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# **PAKEHA DISCOURSES OF MAORI/PAKEHA RELATIONS**

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## Thesis Abstract

This thesis uses a discourse analytic approach to the language used by Pakeha in talk about Maori in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The research begins with an assay of a large body of public submissions and, using the finding of common themes and patterns of ideas, images and usages running through the data, proceeds to examine texts arising from other contexts in order to comment on the generality of the original results. It is suggested that the commonalities described amount to an ideological and linguistic resource base for the construction of a powerful “standard story” of Maori/Pakeha relations, which underpins and legitimates the oppressive status quo. Further extensions of the investigation examine changes in the discourse in the contemporary setting and pursue origins of the themes in historical texts arising from the period of contact between Maori and Pakeha prior to the colonisation of the country.



## Preface

In one way the work which makes up this thesis amounts to a marker stone on a road that I have travelled for some years now, but there is an over-riding sense in which it is the road itself. The orientation and activities upon which the research and writing build are now an integral part of the way I think about and interpret my world, in my work, in my family life, my political activities, in the joys and perils of the daily round.

In many ways it has been a very easy road for me. Growing up in a family where language of all sorts was our first delight and plaything proved an excellent training for the later analysis of semantics, rhetoric and ideology which this work entails. Recapturing and developing that environment as my own children grow is like being part of an immersion course in continuing education.

In other ways the work has been extremely difficult and painful. For I have brought to the analysis of my own parent ideology and discourse all the fears that attend close and unflinching scrutiny of the self. The process of bringing to consciousness and critiquing the most basic of my culture's assumptions and commonsense is not comfortable to me. The business of working daylong, weeklong with overtly and covertly racist anti-Maori text has often left my head reeling as from a spell of working amid noxious chemicals. Particularly problematic is the realisation that despite (or perhaps because of) my liberal, woolly exterior, at many levels a lot of what I read is at best familiar and accessible to me; at worst it often seems part of my working cultural capital.

It has been a very human process, complex, untidy, split with cowardice, lapses, dead-ends, unrealised goals, but organic and overwhelmingly social. The best of it has been the free-flowing discussions and arguments with friends (and enemies), colleagues and critics. If I am due criticism for a lack of direction or insufficient focus in the execution of that process, then my only defence is to point to this as the milieu from which I work.

I take this opportunity therefore to recognise some of the many people who have travelled the road or part of it with me. Ray Nairn and I worked together on this project in its first stage and shaped the analysis and ground work which are carried by the first two papers. Ray has been very supportive and constructive in his critiques of drafts of subsequent papers and I often feel that where I have written "I", I should really have been writing "we". My supervisors Fred Seymour and Fiona Cram especially have exercised the greatest patience and indulgence in allowing me to follow my heart into what must at times have looked grievously dubious enterprises. Many other colleagues, academics from other disciplines and journal editors have helped me enormously in refining publications into the final forms presented here.

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