts to bring together linguistic detail with social theory” (Rogers, 2002, p. 253), so in this way allows for the analysis to move beyond language or text. According to this model of analysis the three dimensions of discourse are:

1. the text
2. the processes of production and interpretation of that text (interaction)
3. the social conditions of the text’s production and interpretation (context)

Each of these dimensions of discourse requires a particular dimension or stage of analysis, and these are:

1. description - which is the stage interested with the properties of the text
2. interpretation - which is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction
3. explanation - which is concerned with revealing the relationship between interaction and social context. This relates to the social determination of processes of production and interpretation and the social effects of this. (Fairclough, 2001b)

As analysts we are committing to the project of analysing more than just text - rather we commit to analysing “the relationship between texts, processes, and their social conditions, both the immediate conditions of the situational context and the more remote conditions of institutional and social structures” (Fairclough, 2001b, p. 21). This form of analysis aims to denaturalise the universal truths and the ideological assumptions within the text being analysed by focussing on the discursive and its links to other material effects.

In this chapter we utilise Fairclough’s model as a foundation to build a discourse analytic for analysis (for a more detailed explanation of this analytic see Woods, 2004). We also call on what is represented as a *précis* of method (Florence, 2000) where Foucault sets out several fundamentals for analysis of discourse. These include first, a distrust of universal truths. This distrust does not require outright rejection necessarily but does require that the validity of such universal truths be tested (Florence, 2000, p. 461). This requires more than noting that the universal truths are possibilities only because of their social and cultural context. The essentialist notions underpinning a neoliberal globalised understanding of our current context require deeper unpacking.

The second analytic move in the framework that we are working within for this paper is to proceed to the level of concrete practices for analysis. This analytic point enables us to interpret relations between the speech, the literacy event of presenting the speech, and the social practices that embed the act of presenting a political speech. This allows a broader focus and makes visible patterns and themes within the data. The representations evident in texts “only become real, socially operative, if they are embedded in social interaction, where texts are produced and interpreted” (Fairclough, 2001b, p. 117) as part of the social practices and contexts of institutions. Once we had selected the Howard text as data, we proceeded to interrogate the text for the representations – of people, events, and objects - that become viable and legitimate within it and its context of delivery. This incorporates what Fairclough (2001b) discusses as the descriptive phase of analysis with its textual focus, but also what is labelled as interpretation in his model. Interpretation deals with discourse as interaction with a productive and interpretive focus. Moving between analysing the text and interpreting the text’s production context allows for an understanding of what happened behind the text to begin to emerge.

At this level it is important to attempt to capture a notion of discourse as a “practice that we impose on things” (Foucault, 1971, p. 22). The principle of specificity of discourse “is the located practice which produces the regularity of discourse, the functions for a subject, the positions for a subject, the possible technologies, the objects and the behaviours that the term discourse encompasses” (Threadgold, 2000, pp. 48–49). A particular text cannot be understood in its entirety according to any one discourse and additionally no one prior system of signs or semiotics will unpack the dimensions of any discourse. So it is important to move to and from textual analysis to the analysis of interaction or context and also to broader social formations throughout the analysis process. Moving forward and back between ‘stages’ or dimensions of analysis allows for some of the complexity of language as social practice to be unpacked. In this paper for example, we pay particular attention to the narrative structure of the speech and the different phases of the narrative structure as they play out to present ‘newness’ within tradition. We focus attention on Howard’s use of binary opposition to unpack the way in which the new is set in opposition to the old while at the same time remaining embedded in this tradition – what we have labelled as a “neoliberal quickstep” (Reiger, 2006) or quick fix.

Finally the analytic framework that we use to frame this analysis works to allow us to "address practices as a domain of analysis" (Florence, 2000, p. 262). This analytic focus requires that the textual and interpretive analysis be related back to relevant social and institutional formations. In this way, the purpose of analysis moves well beyond a simple text analysis. Instead it unpacks the "external conditions of its (the text's) existence" (Foucault, 1971, p. 22). So the focus of the analysis can be what subjects become legitimate, and are able to be known as particular versions of subjects within particular contexts. We are able to ask what gets done to the agenda of an apology and formal recognition to the Indigenous people of Australia within the context of this speech and others like it? What work gets done by another non-apology? How does everything old become new again? In this way it is possible to see how broader formations of discourse and power are manifest in the everyday literacy practices and uses of texts within current neoliberal politics in capitalist society.

ANALYSING DISCOURSE WITHIN A POLITICAL 'NON-APOLOGY'... AGAIN

So within a public speech, or public presentation of policy, which purports to present a 'new' perspective for framing Reconciliation - within a country which had yet to acknowledge its 'old' heritage of institutional racism and exploitation - how is it possible for Aboriginal and Torres Islander peoples, the elected officials, and Australian society generally, to be talked about? What subjectivities are attributed to these groups of people within the political talk of a leader, who in retrospect we know was preparing for the launch of a federal election after being comfortably in power for more than ten years? The analysis that follows will endeavour to unpack how John Howard, as a leader, sets the initiative he introduces as being a new direction, while hedging his bets and embedding this 'newness' in conservative traditional approaches.

The immediate concern for the analysis presented here is Australian Prime Minister John Howard's⁵ address to The Sydney Institute on 11th October, 2007. The speech was delivered just three days before the PM announced what would prove to be his hardest fought election campaign, leading to a subsequent defeat after more than ten years in office. It is legitimate to assume then that this speech was not delivered just to the primarily supportive audience at The Sydney Institute - although it is probably no coincidence that its delivery was to such a supportive conservative physical audience. Instead this speech was being delivered to the broader Australian electorate, an electorate that Howard knew he would soon be facing in a bid to form a conservative government for a record fifth term, and one to whom he must already be aware he was increasingly having difficulty sounding legitimate. Howard had made an art of identifying with his beloved 'middle Australia' and yet after more than 10 years his relationship with this sector of the constituency was strained - he was tying himself in knots in an attempt to identify the position that this group wanted him to take. This goes some way to explaining his attempts to walk the boundary between 'new' approaches and 'old' consistent and traditional ways.

The speech also needs to be contextualised in the announcement 100 days earlier of the Government's emergency Intervention into Northern Territory Indigenous communities, an intervention that purported to be a response to the *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle*, 'Little Children are Sacred' report (Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, 2007). The Intervention was in fact at best a political attempt to capitalise on the homogenised social conscience of broader Australian society, and at worst an innovative renewal of colonisation for the year 2007. So while Howard on several occasions called the Intervention a 'watershed' (including in lines 40-43 of this speech transcript, see Appendix 1), public opinion was mixed and generally lukewarm. Consequently the Intervention quickly became the property of the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs of the time, Mal Brough⁶. One hundred days later and just prior to announcing the election, Prime Minister Howard had a second attempt at rewriting his history, to claim a socially conscious politician identity, one aware of Indigenous issues and hardships, by addressing The Sydney Institute on the issue of incorporating a new Statement of Reconciliation into the Preamble of Australia's Constitution. This speech is analysed here as a text representative of others within the neo-conservative tradition, where it has become fashionable to present incarnations of the same policy directions as new policy.

However while this speech is representative of others in the conservative tradition in this regard, as a non-apology it resists the trend evident in the acts of political leaders throughout the past 10 years. The political apology has become "a form of political speech with increasing significance and power" (Luke, 1997, p. 344) and popular amongst western leaders such as Clinton, and Blair (Augoustinos, Lecouteur & Soyland 2002). Howard made the non-apology his own over a ten-year period, and while this example proved to be his last as the Prime Minister of Australia it is significant. A chance missed to commit to reform and regeneration of Indigenous communities and Indigenous policy and practice, instead this speech wraps an old non-apology and policy in new robes and announced nothing that would work to change the circumstances of the Indigenous poor and marginalised in Australian society. This is not the first analysis of a Howard speech on issues related to Indigenous affairs or reconciliation. The analyses of such political events are almost as prolific as the events themselves (see as examples Luke, 1997; Augoustinos, Lecouteur & Soyland, 2002). However what this archive of analyses allows us to recognise is the politically motivated and strategic practice involved in 'becoming' a particular identity as a political leader. Through these analyses, we see similar discursive practices and indeed content, across the ten years of Howard's reign, aimed at similar outcomes and focused on letting the public come to believe the rhetoric through familiarity. This in itself is a significant finding.

Following one of the foundational purposes of discourse analysis - that is to make contradictions apparent (Wodak, 1999, p. 186) - the initial phase of this analysis involved looking for "instances of paradox" (Woods, 2004, p. 182) within the speech. One such contradiction that emerged in the transcript was the shunting between prolific references to 'newness' and a continual representation of this

supposed new approach as no more than “an affirmation of well-worn liberal conservative views” (lines 194–195 Appendix 1). To unpack this juxtaposition further, our analysis will first present an analysis of the speech as a narrative account. Luke (1997) discusses the fashion in which political texts “locate agency and power with individual political, parties, policies and institutions” and we would add the routines and practices of politics. Luke (1997) discusses the fashion in which “the texts of government locate agency and power with individual political leaders, parties, policies and institutions” and goes on to claim that such texts can be “viewed as narratives that construct governments as heroic protagonists” (p. 359). In this case, the narrative structure seems to work to embed the ‘new’ policy in ‘tradition’, as a way to represent stability. We move to suggest that this phenomenon works along side Howard’s use of binary division throughout the speech to imply ‘newness’ and thus difference from past policies. Finally several issues related to rhetorical device and language choice are unpacked as we consider how these discursive practices work within the speech.

THE ‘NEW’ NARRATIVE OF RECONCILIATION: WHERE EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN

We begin our analysis of this speech by unpacking the narrative structure of the speech as a whole before focussing on several key sections so that a specific focus on the use of binary division and rhetorical device can be taken. In 1997, Luke called on the work of Lyotard to frame up a technique of parsing the “story grammar” of a similar speech made by Howard also in 1997 (p. 359). Luke was investigating the place of the ‘non-apology’, taken eventually as Howard’s trademark, within a context where other like politicians were embracing the apology as a politically productive act. Based in the narrative deconstruction suggested by Luke (1997, p.360), we represent the narrative structure of the speech used as data for this paper here:

Howard’s ‘New’ Reconciliation Narrative

Setting: Contextualisation of this latest policy suggestion in Australian History Summit and the NT Emergency Intervention

Key Protagonist: ‘New’ Reconciliation

Goal: Aboriginal Australia to join the mainstream economy as the foundation of economic and social progress

Condition of support: The sense of balance that Australia has found in 2007

Threat: Not getting a ‘better balance’ – as has occurred in the past because “the dominant paradigm for Indigenous policy” would not allow this to be achieved and because “this whole area has been one that I (Howard) have struggled with during the entire time that I (he) has been Prime Minister”

Resolution: Formally recognise the special status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the first peoples of our nation by putting to the Australian people a referendum to make a change to the Preamble of the Australian Constitution

Outcome: Recognition that Indigenous struggle is the struggle of all Australians and that while ever Indigenous citizens are marginalised that ‘we’ are all diminished

Consequence: New settlement for Indigenous policy in Australia – which stands at the intersection between rights and responsibilities

Narratives generally set the scene by describing the context or setting in which the narrative will unfold (Luke, 1997). This is not the case in Howard’s speech. Instead he contextualises the announcement of ‘new’ reconciliation within a context of the History Summit announced and initiated some twelve months earlier and the more recent Emergency Intervention into Northern Territory Indigenous Communities announced 100 days earlier (for an analysis of how the elimination of the standard narrative ‘setting of the scene’ is indicative of Howard’s style see Luke, 1997). After a short acknowledgement and welcome (lines 1–2 Appendix 1) Howard moves to reiterate the purpose and successful outcomes of the History Summit (lines 3–36 Appendix 1) with only a brief and general introduction to the actual topic of this speech (lines 18–24 Appendix 1). This short topic introduction itself is the first instance of the speech working to place the ‘new’ within an historical archive through the use of figurative language such as: “one that transcends the past, the present and the future” (line 19 Appendix 1); and “unfolding story” (line 24 Appendix 1); and the use of temporal markers such as “generation”, “1950s and 1960s” and “business of our time” (lines 21 & 23 Appendix 1). The setting is then expanded further to take in a contextualisation of the Emergency Intervention (lines 36–46 Appendix 1) which is described as a ‘watershed’ in Australian Indigenous affairs and the foundation of aims to complete unfinished business through decisive steps that “go further and aim higher” (line 36 Appendix 1).

This relatively long description of the setting ensures that the protagonist of this narrative – the ‘new’ Reconciliation – is firmly embedded in a history of conservative Indigenous affairs policy in Australia. Howard manages to hedge his bets as such by providing consistent policy embedded in this history, while at the same time naming it as a ‘new’ “more positive and unifying approach to Reconciliation” (line 46 Appendix 1). It is at this point that the first shunt from old to new is evident. In the sections that follow, we use Howard’s own narrative divides – indicated in the transcript (Appendix 1) by bolded headings, to organise the analysis.

As Howard moves to actually introduce and define ‘new Reconciliation’ as the protagonist of the narrative (lines 47–86 Appendix 1) ‘newness’ is foregrounded. The word new (acting as adjectival to paradigm, Reconciliation, alignment and generation) appears 6 times and works together with phrases such as “a coming together of forces I have not witnessed in 32 years of public life” (line 59 Appendix 1) to recontextualise the policy initiative from being embedded in the old and stayed, to being a new initiative for new times.

Supporting these lexical choices in this work, are the binary oppositions set up within this section of the text. Table 1 demonstrates the binaries set up throughout this section of the speech.

In this way the text sets up those who support group rights as individuals who lack the ethic to take responsibility. As such these same individuals are represented as supporting the rights of all Indigenous people to passive welfare and communal

Table 1. Binary opposites within section A new paradigm, lines 47 to 86 (Appendix 1)

Line	Entity	Link	Entity
49	individual rights and national sovereignty	prevail over	group rights
50	group rights	are and ought to be subordinate to	both the citizenship rights of the individual and the sovereignty of the nation
53	a balance of rights	and	responsibilities
53	a balance of practical	and	symbolic
76	a new generation of Indigenous leaders	(implied opposition to)	(implied) current and past Indigenous leaders who do not have intellectual firepower
82	the cancer of passive welfare	(implied which will be replaced by)	opportunity provided through education, employment and home ownership
84	partnerships that respect communal land rights	(implied opposition to)	partnerships that that encourage wider economic opportunity (based on those rights)

land rights. The text frames them as being opposite to those who support individual rights and national sovereignty. These we are told are individuals who take responsibility and who want wider economic opportunity provided through Western education systems, mainstream employment and home ownership. In this section then the 'new' reconciliation is clearly set as being about new directions and a shedding of a more traditional 'welfare' approach.

As the speech shifts to discuss moving "toward a better balance" (lines 87–144 Appendix 1), Howard also shifts from this focus on 'newness' and returns to a fastidious embedding of this 'new' policy into his own history of leadership. In a classic "neoliberal quick step" (Reiger, 2006), he presents his 'new' approach as that which was indeed his old approach, that which he had always been aiming toward achieving. Again he calls upon a pattern of language to set up his approach as binary opposite of the "dominant paradigm for Indigenous policy". By setting up this protagonist which works – or indeed has worked – as a threat to Howard's now ten year old 'new' approach, Howard again is able to hedge his bets. He is able to achieve a 'new' policy initiative to launch for his election campaign and a traditional, conservative approach that has passed the test of time, having been integral to his approach throughout his ten-year term. Howard begins this section with the following statement:

I'm the first to admit that this whole area is one I have struggled with during the entire time that I have been Prime Minister. (Lines 87–88 Appendix 1)

In this self-representation Howard achieves a construction of himself as an honest man, one who can admit his faults and limitations, but at the same time as one who takes Indigenous affairs seriously and who has worked hard in this policy area

"during the entire time" (line 87 Appendix 1) of his office. Howard, we are told has "struggled", and this lexical choice implicates hard work and toil, perhaps emotional turmoil and trial for not having succeeded to make change. In this way Howard's self-representation here, and again later in the speech (lines 113–124), works as a 'stake inoculation'. This concept is described by Potter (1999 as cited in Augoustinos, Lecouteur & Soyland 2002) as a discursive practice that works to minimise the likelihood or validity of criticisms. Howard uses this device to protect himself from criticisms for his lack of success in the area of Indigenous policy over a 10 year period by stating the obvious – he has failed – but by putting forward the confession as an inoculation against any attack for this failure by others. He then moves to explain why it has been necessary for him to challenge the "dominant agenda" (line 92 Appendix 1) of reconciliation, one that he claims is based on shame and guilt of non-Indigenous Australians. This naming of one section of our society works to set Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples as opposites, reminding the listener that the collective of 'ordinary Australians' of the "Australia I (the Prime Minister) grew up in" (lines 93–94 Appendix 1) does not include Indigenous Australians. This section of Howard's narrative is an imperialist narrative, marking out Australia's colonial past as one of "shared destiny" (lines 95–96 Appendix 1) where exclusion is conducted on the basis of problems with the excluded group themselves and their inability to 'fit' with – and perhaps even work hard enough to be part of – the superior culture who generously offer this shared destiny for all.

This part of the speech is where Howard sets up the threat to his resolution. With a rhetorical device known as 'ontological gerrymandering' (Woolga and Pawluch, 1985 cited in Augoustinos, Lecouteur & Soyland, 2002, p. 117), he sets boundaries around what will be seen as an appropriate response or representation of 'reconciliation', and what will be discarded as outside the bounds of appropriate – indeed what will be represented as the threat within this unfolding narrative. What Howard defines as "old reconciliation" (lines 104–105 Appendix 1) is constructed as relating to:

shame and guilt of non-Indigenous Australians; a repudiation of the Australia I (Howard) grew up in; a rights agenda that led ultimately and inexorably towards welfare dependency; a philosophy of separateness rather than a shared destiny (lines 92–96 Appendix 1).

In a demonstration of the predictability of concepts and patterns presented by Howard in speeches on this topic over a long period of time, a similar description of 'reconciliation that will not work' in a 1997 speech by Howard at the Reconciliation Council, is analysed by Augoustinos, Lecouteur & Soyland (2002). A decade later these risky characteristics of reconciliation are still being described by Howard, used as they are here to set the old reconciliation as problematic, and contrasted to his 'new' reconciliation as a "fundamental correction to the previously unbalanced approach to rights and responsibility" (lines 110–111 Appendix 1). By mapping the boundaries around 'what we are talking about today', Howard sets himself up as legitimately able to produce yet another non-apology, all the while presenting opinions and perspectives that are a decade old as 'new'.

He begins this latest non-apology by first presenting a second self-representation (lines 113–124 Appendix 1). Again he produces an image of an honest man who “acknowledges” his limitations, and who “fully accepts my (his) share of the blame” for the lack of success so far (line 116 Appendix 1), who was “emotionally committed” but “mistaken in believing” (lines 119–120 Appendix 1). He reminds listeners of his traditions and history, as a man he can be no more than “an artefact of who I am and the time in which I grew up” (lines 123–124 Appendix 1). After this reminder of his traditional and conservative approach, based in a history of goodwill – another example of a stake inoculation, Howard delivers his non-apology.

I have always acknowledged the past mistreatment of Aboriginal people and have frequently said that the treatment of Indigenous Australians represents the most blemished chapter in the history of this country. Yet I have felt – and still feel – that the overwhelming balance sheet of Australian history in a positive one. In the end I could not accept that reconciliation required the condemnation of the Australian heritage I had always owned. At the same time I recognise that the parlous position of Indigenous Australians does have its roots in history and that past injustices have a real legacy in the present. (lines 125–133 Appendix 1)

This non-apology is based within the propositions investigated by Wetherell and Potter (1992) as the foundations of racist talk by politicians in New Zealand. They describe 10 such propositions which are listed here:

1. Resources should be used productively and in a cost-effective manner.
2. Nobody should be compelled.
3. Everybody should be treated equally.
4. You cannot turn the clock backwards.
5. Present generations cannot be blamed for the mistakes of past generations.
6. Injustices should be righted.
7. Everybody can succeed if they try hard enough.
8. Minority opinion should not carry more weight than majority opinion.
9. We have to live in the twentieth century.
10. You have to be practical. (Wetherell & Potter 1992, p. 177)

Augustinos, Lecouteur, & Soyland (2002) discuss how these propositions provide a basic legitimacy or accountability to racist ways of knowing and doing because they fit well with some common sense assumptions about how the world works as held within western liberal nations. Howard calls on these propositions as liberal statements of truth – common sense and without question – and by doing so presents his argument against a reconciliation founded on recognition and (symbolic) visibility of past injustices as outside the bounds of productive reconciliation. After all the opinions and needs of the minority can not be given more value than majority opinion – ‘we’ should not feel the need to be ashamed, as while we might acknowledge the past, we can not be required to field the blame for what those in the past have done – “you have to be practical” and just get on with it (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 177).

So by self-representing himself as an honest man who acknowledges but should not be required to apologise for his shortcomings, setting the ontological boundaries around what productive reconciliation cannot be, and producing yet another non-apology, Howard uses this section of his speech entitled as it is “getting a better balance” to provide the space for him to present and define his approach to reconciliation as a resolution to the threats and complications that have challenged reconciliation in the past. He introduces this resolution next:

I believe we must find room in our national life to formally recognise the special status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the first peoples of our nation. (lines 134–136 Appendix 1)

Then despite previously claiming that symbolic representation will not change the pragmatic every day experience of Indigenous Australians – their misery in fact (lines 107–109 Appendix 1), Howard constructs this Australian ‘other’ as configured within the symbolic representations of art and dance. He praises the “blossoming of Indigenous art and dance and the way it gives unique expression to Australian culture” (lines 141–143 Appendix 1) as being part of the strong “affirmation of Indigenous identity and culture” (lines 139–140 Appendix 1) required to solve the crisis of social and cultural disintegration. He advocates a level of respect of difference, but only on the grounds of ‘cultural’ activities such as dance. In this way he is able to marginalise the very real issues of disadvantage and uneven or specialised development that is the day to day experience of many Indigenous Australians, to smooth over or make less visible the messiness of racialised inequality by presenting a respectful representation of this ‘other’ based on somewhat tokenised dimensions.

As Howard’s speech narrative moves to finally announce the ‘new’ initiative (A rare convergence lines 144–207 Appendix 1), he takes the time to configure Australian society as united and on a track toward convergence. Wetherell and Potter (1992) describe a ‘togetherness repertoire’ as a rhetorical device that works to present the proposition or resolution as having the support of all. This rhetoric represents the resolution to the Indigenous policy issue – as a universally received truth. Here it is not possible to discern the exclusion of Indigenous Australians, nor the setting of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples as binary opposites. Instead by calling on the collective term of *Australian people* Howard resists a representation of a divided nation of haves and have-nots, of the majority and the marginalised other. Instead, all Australians are represented as wanting to “move toward a new settlement of this issue” (lines 145–146 Appendix 1). As Howard then frames himself as part of this collective he announces that:

If re-elected, I will put to the Australian people within 18 months a referendum to formally recognise Indigenous Australians in our Constitution...and their special (though not separate) place within a reconciled, indivisible nation. (lines 146–151 Appendix 1)

The language choices within this section of the speech work to represent Howard as the “heroic protagonist” (Luke, 1997, p. 359) of this narrative. He is presented as both decisive and strong, but also as at one with the people. The speech in

lines 144–169 for example places Howard, identified as I, as the most often used participant. In table 2 we set out the processes and circumstances attributed to Howard (I) as participant. As an example of how these language choices work to attribute Howard the central status within the resolution to this ‘old’ problem, note how the participant I is matched with many mental and relational processes such as *share, commit, aim, hope, seek, believe*. This works to construct Howard as both leading the push toward the ‘new’ reconciliation but also grounds this work in a shared approach with ‘the Australian people’.

Table 2. Processes and circumstances that work with the participant I (Howard) in lines 144–169.

Process	Circumstance	Process type
share	that (the Australian people’s) destiny	mental
am	here tonight	relational
announce	that if elected	verbal
(will) put	to the Australian people...	material
(would) commit	immediately to working in consultation...	relational
(would) aim	to introduce the bill...	mental
(would) seek	to enlist wide community support...	mental
(would) hope	to secure the sort of overwhelming vote ...	mental
(would) aim	to secure the sort of overwhelming vote...	mental
believe	this is both realistic and achievable.	mental
see	this as a dignified and respectful reconciliation...	mental

To remind the listeners that this work is grounded in the needs and desires of the Australian people, Howard frames this presentation of the ‘new’ initiative once more by calling on a togetherness repertoire (Wetherall and Potter 1992):

It rests on my unshakeable believe that what unites us as Australians is far greater than what divides us. (lines 167–168 Appendix 1)

The announcement of Howard’s ‘new’ reconciliation then is grounded in history and self-representations of Howard as traditional and conservative, but claimed as ‘new’ through the continual setting of this ‘new’ approach as a binary opposite to ‘old’ approaches. What is missed in this representation is that Howard has led the country for more than ten years prior to delivering this speech, and to his own admission this ‘new’ reconciliation is “little more than an affirmation of well-worn liberal conservative ideas” (lines 194–195 Appendix 1). And yet in what we have called the well-worn and classic “neoliberal quickstep” (Reiger, 2006), Howard represents his ‘new reconciliation’ as innovative at the same time as embedding the approach in the old, all the while without taking responsibility for past failures under his previous ten years of leadership.

In this short analysis we have demonstrated the language choices that have set up the binary divisions required to produce the chimera of ‘newness’, and the rhetorical devices called upon to place this newness in traditional and conservative neoliberal political approaches to Indigenous issues.

CONCLUSION

Washing his hands of the past, Howard’s “new statement of reconciliation” which is analysed here, was a cynical manoeuvre, announced three days before declaring the date of the Federal election⁷. Without adequate consultation, Howard claimed he wanted to forge a “national consensus” for reconciliation. Yet, he refused to issue a formal apology because it would “only reinforce a culture of victimhood,” and because “I have felt – and still feel – that the overwhelming balance sheet of Australian history is a positive one. In the end I could not accept that reconciliation required the condemnation of the Australian heritage I had always owned.” (Appendix 1) What emerged, then, was a classic case of old philosophical wine in new discursive bottles. Looking at Howard’s “new reconciliation” as a discursive or “racialized regime of representation” (Hall, 1997, p. 245), allows us to uncover the ideological assumptions that underpin the making of race and nation in Australia. It is at this stage of the analysis that it again became possible to see how broader formations of discourse and power are manifest in literacy acts such as political speech making within current neoliberal politics in capitalist society. In effect, how narrative performs the settler state in order to create a shared geography and sense of belonging.

Whilst refusing to say sorry on behalf of the Federal Government and Australia generally for past injustices or to offer a separate Treaty, Howard’s “new reconciliation” was a discursive ploy that enabled him to undercut the legitimacy of claims for redress— of unfinished business. Like Dorothy clicking her heels three times, Howard believed that he had the power to put the past behind him by simply announcing his destination of choice. The official discourse that claims that the past is over and that it is time now for practical reconciliation constituted a state-sanctioned discourse of remembering and forgetting. Wetherall and Potter (1992) discuss the language of politicians in relation to their use of “rhetorically self sufficient arguments” (p. 177) which once said, and by calling on the common sense assumptions and ideological beliefs of the broader public, look natural and beyond doubt – in other words they stand as universal truths. Augoustinos Lecouteur, & Soyland (2006) matched Wetherell and Potter’s findings of politician talk in New Zealand, when they identified the use of these same rhetorical devices in the language used by Howard in his address to the Reconciliation Convention in May 1997. The propositions that: *you cannot turn the clock backwards, present generations cannot be blamed for the mistakes of past generations, and we have to live in the twentieth century* are three of the ten rhetorical propositions put forward as common in the talk of politicians by both Wetherell & Potter (1992) and Augoustinos, Lecouteur, & Soyland (2006), and work to support the state-sanctioned discourse of remembering and forgetting that we discuss here.

Against the historical backdrop of a racist and antipodean imaginary, the Commonwealth government's construction of Aboriginal Australians as deviant "other" demonstrates the resilience of colonial hegemony. Moving between the past and present, the establishment of "colonial relationships of a racist, exploitative and coercive nature" must be understood within the historical context of settler states such as Australia that have a possessory interest in the Aboriginal land base (Green, 1995; Lipsitz, 1998). And because the fabrication of discourse through the use of rhetorical devices and language choices has become so refined, it was easy to get swept up in Howard's narrative. However, it also worked to perform the white colonial settler state, with significant discursive and material effects.

Traditional colonial discourses have positioned Aboriginal peoples as lazy and indulgent, as a people who needed to be controlled and "civilized." Likewise, the current NT intervention is being conducted under the guise of "protection." The new neoliberal mantra of "good governance" echoes that ethnocentric and racist sentiment. In the aftermath of the NT Intervention, Brown and Brown (2007) argue:

In many respects, a new (or rekindled) language emerged, the language of "Aboriginal deficit". The media were awash with claims of "paedophile rings", of a culture that "accepted and protected" the raping of children, of "customary law being used as a shield to protect abusers". The inference was that all Aboriginal men are "perpetrators", all Aboriginal children are abused, and that these abuses — fuelled by alcohol, petrol and kava — are compounded by social dysfunction that is largely the consequence of a "primitive" and "barbaric" culture." Public commentary allowed the seeds of change to be sown, change that "required" a "new paternalism", "normalisation" or "mainstreaming"; that called for the closure of "unviable remote communities"; that touted the "failure of self-determination"; that required an end to "political correctness gone mad" and the "pouring billions of dollars down the toilet."

Despite most money for the so-called "Aboriginal problem" disappearing into an unwieldy white bureaucracy, it is easy for politicians to take umbrage at such so-called funding "black holes" and discursively construct Aboriginal community governance as costly, wasteful and inefficient. Against this racist backdrop, Dodson writes, "Public policy that celebrates Indigenous culture has been shunned. We are left with a vague sense that the problems of the present-day crisis have no history and that the way forward is for Indigenous people to abandon their identity and be absorbed into European settler society" (p. 22). Designed to de-emphasize group conflict with an emphasis on individual rights under a rational liberal policy framework, the patronising and stereotypical discourses of neoliberalism promise to remedy the deficiencies of the Keynesian welfare state with a focus on market driven forms of governance.

Having tied himself up in knots trying to win the approval of the white electorate, Howard's "new statement of reconciliation" pointed to the dominant position of the white majority as well as the structural benefits of Whiteness and institutionalised

racism. As the outcome of a specific history of struggle, that includes the shaping and reshaping of the multiple discourses of reconciliation, Howard's speech provides a classic case study of processes of colonial restructuring in Australia. This includes reworking and transforming an influential and powerful political discourse into a "new" shape, and tying it more closely to discourses of development, nation building and neoliberalism.

Set against this backdrop, the newly elected Labor government led by Kevin Rudd announced that part of its motivation for supporting the NT intervention is to "assimilate" Aboriginal people "as workers, home owners and consumers" (Eatock, 2008; see also Clancy, 2008). To foster entrepreneurship and economic development in Aboriginal communities, the current Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin, said it was imperative to "encourage private home ownership" and give potential investors "incentive to invest", e.g., creating opportunities for leases for mining on Aboriginal land (Head, 2008). Such punitive and draconian measures as the NT Intervention demonstrate that the making of neoliberal policy in Australia does not represent the end of colonisation or territorial struggles, but rather the intensification of a pernicious form of "internal colonisation". Establishing the legitimacy for state intervention, the official policy discourse of Aboriginal peoples as "add-ons", peripheral only within the larger discourse of the meritocratic Australian Dream, has justified the colonial denigration and devaluing of traditional cultural bonds and social roles including community ownership of land under customary law. In the aftermath of the Rudd apology⁸, it remains to be seen whether a systemic policy that works to move the present toward the future is possible when anchored within the past.

APPENDIX 1: (NUMBERS ADDED, BOLD AND HEADINGS IN ORIGINAL RELEASE)

11 October 2007

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER
THE HON JOHN HOWARD MP
ADDRESS TO THE SYDNEY INSTITUTE
SOFITEL WENTWORTH HOTEL, SYDNEY

The Right Time: Constitutional Recognition for Indigenous Australians

1. Gerard and Anne Henderson, members of The Sydney Institute,
2. my fellow Australians.
3. Earlier today I released a small document on a big topic – Australian History.
4. It's a road map for the teaching of Australian History in Years 9 and 10.
5. It takes forward a project I launched some 21 months ago, on Australia Day
6. eve 2006. I called then for a root and branch renewal of the teaching of
7. Australian History in our schools.
8. My sense – confirmed by work done for last year's Australian History Summit
9. – was that Australian History in our schools had, to a worrying degree, fallen
10. victim to neglect and complacency. In some cases, it had simply gone
11. missing. Vast numbers of students had no exposure to a coherent and
12. sequential understanding of our national story.
13. I believed then, and I believe now, that if this country is to live up to its full
14. potential and its highest ideals we must turn this around. We're not there yet.
15. But I think we'll get there. I want to thank Gerard Henderson and many others
16. too numerous to name who have devoted their time and intellectual energy to
17. this task.
18. Tonight my focus is another topic of utmost national importance; one that
19. transcends the past, the present and the future of Australia and that goes to the
20. heart of our national identity and shared destiny.
21. For my generation – Australians who came of age in the 1950s and 1960s – it
22. has been ever present; a subject of deep sorrow and of great hope. The
23. challenge, and unfinished business, of *our* time. It is the place of Indigenous
24. people in the profound, compelling and unfolding story of Australia. In the
25. speech where I launched the Australian History project last year I spoke at
26. length on the secret of the modern Australian Achievement – our national
27. sense of balance. I said then that: 'Balance is as crucial to a well-ordered
28. society as it is to a full human life. It should not be mistaken for taking the
29. middle road or splitting the difference. Nor does it imply a state that is static
- or
30. a nation at rest. 'Quite the opposite. A sense of balance is the handmaiden of
31. national growth and renewal. It helps us to respond creatively to an uncertain

32. world with a sense of proportion. 'Keeping our balance means we reform and
33. evolve so as to remain a prosperous, secure and united nation. It also means
34. we retain those cherished values, beliefs and customs that have served us so
35. well in the past.'
36. The sense of balance Australia has found in 2007 allows us now to go further
37. and to aim higher. The time is right to take a permanent, decisive step towards
38. completing some unfinished business of this nation. A little more than 100
39. days ago I spoke at The Sydney Institute on the topic of the Government's
40. emergency intervention in Northern Territory Indigenous communities. This
41. intervention – and in particular the public's reaction to it – has been a
42. watershed in Indigenous affairs in Australia. It has overturned 30 years of
43. attitudes and thinking on Indigenous policy. The response from people around
44. Australia has again highlighted to me the anguish so many Australians feel
45. about the state of Indigenous Australia and the deep yearning in the national
46. psyche for a more positive and unifying approach to Reconciliation.

A new paradigm

47. This new Reconciliation I'm talking about starts from the premise that
48. individual rights and national sovereignty prevail over group rights. That
49. group rights are, and ought to be, subordinate to both the citizenship rights of
50. the individual and the sovereignty of the nation. This is Reconciliation based
51. on a new paradigm of positive affirmation, of unified Australian citizenship,
52. and of balance – a balance of rights and responsibilities; a balance of practical
53. and symbolic progress. It is this balance which holds the key to unlocking
54. overwhelming support among the Australian people for meaningful
55. Reconciliation.
56. Some will say: Surely we've been here before. What's different now? Good
57. question. I'm convinced we are dealing today with a new alignment of ideas
58. and individuals; a coming together of forces I have not witnessed in 32 years
59. of public life. As always, the Australian people themselves are the best guide.
60. Let me quote from just one of the many letters I have received since the
61. Government announced the Northern Territory intervention. It is from Mrs
62. Terry Meehan, now living in Melbourne. Her late husband, Dr Ken Meehan,
63. was the sole doctor of Yarrabah Aboriginal Community in Queensland for
64. many years, looking after some 2,000 indigenous people. She writes that: 'His
65. whole life was dedicated to the welfare of mankind but especially indigenous
66. peoples both in New Guinea and Australia. ... During my time as his wife in
67. Yarrabah I watched with frustration and anguish at the devastation alcohol
68. abuse caused. 'The local canteen only served full strength beer and of course
69. was run by the local council. The number of alcohol related deaths was great –
70. but we weren't allowed to speak about it publicly at that time. 'You have
71. taken a much needed step in order to make a difference to help these
72. wonderful people become a proud people.'
73. A major catalyst for the new alignment I spoke about is the rise of the
74. Indigenous responsibility agenda and the intellectual firepower which a new

75. generation of Indigenous leaders has brought to Australian politics. I've been
 76. reminded that, in fact, the Indigenous responsibility agenda is an old agenda;
 77. the agenda of Faith Bandler and Neville Bonner among others.
 78. At its core is the need for Aboriginal Australia to join the mainstream
 79. economy as the foundation of economic and social progress. This is at the
 80. heart of the work the Australian Government is pursuing under the Federal
 81. Minister Mal Brough's leadership. The central goal is to address the cancer of
 82. passive welfare and to create opportunity through education, employment and
 83. home ownership. We seek partnerships which respect communal land rights of
 84. Indigenous Australians, but with a view to encouraging wider economic
 85. opportunity based on those rights.

Towards a better balance

86. I'm the first to admit that this whole area is one I have struggled with during
 87. the entire time that I have been Prime Minister. My instinct has been to try and
 88. improve the conditions for indigenous people within the framework of a
 89. united nation and unified Australian citizenship. I have never felt comfortable
 90. with the dominant paradigm for Indigenous policy – one based on the shame
 91. and guilt of non-indigenous Australians, on a repudiation of the Australia I
 92. grew up in, on a rights agenda that led ultimately and inexorably towards
 93. welfare dependency and on a philosophy of separateness rather than shared
 94. destiny. This nation spent (and wasted) a lot of time in the last 30 years toying
 95. with the idea of a treaty implying that in some way we are dealing with two
 96. separate nations. To me, this goal was always fundamentally flawed and
 97. something I could never support. We are not a federation of tribes. We are one
 98. great tribe; one Australia. I still believe that a collective national
 99. apology for past injustice fails to provide the necessary basis to move forward.
 100. Just as the responsibility agenda is gaining ground it would, I believe, only
 101. reinforce a culture of victimhood and take us backwards.
 102. I said a couple of years ago that part of my problem with the old
 103. Reconciliation agenda was that it let too many people – particularly in white
 104. Australia – off the hook.
 105. It let them imagine they could achieve something lasting and profound
 106. through symbolic gesture alone, without grappling in a serious, sustained way
 107. with the real practical dimensions of indigenous misery. There had to be a
 108. fundamental correction to the unbalanced approach to rights and
 109. responsibilities. This in no way diminishes the importance of government
 110. responsibility in providing resources and services.
 111. I acknowledge that my own journey in arriving at this point has not been
 112. without sidetracks and dry gullies. There have been low points when dialogue
 113. between me as Prime Minister and many Indigenous leaders dwindled almost
 114. to the point of non-existence. I fully accept my share of the blame for that.
 115. On the night of the 1998 election I publicly committed myself to
 endeavouring
 116. to achieve Reconciliation by the year 2001. In the end, that did not happen.

117. I recognise now that, though emotionally committed to the goal, I was
 118. mistaken in believing that it could be achieved in a form I truly believed in.
 119. The old paradigm's emphasis on shame, guilt and apologies made it
 120. impossible to reconcile the goal with the path I was required to tread. The
 121. challenge I have faced around Indigenous identity politics is in part an artefact
 122. of who I am and the time in which I grew up.
 123. I have always acknowledged the past mistreatment of Aboriginal people and
 124. have frequently said that the treatment of Indigenous Australians represents
 125. the most blemished chapter in the history of this country.
 126. Yet I have felt – and I still feel – that the overwhelming balance sheet of
 127. Australian history is a positive one. In the end, I could not accept that
 128. Reconciliation required a condemnation of the Australian heritage I had
 129. always owned. At the same time, I recognise that the parlous position of
 130. Indigenous Australians does have its roots in history and that past injustices
 131. have a real legacy in the present.
 132. I believe we must find room in our national life to formally recognise the
 133. special status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the first peoples of
 134. our nation.
 135. We must recognise the distinctiveness of Indigenous identity and culture and
 136. the right of Indigenous people to preserve that heritage. The crisis of
 137. Indigenous social and cultural disintegration requires a stronger affirmation of
 138. Indigenous identity and culture as a source of dignity, self-esteem and pride.
 139. This is all the more so at a time when the blossoming of Indigenous art and
 140. dance – and the way it gives unique expression to Australian culture – is
 141. something we all celebrate and share.

A rare convergence

142. The Australian people want to move. They want to move towards a new
 143. settlement of this issue. I share that desire which is why I am here tonight. I
 144. announce that, if re-elected, I will put to the Australian people within 18
 145. months a referendum to formally recognise Indigenous Australians in our
 146. Constitution – their history as the first inhabitants of our country, their unique
 147. heritage of culture and languages, and their special (though not separate) place
 148. within a reconciled, indivisible nation.
 149. My goal is to see a new Statement of Reconciliation incorporated into the
 150. Preamble of the Australian Constitution. If elected, I would commit
 151. immediately to working in consultation with Indigenous leaders and others on
 152. this task. It would reflect my profound sentiment that Indigenous Australians
 153. should enjoy the full bounty that this country has to offer; that their economic,
 154. social and cultural well-being should be comparable to that of other
 155. Australians. I would aim to introduce a bill that would include the Preamble
 156. Statement into Parliament within the first 100 days of a new government. A
 157. future referendum question would stand alone. It would not be blurred or
 158. cluttered by other constitutional considerations. I would seek to enlist wide
 159. community support for a 'Yes' vote. I would hope and aim to secure the sort
 160. of overwhelming vote achieved 40 years ago at the 1967 referendum.

161. If approached in the right spirit, I believe this is both realistic and achievable.
162. I see this as a dignified and respectful Reconciliation process. It is founded on
163. the notion that we are all Australians together; bound by a common set of laws
164. which we must all obey and from which we are entitled to equal justice. It
165. rests on my unshakeable belief that what unites us as Australians is far greater
166. than what divides us.
167. A positive affirmation in our Constitution of the unique place of Indigenous
168. Australians can, I believe, be the cornerstone of a new settlement. I sense in
169. the community a rare and unexpected convergence of opinion on this issue
170. between the more conservative approach which I clearly identify with and
171. those who traditionally have favoured more of a group rights approach. It is a
172. moment in time which should be seized, lest it be lost. Reconciliation can't be
173. a 51-49 project; or even a 7-30 project. We need as a nation to lock-in behind
174. a path we can all agree on. I hope the steps on Australian History that I
175. announced today can also make a practical contribution. As I said at the time
176. of the Australian History Summit, you can't have a proper comprehension of
177. Australian history without an understanding of indigenous history and its
178. contribution to the Australian story. Summit participant Jackie Huggins has
179. written that an Australia where all our young are taught the continuing story of
180. indigenous Australians as part of our nation's history 'may not seem like such
181. a remarkable outcome but it is'. Indeed, she argues, 'the teaching of our
182. shared story is the key to reconciliation because it allows us to understand
183. each other and to build healthy, respectful relationships'.
184. There is a window to convert this moment of opportunity into something real
185. and lasting in a way that gets the balance right. But I suspect it is small. Noel
186. Pearson has made the point to me that Australia seems to go through 30 to 40
187. year cycles on indigenous affairs: periods of reorientation and attempts to find
188. new solutions (assimilation in the 1930s; equality and self-determination in the
189. 1960s and '70s) followed by decades of denial of the lack of progress in
190. between. Some will no doubt want to portray my remarks tonight as a form of
191. Damascus Road conversion. In reality, they are little more than an affirmation
192. of well-worn liberal conservative ideas.
193. Their roots lie in a Burkean respect for custom and cultural tradition and the
194. hidden chain of obligations that binds a community together. In the world of
195. practical politics they owe much to the desire for national cohesion Disraeli
196. spoke to in 19th Century Britain – another time of great economic and social
197. change. And in a literary sense they find echoes in Michael Oakeshott's
198. conservatism and the sense of loss should precious things disappear. In the
199. end, my appeal to the broader Australian community on this is simpler, and far
200. less eloquent. It goes to love of country and a fair go. It's about understanding

201. the destiny we share as Australians – that we are all in this together. It's about
202. recognising that while ever our Indigenous citizens are left out or marginalised
203. or feel their identity is challenged we are all diminished. It's about
204. appreciating that their long struggle for a fair place in the country is our
205. struggle too.

Conclusion

206. I am a realist. True Reconciliation will become a reality only when it delivers
207. better lives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. That, quite
208. frankly, will be the work of generations. I'm also an incurable optimist about
209. this country. I always have been. And I always will be. I'm in no doubt that if
210. we continue to get the big things right Australia's best years are still ahead of
211. us. My optimism has always found its greatest nourishment in the character of
212. the Australian people. Reconciliation – at its best – is, and must be, a people's
213. movement. Now, for the first time in a long time, we can see the outline of a
214. new settlement for Indigenous policy in Australia.
215. It stands at a point of intersection between rights and responsibilities; between
216. the symbolic and the practical. It is, to be sure, less an end point than a point
217. of light that can guide us to a better future. We're not there yet. But if we keep
218. our balance, we can get there soon.

NOTES

- ¹ Australia has six states and two mainland territories.
- ² Despite some prominent dissenting voices in the wider community, the Intervention had bi-partisan support from the federal Labor Party, even if it was critical of some of the measures such as the abolishment of the CDEP scheme and removing the permit system.
- ³ Cheering the market as a remedy for the failure of the Keynesian welfare state and Aboriginal governance systems, the intervention could be framed as a land grab that constitutes the "unfinished business" of the liberal democratic settler state (Pilger, 2008; Sharp, 2007/2008).³ Under the NT Intervention, the take over of townships, currently held under the Native Title Act 1993, through the imposition of five-year leases, removed community ownership of land. ³ Using its power of compulsory acquisition to administer townships, the government also suspended the permit system that required permission from traditional owners to enter their land. These measures were justified as part of Howard's (2007) promise in his speech on June 27th "...to ensure property and public housing can be improved."³ At the time, he claimed, "If that involves the payment of compensation on just terms as required by the Commonwealth Constitution, then that compensation will be readily paid" (Howard, 2007). Contrary to this, the direct intervention into pre-existing Aboriginal property rights raised questions about "just-compensation provisions" including for those communities that "rely on the income earned from issuing permits" (Hunter, 2007). Many Aboriginal leaders, with grassroots support in the wider community, were convinced that the government used alleged sexual abuse as "a Trojan horse to resume total control of our lands" (Turner cited in Robertson, 2007). For example, the NT Intervention was seen to encourage the break up of remote communities and townships making mining and the transport of toxic waste including nuclear material close to Aboriginal communities less controversial and more difficult to be resisted (Nixon, 2007; Robson, 2007).³
- ⁴ The authors of the report, such as Pat Anderson, have been highly critical of the NT Intervention (Hunter, 2007).

- ⁵ John Howard lost the Australian Federal election to the now Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and his Labour party on 24th November after 10 years and four terms in office. Howard also lost his seat of Bennalong – only the second time in history that an Australian Prime Minister has not retained his own seat at an election.
- ⁶ Mal Brough was one of the key Howard Ministers who also lost his seat at the 2007 Federal election.
- ⁷ Following Rudd's landslide electoral victory on 25 November 2007, Alexander Downer revealed that the aim of the intervention into Northern Territory communities was to generate 'electoral bounce' (Altman, 2007/2008, p. 5).
- ⁸ Since the election, the Rudd Labor government has made some important symbolic gestures, including a formal apology to the Stolen Generations at the first sitting of the new Parliament on February 13th 2008 and making a commitment to "close the gap" in indigenous life expectancy through a range of health and education initiatives. However, the NT intervention has created a new wave of dispossession and social problems. As Lyle Cooper, Acting President of Bagot Community has said "I thank you Prime Minister Rudd for your apology (but) it's an invasion all over again. We are being told where to shop, what to eat, how to act and how to live" (Darwin Aboriginal Rights Coalition cited in Pariah, 2008). Following a promising start, the PM Kevin Rudd and Aboriginal Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin are now officially the face of the continuing intervention. Despite repeated calls to scrap the intervention, the Rudd government recently committed (after a review) to providing ongoing support for it (Karvelas, 2009).

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ALISON SAMMEL AND SHAUNEEN PETE

10. RE(A)D AND WHITE: DISCUSSING ETHNICITIES AND THE TEACHING OF WHITENESS

Ali: Dialogue can be the midwife of inspiration, reflection and understanding. Yet, in our very busy practices of formal learning and teaching less time is dedicated to moments of deliberate, casual, cheerful or heated academic dialogue with our peers. I find that much of our daily conversations tend to focus on administration or logistic functions, or a deconstruction of said tasks, but rarely do we focus on emerging ideas of our chosen disciplines or explore their underlying neoliberal agendas. This is unfortunate, as I know from experience that many of my own pedagogic insights came from the rich, dynamic interplay started over a coffee, or the red scribbles on a dissertation, or a random comment in a hallway, or more playfully, a jest muttered in a pub. This chapter seeks to capture this dynamic by documenting a conversation between two colleagues reflecting on the ongoing presence and pressure of colonialism in education and what it means at a practical level for their pedagogy.

We start this conversation with the assumption that colonialism is alive and well in the formal education systems in which we teach – Canada and Australia. We maintain that the inherent racism currently occurring in Western classrooms is neither a natural phenomenon, a ‘neutral’ way of things, nor is it unanticipated or unpredictable. Similar to hurricane Katrina, institutional racism in education is a consequence of political disposability (Giroux, 2006) and governments at all levels are continuing to either ignore, or inadequately respond to these chronic cases of everyday inequity. Indeed, fundamentally, the capitalistic machine is benefiting from it. We are colleagues who strongly disagree with this oppression and engage in the pedagogy journey of resisting this inequity. Our teaching and research explores the complexity of why the education system is under-prepared for, or feels little sense of responsibility towards those who are marginalised. Similar questions are still being asked about the US government and those most marginalised in New Orleans. However, in education, the answers are now coming in the form of ‘Standards’ that speak to the ‘Valuing of Diversity’ (Sammel and Martin, 2008) but these liberal understandings of diversity do not acknowledge the politics of oppression and give the same status to ‘gifted and talented’ students as they do to ‘class, gender, and race’ (see Gore, 2001; Mills, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002 for more on this).

With the agenda to challenge the current dysfunctional and unjust education system, and with the intention of seeing our pedagogy as a political activity for embracing social change, we come together to engage in developing more

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