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The Discourse of Security and Patriarchal White Sovereignty

RACE HAS BEEN CENTRAL to Australian politics and the transition from colony to nation, yet its significance as a concept has often been overlooked in Australian political theory, with the exception of its application to those who are not white. Since the election of the Liberal Party to government in March 1996, several scholars have written about how “race” plays a role in conservative politics. Judith Brett’s *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class* foregrounds how under Prime Minister John Howard’s leadership the Liberal Party was reconfigured to represent the nation.¹ Brett argues that his stand on multiculturalism, immigration, and Indigenous issues “are not the result of his racism but of his liberal individualism” and commitment to nationalism.² She notes that Howard has continually stated that he is opposed to “any form of discrimination . . . based on ethnic background, nationality, race, colour of skin, religious or political conviction and to bigotry and intolerance” because we are all equal citizens of the one nation.³ Andrew Markus in his book *Race: John Howard and the Remaking of Australia*, argues that “Howard has been instrumental in determining the role of race politics within the unfolding Liberal agenda.”⁴ For Markus, race politics are based on making race central to nation building and national identity through either exclusion or assimilation.⁵ In *Against Paranoid Nationalism*, Ghassan Hage argues that John Howard has given birth to a particular kind of fundamentalism in Australian politics that is predicated on having an idealist notion of national core values, which are perceived to be coherent and normative.⁶ As a political ideology, fundamentalism operates by assuming that these core values are good and that they have been eroded, which is why they need

to be recuperated and restored.⁷ For Hage, this fundamentalism is tied to white colonial paranoia, a perception of white injury and an obsession “with border politics where ‘worrying’ becomes the dominant mode of expressing one’s attachment to the nation.”⁸ Brett, Markus, and Hage offer compelling arguments in their analysis of Howard’s politics, but they overlook or understate the role that Indigenous sovereignty plays in shaping the body politic through its relationship to patriarchal white sovereignty. This chapter begins to consider this proposition.

In former British colonies such as Australia, “race” indelibly marks the formation of nation-states and the development of national identity. As such, it was instrumental in the assertion and assumption of patriarchal white sovereignty and its manifestation in this place as the Australian nation-state. The intersection between race and property played a definitive role in international common law through the legal fiction of *terra nullius*, which enabled the assumption of patriarchal white sovereignty in the name of the British Crown. Indigenous sovereignty has never been ceded. However, the theft of Indigenous lands and the death of Indigenous people are inextricably tied to the assumption of patriarchal white sovereignty in Australia. Indigenous sovereignty is perceived to be foreclosed by this assumption and its existence is both refused and acknowledged through an anxiety of dispossession, which rises to the surface when the nation as a white possession is perceived to be threatened.⁹

Patriarchal white sovereignty is a regime of power that in the Australian context derives from the illegal act of possession and is most acutely manifested in the form of the state and the judiciary. The development of sovereignty as we now know it came into being through wars carried out by kings and their knights.¹⁰ The transition to modernity precipitated the transfer of the king’s sovereignty to the state, which in the form of the Crown is the sovereign holder of land, and this transference also encompassed authority over a territorial area and the people within it. Thus social contract theorists, such as Locke and Rousseau, argued that the formation of the democratic state within modernity was enabled by a contract between men to decide to live together, govern, and make laws for such living. The Crown has been symbolically represented as the king, and feminists have thus argued that modern patriarchy is characterized by a contractual relationship between men, and part of that contract involves power over women.¹¹ However, Charles Mills argues that the social contract underpinning the

development of the modern state is also racialized.¹² The racial contract originally stipulated who counts as full moral and political persons, setting the boundaries for who can “contract” into the freedom and equality that the social contract promises. The universal liberal individual, who is the agent of social contract theory, was the European white male, who collectively identified as white and fully human. This racial contract allowed white colonists to treat Indigenous people as subhuman, appropriating Indigenous lands in the name of patriarchal white sovereignty. Thus sovereignty within Australian modernity is both white and patriarchal, and as a regime of power it is constraining and enabling. That is, it is both productive and oppressive; for example, all citizens have equal rights, but not all citizens have the resources, capacities, and opportunities to exercise them equally. Race, class, gender, sexuality, and ableness are markers that circumscribe the privileges conferred by patriarchal white sovereignty within Australian society. As a regime of power, patriarchal white sovereignty operates ideologically, materially, and discursively to reproduce and maintain its investment in the nation as a white possession. One of the ways in which the possessive investment manifests itself is through a discourse of security, which supports the existence, protection, and maintenance of patriarchal white sovereignty.

The Discourse of Security

A discourse of security pervades speeches made by John Howard, who since being elected to government has presented approximately 464 speeches between June 1997 and October 2004. The majority of these speeches have been concerned with commerce and business, the Liberal Party, war memorials and defense issues, trade and international relations, sporting events, and issues and policy announcements. A disproportionately small number of speeches are on issues specific to women, Indigenous people, and “migrants.” There appear to be no speeches presented to the gay and lesbian community over this period of time. Howard’s speeches are peppered with liberal theory’s premise that traditionally citizens are white heterosexual men, who as free persons forfeited “certain individual rights to [patriarchal white sovereignty] to ensure their collective security.”¹³ Howard continually reiterates that there are core values to which Australians are committed and these values unite us despite our differences.

External National Security

The discourse of security involves prioritizing economic, military, and cultural protection, which are central elements of Howard's investment in patriarchal white sovereignty. This discourse is deployed in response to a perceived threat of invasion and dispossession from Indigenous people and others who are deemed not to belong for a variety of reasons. For Howard, the most important countries that contribute to the well-being and security of Australian patriarchal white sovereignty are Britain and the United States, two white Western nation-states. As Howard specifies, "Australia faces no choices between her history and geography."¹⁴ What Howard conveyed in this statement is that Australia may be geographically located in Asia, but its history has determined that the nation is culturally white and Western. Howard's representation of a distinction between history and geography is a way to avoid any discussion of race.

Apart from our shared history, Britain is also important to Australia's economy; it is our second largest investor, and our bilateral relationship cements defense and security ties in our respective regions. We are allies separated only by geography. For Howard, Australia and Britain's national identities have been shaped by what we share in common: "The enduring ties that will continue to bind peoples: the shared values and aspirations, the historical and institutional associations, the ties of family and community, and the links established by cultural, education and sporting exchanges."¹⁵ For Howard, Britain, as a Western nation, is positioned as Australia's cultural equivalent, and he continually references this sameness. What is not recognized about this sameness is the birth of Australia through the British imperial project, which refused Indigenous sovereignty while it simultaneously appropriated Indigenous lands. Seemingly all traces of colonialism have disappeared from our shared history, yet it is the foundation of our current relationship by which both nations are formally committed to the defense of each other's sovereignty. Howard's refusal to acknowledge Indigenous dispossession is symptomatic of his anxiety of dispossession. One does not need to defend one's security unless one perceives it to be threatened. The preoccupation with security is to bring the possibility of dispossession into being, to know it is possible in a geographical context that does not share his history. It is the recognition of this possibility within the subliminal that makes Australia's relationship

with Britain an important and possessive investment in the stability and maintenance of patriarchal white sovereignty. As such, this relationship operates to reaffirm white national identity and the nation as a white possession while being shaped by the unfinished business of Indigenous sovereignty.

The relationship between the United States and Australia is similarly portrayed. In a speech made in New York on June 23, 1997, Howard stated that the affiliation between the two countries was “amongst the most important of all of the bilateral relationships that Australia has around the world.” An enduring relationship sustained by common values and aspirations.¹⁶ Howard states, “We both share an unequivocal commitment to democracy, to free speech, the freedom of the press and the independence and the authority of the rule of law. We both believe in the right of every citizen, regardless of colour, race or creed, to equality of opportunity to dignity and to individual self-respect.”¹⁷ For Howard, Australia, like the United States, is a race-blind nation. He notes that our common experiences extend to war and the sacrifices made by individual men and women; this experience has shaped our shared commitment to peace and prosperity throughout the world. Since World War II, Australia and the United States have worked together to build new global and political institutions such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and the ANZUS alliance. The United States is our largest investor and largest source of imports, both of which contribute to the stability of our economy. As Howard notes:

The role of the United States has been crucial to the unprecedented stability and growth that the Asia Pacific region has achieved. I believe it would be an error of historic proportions for the United States to diminish the level of its engagement in the Asia Pacific region. It would profoundly affect events in the region for the worse. . . . The United States military presence has provided the security, which allows the countries of the region to focus on economic development. United States capital, technology and management skills will continue to be vital in sustaining the region’s growth. Australia and the United States have fundamental interests and objectives in common. We will both always stand up for the values and principles on which our societies are based.¹⁸

Howard’s anxiety about dispossession is evidenced in his appeal to the United States to retain its level of engagement within the Asia-Pacific region. The relationship between Australia and the United States is underpinned by the security offered both economically and militarily

through such an alliance. The importance of U.S. support is articulated through stressing common values, objectives, aspirations, and a shared history of war. What is not stressed, as a common feature of both countries, is the history of colonization and war with Indigenous peoples, who fought to defend their respective sovereignties. Nor is the common history of racist treatment of Indigenous and nonwhite people by both nations acknowledged as part of each nation's shared values and aspirations. Howard refuses the shared history of Indigenous dispossession by valorizing each nation's virtue, which operates discursively to placate anxiety about dispossession.

For Howard, the United States is the dominant patriarchal white sovereign nation that will extend its protection to its smaller mirror images in the Asia-Pacific region. Australia's support for U.S. foreign policy in Afghanistan and Iraq can thus be perceived as a dividend paid in the nation's economic, political, and military interests. Howard's use of the United States' false justification for going to war—that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, which could be inflicted on the white Western world—to rally support for our participation served a number of purposes. One of which was to reinforce our commitment to an alliance that binds the United States to the protection of Australia's patriarchal white sovereignty within the Asia-Pacific region. This relationship also operates in the interests of the United States, not necessarily by our economic and military contributions, but by the worth of our moral authority as a white Western nation: a member of the axis of good and the coalition of the willing. Nicoll argues that “by establishing a proprietary relationship to virtue [patriarchal white sovereignty] is . . . staking a possessive claim which effectively dispossesses [others] from the ground of moral value.”¹⁹ In this context, Howard's reliance on the United States can be seen as an investment to minimize anxiety about dispossession within a nation burdened by its origins and the persistence of Indigenous sovereignty.

Howard's perception of our role in the Asia-Pacific region does not reflect his views on Australia's moral and cultural commonalities with Britain and the United States. In a speech presented to the Menzies Research Centre on August 22, 2001, he reiterated that it is not necessary to choose between our history and our geography. The differentiation between these two categories simultaneously masks the racialized borders by which they are marked. For Howard, the Asia-Pacific region is “culturally different.” It is characterized by change and unpredictability,

but he notes that “these are not . . . tendencies to fear, so long as you have the credentials and institutions to deal with them.”²⁰ He argues that it is therefore in Australia’s interests to “work to ensure that our region, the part of the world that has the most direct bearing on our fortunes, is as stable and prosperous as we can make it. And we need to have an armed force that has the capacity to defend us if necessary and to act with others in support of regional stability.”²¹ Howard’s anxiety about dispossession informs his strategy to ensure stability and predictability within the region through increasing Australia’s defense capability while protecting and maximizing our economic prosperity.

Australia seeks to foster the development of democracy and economic growth within the region through various forms of aid. Howard states, “The nations of Asia matter because they are important political partners with whom we have worked for many years to build a more stable and secure region. They matter because of where they are. Their proximity inextricably links their future prosperity and security with ours. And they matter because of what they are—our largest export markets and the source of much of our investment and imports.”²² Despite the “cultural differences,” it is Asia’s geography and markets that are important to national security and prosperity. In addressing Australia’s Pacific neighbors, Howard recognizes that they are underdeveloped and in need of our financial assistance. Invoking the authority of patriarchal white sovereignty, he states that “we now see ourselves as more active, more engaged, more willing to help, but reasonably seeking reforms and better governance as conditions of that assistance.”²³ The norms, values, and ideas of reform and governance attached to patriarchal white sovereignty are to be adopted. Howard requires an adherence to sameness in exchange for aid, ensuring that white normalizing techniques discipline small nation-states within the region to conform and maintain stability and security.

In a speech made to the Asia Society Luncheon in Manila in July 2003, Howard asserted that the greatest challenge facing the region is terrorism: “You cannot talk about the challenge of terrorism without recognising the need to address the fundamental challenge of poverty and economic development. And unless that is understood at the very beginning, all of us will find our efforts to deal in a day to day sense with the challenge of terrorism will fall short of the mark and will be undermined.”²⁴ Howard’s focus on economic reform is linked to issues of poverty and terrorism, hence the need for democratic reform in the

Asia-Pacific region to ensure Australia's security and minimize the threat of "attack." Australia's role is to guide Asia-Pacific nations toward the goals usually associated with modernity and progress.²⁵ There is an unconscious association that links developing nations with blackness and corresponding links of achievement and progress with white superiority. Development and aid are tied to achieving modernity and progress as well as white morals and values. The relationship between Australia and the Asia-Pacific region is based on maximizing an investment in patriarchal white sovereignty through economic prosperity, ensuring the continuation of the nation as a white possession. For Howard, economic prosperity and democratic reform within the Asia-Pacific region will minimize "instability" and "unpredictability," increase our export markets, and thus decrease the threat of invasion. Australia's future will be made secure because our credentials and institutions will be in place and our investments will work in the interests of patriarchal white sovereignty.

The Howard government's concern with security in the region is inextricably linked to an anxiety about dispossession, which is why it requires the continued presence of the United States in the region. This anxiety is evidenced by the slogan "We will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances under which they come," which was deployed by the Liberal government during the 2001 election in response to "illegal immigrants" entering Australia.²⁶ This assertion of sovereignty is made in the face of a perceived invasion by "illegal immigrants." As Ravenscroft argues, this anxiety is tied to the original dispossession of Indigenous people: "Indeed, under the logic of colonialism, if Australia were invaded by Asia, the European would be positioned as he has positioned the *Indigenes* and remade in the terms of the coloniser."²⁷ This anxiety about dispossession is not just tied to the possibility of an invasion in the present and divestment of patriarchal white sovereignty; its roots lie in history. Thus the unfinished business of Indigenous sovereignty continues to psychically disturb patriarchal white sovereignty and shape the possessiveness of its foreign policy.

National Security

Within the confines of its own borders, Australian patriarchal white sovereignty continues to invest in itself. Since 1997, Howard has sought to reproduce the nation as a white possession through various forms

of security. Howard recentered heterosexual patriarchal whiteness by identifying the “mainstream” as his primary constituency, stipulating that the family unit was the foundation of the nation. For Howard, same-sex relationships do not constitute a family; instead, they are perceived as a threat to heterosexual marriage, where reproductive services are required to provide the labor to invest in patriarchal white sovereignty.²⁸ “Gay and Lesbian people” can be included within the “mainstream” as individuals on the basis that they deny their sexuality and do not want to marry. His conceptualization of the “mainstream” is reflected in a quote from Prime Minister Robert Menzies’s speech entitled “The Forgotten People.” Quoting Menzies, Howard states:

“I do not believe that the real life of this nation is to be found either in the great luxury hotels and the petty gossip of so called fashionable suburbs, or in the officialdom of organised masses. It is to be found in the homes of people who are nameless and unadvertised and who, whatever their individual religious conviction or dogma, see in their children their greatest contribution to the immortality of their race.” Those words are in substance as true today as they were then.²⁹

When Menzies made this speech, Australia was demographically and culturally a white nation. Howard’s reiteration of these sentiments, as being as true today as they were then, is to communicate the idea that the mainstream is the white race, which is reproduced through heterosexual marriage. As Stratton argues, “The ‘mainstream’ are perceived to be those people who are the remnants of a pre-existing unified society that can speak on its behalf. They welcome ethnic groups and others into the ‘mainstream’ but only as individuals.” He notes that “Howard’s deployment of the ‘mainstream’ coincides with a voting cohort who support a move back to assimilationism and a more racialised basis to the migration program.”³⁰

Howard’s main concern is for “mainstream” Australia, the people who were feeling disenfranchised and disadvantaged under the previous Keating government, because of their perception of its capitulation to special-interest groups and promotion of a multicultural Australia. Howard’s vision to repair the nation, informed by a lower-middle-class ethos, was in response to this perceived white injury. The election of Pauline Hanson assisted his vision for the Australian nation, a vision shaped by Howard’s experiences of the Australia he knew and knows.³¹ Howard is symbolically the white patriarch, the mirror of national identity; thus it is white men who represent the nation. This

is evidenced in his speeches valorizing Australian characteristics and values with reference to sporting and war heroes like “Weary” Dunlop and Don Bradman, who embody mateship, tolerance, and fairness.³² Howard constantly identifies the Battle of Gallipoli as the defining moment of national identity and character, using war to remind the Australian public of the need to value the freedom fought for and won by white men.³³ Gallipoli has given us “so much of the inspiration of our sense of independence, our sense of our place as a nation in the world, of our separate identity from others—those qualities that we like to believe lie at the heart of the Australian spirit and the Australian character.”³⁴ Howard’s emphasis on core Australian values and characteristics, born of defending patriarchal white sovereignties in a far-off country that posed no immediate threat to our shores, offers security and pride to a nation anxious about its dispossession.

For Howard, a secure national identity is also linked to economic security. Howard’s promise to establish programs aimed at the social concerns of mainstream Australia has been tied to his financial deregulation of the economy: “The floating of the Australian dollar, the admission of foreign banks . . . the abolition of exchange controls . . . tariff reform . . . deregulation of the labour market” and the introduction of the goods and services tax.³⁵ He believes his economic reforms have seen the Australian economy prosper and the mainstream benefit through lower interest rates and higher levels of home ownership and investment properties. The mainstream as property-owning subjects can possess the nation through their ontological relationship to capital. Their possessive investment in patriarchal white sovereignty is enhanced through private property ownership. This security produces an effect that is encapsulated in a sense of home and place, mobilizing an affirmation of a white national identity that has surfaced as the result of the heroic deeds of white men. This sense of belonging is derived from ownership, as understood within the logic of capital, but it continues to be tormented by its pathological relationship to Indigenous sovereignty.

Similarly, in addressing migrant communities, it is their contributions to the economy that are emphasized and applauded.³⁶ The contribution of migrants to the nation is primarily through their industry and business, although Howard does acknowledge the cultural enrichment they offer Australia. As he notes in his speech at the launch of the National Multicultural Advisory Council report in May 1999, Australia’s multiculturalism is special:

We've always found a particular Australian way of doing things. And one of the elements, one of the genius elements of the Australian story is the way in which we have been able to retain the good bits that have been contributed to Australian society by the various tributaries, cultural tributaries, that make up our nation and reject the bad bits. . . . We have been very successful and the reason we have been very successful is that within the individual commitment and affection people have to the culture and the land of their birth they have developed, and all of us together, acquired a common overriding commitment to the values of the Australian nation.³⁷

Howard's use of the term "tributaries" here to distinguish "cultural" others from the river itself illustrates that his use of the term "mainstream" does represent white Australia. Thus the tolerance extended to migrants is tied to their commitment to the economic and social values of the nation, not their cultural difference. And it is only the "good bits" from the tributaries that he wishes to retain, the ones that benefit patriarchal white sovereignty. As Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos argue, the migrant is positioned as the perpetual foreigner, who is allocated a position within whiteness that is off white. "Dominant white Australia posits a suitable 'other' through whom whiteness marks rightful control of Australian territory. A certain category of (im)migrant is positioned to give and receive the necessary form of mutual recognition whilst remaining readily visible as a foreigner."³⁸ Certain migrants function within the logic of possession, to legitimize patriarchal white sovereignty through their presence and subscription to national core values tied to capital. Their legitimizing presence is linked to patriarchal white sovereignty's disavowal of Indigenous sovereignty. Thus, the omnipresence of Indigenous sovereignty is part of the ontological condition that shapes patriarchal white sovereignty's investment in itself and its anxiety about dispossession.

In a different way the idea of the "illegal immigrant" serves to ideologically affirm the possessiveness of patriarchal white sovereignty through its border-protection policy. In August 2001, Howard's response to what became known as the "Tampa incident" was to define the mainly Muslim Afghan refugees as queue jumpers, who resorted to extreme measures to gain asylum in Australia.³⁹ His response to Captain Rinn of the movement of the cargo ship *MV Tampa* into Australian waters, which was legal under international law, was to order the Navy to intervene to prevent it from happening. In a speech made to the Federal Liberal Party, he stated: "I want to place on record my gratitude . . . to

the men and women of the Royal Australian Navy who have not only been protecting our borders but saving lives in the process of doing it. Now that's the face of Australia to the world. We will be compassionate, will save lives, will care for people but we will decide and nobody else who comes to this country."⁴⁰

Events of September 11 also contributed to cementing the idea that "the Muslim" invaded and terrorized. Howard used these events to muster support for his border-protection policy and detention centers here and in the island nation of Nauru in Micronesia. These two events served to position the Muslim as the invading "other," thus enabling Howard to demarcate, secure, and protect the territorial integrity of patriarchal white sovereignty within Australian and international law. Howard's possessive investment in patriarchal white sovereignty was further expressed after the bombings in Bali in 2002, when he proclaimed that he would take preemptive action in the Asia-Pacific region should it be perceived that Australia was threatened by terrorists. Howard fed the fear attached to Australia's anxiety about dispossession, a fear that is embedded in the nation's denial of the continuing existence of Indigenous sovereignty. This denial of Indigenous ownership ensures the legitimacy of patriarchal white sovereignty and its right to exert border protection against others. In this way Indigenous sovereignty subliminally shapes Australia's border-protection policy.

Between June 1997 and October 2004, Howard made fewer than ten speeches concerning Indigenous issues in which he consistently positioned Indigenous people's rights and interests as adverse to the nation. When the *Wik* decision was handed down in 1997, he made an address to the nation in which "he displayed a map claiming that Indigenous people could veto development over 79% of Australia's land mass. Later in the same week in Parliament, he stated that it was possible for native title claims to be made of 79% of Australia."⁴¹ Howard traded on the fear and insecurity attached to Australia's anxiety about dispossession by bringing to the surface the possibility of dispossession by the Indigenous "other." In November, he addressed the nation, reiterating that the sooner the whole debate about native title was over, the better it was for all of us.⁴² He did make it better for "us" in September 1998, when his amendments to the Native Title Act 1993, which diminished the rights of Indigenous people, were implemented. Despite the success in reducing Indigenous interests, in addressing the National Farmers Federation conference in May 1999 he stated that "this native title thing

has gone on for too long. . . . I mean this native title thing is hurting Western Australia, it's hurting the country. We should have resolved it."⁴³ Native title is positioned as adverse to the nation's interests; as such, it is separated from the nation, which is perceived to be a white possession. This possessiveness is illustrated by Howard's appointment to the High Court of two conservative judges, who formed part of the majority decision reaffirming patriarchal white sovereignty's security of tenure in the *Yorta Yorta* decision on December 12, 2001. This decision effectively determined that no native title claims will be successful unless Indigenous people can prove that their native title is consistent with that which existed at the time of the original assumption of patriarchal white sovereignty.⁴⁴

The refusal of Indigenous sovereignty is also evident in the way in which Howard has responded to the recommendations of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, most notably the recommendation for a treaty. In his address to Corroboree 2000, he disingenuously acknowledged the traditional lands of the Eora people.⁴⁵ This is an acknowledgment he only performs when addressing Indigenous people, because the protocol of recognizing Indigenous "traditional lands" is simultaneously a reminder and a denial of the existence of Indigenous sovereignty. The reminder is evidenced by the presence of Indigenous bodies, but its denial is contained in the words "traditional lands," which transports ownership back into the past, not the continuing present. Howard stated that Corroboree was an occasion "to honour the contribution of the Indigenous people of Australia . . . the special character of their cultures . . . to thank them for the generosity of spirit [and] the richness that their cultures bring to modern Australian life."⁴⁶ Howard positions Indigenous people within multiculturalism: we are reduced to being one culture among many, another "cultural tributary." Like migrants, we contribute to the nation through our cultures, but our presence cannot serve the legitimacy of patriarchal white sovereignty because we are the source of its insecurity.

Howard refuses to recognize how the exploitation of Indigenous land, resources, and labor contributed to the making of the nation, just as he does not recognize that Indigenous people have any of the core Australian values that he cherishes. Instead, Indigenous people are "the most profoundly disadvantaged . . . and part of the process of reconciliation is to adopt practical measures to address that disadvantage."⁴⁷ Howard's idea of addressing Indigenous disadvantage is to offer the

same opportunities that are available to other citizens through mainstream programs. However, our citizenship is not predicated on the same basis as everyone else. Our sovereignty has never been ceded and our rights as Indigenous people have yet to be formally recognized. Our rights are not the same as the rights of other citizens. Yet Howard believes that “true reconciliation can never be said to have occurred until Indigenous Australians enjoy standards of opportunity and treatment the equal of their countrymen and women.”⁴⁸ Howard wants to include Indigenous people in the nation through the provision of welfare measures that do not provide for the control and ownership of our lands and resources, which is what is required to address our poverty. Howard totally rejected the council’s call for a treaty, saying that it would be divisive and that his government could only make treaties with other nation-states. Our economic interests, which would be protected by a treaty, are denied in favor of the interests of patriarchal white sovereignty. Howard’s refusal of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation’s recommendation of a treaty is a disavowal of Indigenous sovereignty and the history of colonization. As Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos argue, a condition of the ontological pathology of Australian whiteness is that Indigenous people must not be recognized as property-owning subjects whose sovereignty is different.⁴⁹ The premise of *terra nullius* prevails as a possessive investment in patriarchal white sovereignty and its required security.

Howard’s refusal of Indigenous sovereignty is tied to the “history wars” and his recuperation of the virtue of white national identity.⁵⁰ It is no coincidence that we have seen the eruption of the history wars during his time in government. In fact, he regularly reads the journal *Quadrant*, which fostered the work of Keith Windschuttle, a right-wing historian. The history wars are a recuperative act of possession whereby people like Windschuttle want to restore the virtue of the white nation and secure national identity through claims that massacres are a fiction and that Indigenous people had no word in their language for “property.” Following Windschuttle’s logic, Indigenous people did not have a concept of ownership, which means that we had no sovereignty to defend. Thus there was no theft, no war, and no need to have a treaty. What underpins his work is the belief that the assumption of patriarchal white sovereignty is morally right and legally correct. The disadvantage that Indigenous people suffered is not perceived as an effect of this assumption, but rather the implication is that Indigenous people

lack the core values required to contribute to the development of the nation. The perception that we lack core values is evidenced by the recent proposal that we may be required to carry a “smart card,” which will be tied to behavioral outcomes to ensure that the nation’s welfare dollars are well spent. The rights of citizenship are not the same for all. The differential treatment of Indigenous people by patriarchal white sovereignty has always been in its best interests, which is why it gave rise to policies allowing Indigenous children to be removed and trained as domestic servants for white homes. Indigenous people were placed on reserves and missions and their labor used to service the pastoral and cattle industries. The low wages paid to Indigenous people were appropriated by state governments to supplement reserve and mission infrastructure. The current relationship of Indigenous people to capital is primarily as consumers; our unemployment rate is approximately 48 percent when the number of people working for the dole and those registered as unemployed are combined.⁵¹ The Indigenous industry is an income-generating service for predominantly white professionals, tradespeople, and public servants. Our welfare dependency has been structured by and in the interests of patriarchal white sovereignty; it is the investment that we have been offered. Howard’s denial of Indigenous sovereignty masks the continuing effects of dispossession and the benefits of colonial theft reaped by the white Australian nation.

Howard’s disavowal of Indigenous sovereignty is also evident in the dismantling of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). After Geoff Clarke became chairperson of ATSIC, the policy direction shifted to Indigenous rights advocacy. ATSIC’s funding contributed to exposing the racism within the amendments of the Native Title Act at the United Nations and Indigenous participation in the draft declaration of Indigenous rights, both of which emphasized the need for a treaty in Australia. This advocacy embarrassed Howard’s government and differed from its practical reconciliation process. Media reports supported Howard’s agenda to dismantle ATSIC by attacking the character of two ATSIC Indigenous patriarchs, who were represented as rapists, thugs, and thieves, coupled with the appalling conditions of Indigenous health and education, two policy areas controlled and delivered by mainstream departments, not ATSIC. The representation of Indigenous pathology provided Howard with the moral authority to silence Indigenous advocacy for our sovereignty within and outside the nation. Howard’s practical reconciliation, which includes the

mainstreaming of Indigenous programs, is a strategy designed to protect the cultural and territorial integrity of the nation, thereby securing a possessive investment in patriarchal white sovereignty.

Conclusion

Race indelibly marks the politics of possessive investments in patriarchal white sovereignty, which are often invisible and unnamed in everyday discourse and academic analyses. This is because Indigenous sovereignty is never positioned as central to shaping the terms and conditions of the very making of the nation; nor is its continuing refusal understood as shaping a politics based on white anxiety of dispossession. Brett's explanation, that it is Howard's commitment to individual liberalism and nationalism that informs his policies, can only be sustained if race in the form of patriarchal white sovereignty is perceived not to function discursively within the epistemology that constructs and supports such political ideologies. As I have argued, Howard's deployment of the discourse of security is inextricably linked to an anxiety about dispossession shaped by a refusal of Indigenous sovereignty with clear roots in white supremacy.

I concur with Markus that race operates through strategies of exclusion and assimilation by groups to resolve racial problems, but Marcus does not address the way in which they are marked by the exercising of patriarchal white sovereignty. The roots of strategies of exclusion and assimilation do not just lie in the conservative mobilization orchestrated by Howard and his government. They are epistemologically and ontologically buried in the assumption of patriarchal white sovereignty, where they function as tools of white possession. I agree with Hage's thesis that Howard's fundamentalism is tied to white colonial paranoia, perceived white injury, and an obsession "with border politics where worrying becomes the dominant mode of expressing one's attachment to the nation."⁵² However, white colonial paranoia, injury, and worrying are inextricably tied to an anxiety about dispossession that is harnessed to instill hope through possessive investments in patriarchal white sovereignty. This is how the unfinished business of Indigenous sovereignty continues to shape and disturb the security of patriarchal white sovereignty.