
Speech, script, and performance: Towards a public poetics of the political speechwriter's role

Dr Tom Clark

Victoria University, Melbourne

Abstract

This article brings together and contextualises some ostensibly disparate 'readings' of political speeches from Australia and the United States, both good examples and not-so-good examples, to examine a characteristic that prevails in all public communication, and which is especially noticeable in politics. That characteristic is the nexus between the poetic and the political in all public language. In this case, it is grounded in a distinction between political speakers-as-performers and the advisors who script many of their performances for them. The dynamics of this relationship are critical influences on the more publicly explicit relationship between speakers and their audiences. Consequently, these dynamics are critical to our understanding of political discourse, and of public communication more broadly.

Introduction

Speechwriters write as poem-writers write. They have a voice to scribe for, and a situation into which to project that voice (Clark, 2008). That situation sets down requirements: a time limit, specific topics to raise and others to avoid, set phrases to mention and reiterate, courtesies to perform, a certain interpersonal register to maintain. Often, a speaker will dictate the leading themes of the speech, which the writer must take as a structuring principle to compose around. When the speech is likely to attract media coverage, the speechwriter must script phrases topical enough and sufficiently charismatic that journalists will pick them to become the grabs and sound bites they feature

in their news reporting – rather than focusing on topics and phrases of their own choosing.

These and other requirements govern the work of the professional speechwriter. He or she writes to such requirements, running lines of entertainment, information, polemic, and story through them to the greatest effect that his or her imagination can achieve. What is more, as previous articles arising from the same project of research as this one have discussed (e.g. Clark, 2009), the theoretical case for a poetic approach to political rhetoric is compelling: a speechwriter draws on a repertoire of phrase and theme formulas to produce a speech that meets the specific demands of the situation while conforming to the general style of the speaker. It is the same process that confronts someone who sets out to write a villanelle, sonnet, rondeau redoublé, haiku, or what have you: navigating through rules about words, using the words themselves.

The present article¹ proposes to make practical and applied meaning out of the idealistic and highly generalised sentence that opens it. My aim is to explore the nature of speechwriting – characterising it as an inherently poetic field of creative work – through the pragmatic lens of professional practice. It is not to compare the speechwriting techniques of one speechwriter, school of writers, time or place with those of another, so much as to reflect upon the necessarily creative approach to language that unites all of them. It illustrates aspects of that nature by reference to Australian political speech and to oratory from the United States of America. As discussed briefly below, the USA has produced a particular rhetorical tradition which is distinct

from those of many other Anglophone countries, meaning it is important to look past this somewhat exceptional example (for all American culture's ubiquitous familiarity). In pursuing the discussion, this article uses methods of interpretation and analysis that are common in the interpretation and analysis of poetry texts and performances. The amenability of political speeches to poetic analysis is itself evidence for the central argument here.

Speechwriting is one of the core roles that public relations advisors perform. Almost universally in the literature of political and business communications, the success or merit of speechwriters is assessed principally by the extent to which they assist 'their' speakers to deploy messages that mobilise strategically targeted publics in strategically effective ways. We might go further, then, to argue that speechwriting serves a defining function of public relations. Done well, it demonstrably furthers 'the *development and management of ethical strategies using communications to build relationships with stakeholders or publics*' (Johnston & Zawawi, 2009, p. 6, italics in original).

Before addressing the strategic targeting of publics with messages, however, this article must also grapple with a fundamental and often contested theoretical question, to do with the relationship between writer/writing and speaker/speech. A huge body of literature has grown up in orality and literacy studies, a field that derives its name from the seminal book by Walter Ong (1982). The discipline of Orality and Literacy demands that observers and critics of language re-examine their assumptions about the interchangeability of speech and writing in our society. It draws attention to conflicting hierarchies in communications practices: modern attitudes appear on the one hand to privilege the printed text as truthful record, but on the other hand require oral performance as validation or authorisation of intent. This perspective has come in for heavy criticism from theorists of the public sphere, especially Michael Warner, who rejects a 'McLuhanite techno-determinist

fallacy' that treats any given message as determined by (hence subordinate to) the medium that conveys it (Warner, 1990). The conflict between these approaches forms an important and stimulating context for the present discussion.

This article then goes on to consider questions of strategic targeting and messaging. It builds an understanding of professional practice as informed by an almost grammatical set of aesthetic norms that practitioners and publics both use to produce, receive, and critically appraise political speeches and the strategies that inform them. This raises some further caveats and distinctions about the relationship between a speechwriter's script and a speech-as-performance, which help to illuminate the poetic fundamentals of speechwriting.

Speech and writing

It seems too obvious to declare that a speechwriter's worth is only realised once her or his script moves into the remit of the performer who declaims it. Speeches belong to their speakers, the professional consensus runs, not their writers. Of course, many public speakers cannot or will not make use of speechwriting staff. Some choose to write their own speeches, as Robert Menzies usually did, and as Barack Obama has done for some of his most strategically important attempts at mass persuasion (e.g. his celebrated speech on race: Obama, 2008). Some speakers have the support of volunteer activists (among them, some very gifted students conducting their graduating projects at Victoria University), and others are amateurs with professional writing support. Some rely on stock speeches written for multiple performers, or on reusing speeches written specifically for someone else. A rather small number prefer to speak off the cuff altogether — as John Howard often did, confronting his accusers armed only with a cup of tea. Hansen (2003, p. 247) quotes Martin Luther King expressing a similar preference:

I started out in high school oratorical contests and one of the things that I developed then was a means of speaking without being tied down to a

manuscript, which means that I'm usually free when I'm speaking to communicate with my audience, communicate by actually looking at the audience.

Even King's approach shares fundamental properties with the speechwriting relationship, especially including the reliance on a technology of recall. And yet, as Ong (1982) has explained, the differences between orality and literacy run much deeper than institutional practice in literate societies tends to acknowledge. At a relatively superficial, pragmatic level, the purposes of speechwriting are almost exclusively instrumental. The written word brings means of control that the unscripted word can only loosely approximate. In preparation, it enables a power of fact-checking and phrase-testing that is extremely useful in managing the pressures of public accountability. In composition, it enables a greater sophistication and clarity of structuring and arrangement than most improvising speakers can achieve. In delivery, critically, it enables the speaker to stick to the pre-agreed strategy for the speech – to stay on message – without adding the responsibilities of memorisation to the stresses of public performance.

The absence of these crutches is most noticeable in politicians who are used to leaning on them, as we can see, for example, with these remarks from Australia's one-time minister for vocational and technical education, Gary Hardgrave (2006), opening the International Education Forum in Brisbane:

Well thanks very much Geraldine.

To colleagues and all of the international visitors to Australia, I am glad you are here today and I am glad to be able to speak with you.

I guess quality in a lot of ways, is a commodity that, is difficult to define and it's a bit like from wherever you happen to sit is probably where you stand on the issue. But with the 21st century education must be absolutely relevant, it has to be flexible, has to offer, obviously, continue to offer,

high quality. The business world is a borderless entity, worldwide businesses operate in so many different places and I can't see for instance why education can't have exactly the same set of circumstances. Technology, through the marvellous internet, is of course driving so much of the possibilities and so I suspect in so many ways this really does challenge our thinking, it probably therefore challenges our comfort zones.

Educationalists naturally enough want to maintain control to maintain integrity. Yet of course, for many people, their greatest sources of knowledge are those which are sought from very non-classical sources – the media, the internet, the experience of life, young people and the way they are seeking to find out about things for themselves, so challenging the established paradigm.

From the perspective of skills, which is my responsibility in the Australian Government, we measure quality in a number of ways. We measure by how it delivers the skills which industry wants, but predominantly we've ensured there's quality by supply side comfort zone measures such as focusing in on how institutes themselves operate, how the teaching staff and the courses and content are relevant to requirements.

Hardgrave's example reveals poetic elements that a good speech conceals (Clark, 2006). His speech lacks rhythmic, dramatic, or semantic control. Individual sentences do not form paragraphs with much coherence or command. We may be inclined to disregard his intelligence altogether if we make too much of stanzas 3-5. There, in the first substantive remarks of his speech, is a remarkable concentration of oxymoron and redundancy, as well as appreciable denigration of large sections of his audience. We can imagine audience members' discomfort as they sat through it: they knew it would offend them, and it began so clumsily.

What happened along the way, though, is that Hardgrave figured out how to say what he wanted to. His search for fluency was at least

partially successful. During these introductory paragraphs, we can see how he was fumbling for the right way to couch his story of policy reform. His second mention of “comfort zone,” in stanza 5, seems to indicate he had found what he needed, contriving to equate this formula with “supply side” policy measures. He used the “comfort zone” formula three more times in the rest of the speech — or five uses all up. So now Hardgrave the reformist had named his quest: to cultivate and defend ‘demand-side’ policy measures — and now he appeared to find his stride. A reading of the entire transcript shows that the frequencies of tautology and oxymoron began to fall off significantly and the policy logic of the speech began to emerge from this point on.

Performative strengths of voice may be more immediately appreciated than those of scripting. Vocalisation entails a control of tone, volume, and timing that no written script can achieve. The dramatic value of performance is not limited to voice, of course. Even on radio, a speaker has access to other elements of communication – for example, the sounds of the audience. On video screens we can add to this the more noticeable elements of clothing, gesture, and facial expression. Live at the lectern or on a stage, the power for paralinguistic communication increases again. A script can allow for these values only in very limited ways. For example, it can guide certain symbolic behaviours with hypertext, such as instructions to open a significant envelope to announce the prize, setting out the correct pronunciations of foreign names, or prompting remarks in sign language for a speech acknowledging deaf people. When there is a demand for rich or nuanced paralanguage, though, a script often has to refrain from guidance, quite simply getting out of the way of the performance.

An acutely revealing example is one of the most famous speeches in modern history, Martin Luther King’s ‘I have a dream’ (1963). Most of the words of this speech were performed from a script, but the most memorable elements are from that latter part

of the speech King delivered without following the scripted lines (Hansen, 2003). In the eleventh stanza, King (1963) enjoins:

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

Like so much of the rhetoric in the gospel preaching tradition that claims him as its paragon, King makes this speech become what it says. For the speech itself ‘can and will be changed’ from this point forward. In the ensuing paragraphs, King begins to outline the ‘dream’ for which this speech is named. The anaphoric exhortations of stanza 11 – ‘go back to’ – lead into his most famous anaphora, the chorus that commences each of stanzas 13-20: “I have a dream.”

As Hansen describes it (p. 58), when King began to describe his dream in stanza 12, Mahalia Jackson called from the crowd: “Tell them about the dream, Martin!” As though in response, King began to depart radically from his script. After stanza 11, as recordings make plain, his voice both rose and keened its pitch, losing richness but gaining melody. What is more, from this point on, the transcript of his speech begins to reflect the natural rhythm of his delivery in its punctuation much more closely than the clear and sophisticated sentences of its early paragraphs. These shorter phrases and stanzas lead a more unmistakably versified rhetorical arrangement. It is as though King looked at his script and thought, good so far, but I want to do even better than this, and then looked up at his audience again, ready to improvise the most important stanzas of his most important speech. Such strengths of expression as the script had brought him were valuable enough, but he now sought to communicate at a level they could not help him attain.

Political speaker and political strategy

Not many speakers ever summon the courage and capacity to carry off an act like King’s: to

begin with a sparkling script, performing it consummately, then wander away from it, performing even more brilliantly. Far more common is to make a good show on one side or the other of this divide, and stick to it. More common still in cultures where few people learn public speaking systematically – the Anglophone mainstream cultures of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom being salient examples – is for a speaker to perform a speech poorly, no matter whether it is scripted or not. Even in the USA, King’s virtuosity was and is most certainly atypical. At the same time, though, it reveals how dynamic the relationship between script and performance is, how important the negotiation between orality and literacy is, in the preparation and performance of public address. No speech is better known among speechwriters in the English language, in part because no performance better illustrates the fragile balance between what a speech script can and cannot achieve.

This dynamic relationship extends beyond ‘set piece’ speeches, of course. The speechwriter Don Watson’s *Recollections of a bleeding heart* (2002) describes how the office of Australia’s Prime Minister Paul Keating would labour in the development of epithets about his opponents. The performance of these primed phrases was critical to Keating’s leadership when he campaigned for the 1993 election — which he won, against most expectations. As Watson describes it, the moment Keating labelled then opposition leader John Hewson a “feral abacus,” a phrase Bob Ellis coined for him (p. 259), was a symbolic turning point in the campaign against Hewson’s economic rationalist agenda because it remoralised a Labor Party caucus that had lost hope. The rhetoric of Australian politics should be best known for its generation of such epithets. Many of its most memorable, resonant, and conceptually vivid expressions are epithets that ridicule opponents as they identify them. *Hansard* throws up many examples along the following lines (Tanner, 2009, p. 6577):

I thought I told you to stay in the car
and bark at strangers!

In parliaments as in the classics, such remarks are usually prepared and rehearsed before their performance, though only occasionally written out in full beforehand.

Watson (1995, p. xiv) elsewhere insists that a speech is judged by its performance, not by its script:

There are no rules or guidelines, except the unwritten one: ownership resides in the speaker. There are no inviolable criteria either, save the one which demands that the message be delivered.

Here is the ubiquitous ‘message’ again. Professional approaches to public communication pay especial heed to this term: *message* is a meaning we select for its strategic value; it entails a set of tactics for ensuring strategically selected publics will notice, remember, and appreciate that meaning enough to act on it in the strategically desired way. For commercial advertising the doctrine of the message is easily applied: creatives develop messages in order to prompt targeted categories of people to consume the advertised goods. The purposes of poetry as a whole are more diverse than that. What is more, they are often less amenable to clear enunciation, meaning it is harder to distil an applicable doctrine of the message for creative writing. Asked by a journalist for the message of his novel *Lolita*, Vladimir Nabokov famously replied, “I am a writer. I am not a postman” (Coe, 1965, p. 5). Still, we can generalise about elements that the message of a poem contains. One generalisation is that it contains something. Another is that poets intend their target publics to respond to the aesthetic form of the message, its sensory details, along with its semantic meaning – the two are mutually inextricable.

Aesthetic norms in political speech

Political discourse sits somewhere between the simpler and more complex ends of this picture. Its situational imperatives are inherently complex, but the professional culture of politics imposes simplifying strictures upon its range of acceptable purposes. Political operations are subject to professional paradigms of situational analysis and strategic action, which participants experience as a kind of grammar: political

actors infer norms of analysis and action, and they themselves recreate and consolidate those norms – for others to infer – by emulating the analytic approaches and the actions of their peers. That intellectual and behavioural ‘recursiveness’ is an understandable common response to the situational pressures and opportunities that all political actors work with (Crozier, 2007; Crozier, 2008). It is a fundamental cause of those similarities between all parties which electorates apprehend at an aesthetic level, and which political actors vainly try to overcome by resort to claims about policy – pitched at the analytic level.

In any case, the imposition of simplifying strictures onto the complexity of situations and purposes that characterise professional politics makes for a highly convention-bound grammar of political speech, and a highly normative array of strategic purposes admitted to motivate it. Its conventions are observable at all levels of expression: word choice, syntax, phrasing, tone of voice, timings, deportment, interpersonal gesture, clothing, furniture arrangement, camera positions, and so on are all highly circumscribed.

We can be more specific here by noting that these elements of public address are expected to conform to aesthetically defined norms of expression. That is because speakers, audiences, and critics appraise the success or otherwise of a remark principally by reference to its fit, or lack of fit, with the speech situation, ahead of any intellectual merit it may possess. The following news grab gives an illustrative example. In April 2008, leading up to the Beijing Olympics, a champion athlete, Jana Rawlinson, told reporters that she intended to shut out inconsequential distractions and focus on the core business of her sport (Lockyer, 2008):

I will make a pact to my fellow-fans,
that I’ll use my legs to run and not to
talk.

Two malapropisms in one sound bite makes for entertaining media, of course, so it is no fluke that this sentence survived the editing suite. The first, “my fellow-fans,” is a

dramatic irony, in that it prompts the audience to ridicule her. It rather neatly plays into a caricature of Rawlinson as narcissistic, which has been a constant theme in public criticisms of comments she has made over the years. The second, a genuine catachresis, may be more revealing for the purposes of this article, in that it embeds malapropism within the purposive strategy of Rawlinson’s remarks. It is here that she expresses the essential idea she wanted to convey, here that she creates the news value of her utterance, even if that is not entirely an intended effect.

“To run and not to talk” means to choose athletics ahead of celebrity. It is something that active legs do. For a track athlete, it rhymes conspicuously with the commitment to run and not to walk. It is life for action and life for speed, not life for reflection or perambulation. These are matters of platitude for a professional sprinter. In Rawlinson’s case, this avowal was a newsworthy utterance because she had made many headlines with things she had said off the track. And of course the malapropism is that legs do not talk. To use her legs to run is manifestly commensurate with the properties of legs; the alternative, to use her legs to talk, is absurd.

Just to use the word, ‘absurd’, though, is to analyse and not to syncretise. It is the clearest possible indicator that aesthetic norms have been usurped by analytic standards. Rawlinson’s “pact to” her fans is that she will continue to speak in formulas they can appreciate, in formulas that respect the grammar of the discourse they share with her. (In this respect, they are indeed her fellows at the same time as they are her fans.)

In any case, speakers more highly trained than Rawlinson have tripped on their uses of legs. Speaking as Australia’s deputy prime minister, Julia Gillard (2009) offered the following advice about banks that refused to pass on successive decreases in the Reserve Bank’s official rate of interest to their mortgage customers:

They should put the acid on their banks,
to offer them the best possible deal, and
if their banks don’t, then they should
walk with their feet to another bank.

Here the tautology is almost stifling: how might customers walk other than with their feet? But this question, to which the *Insiders* anchor Barry Cassidy drew attention by repeating the utterance on his programme, downplays the leading feature of the grammar, namely that Gillard's metaphor fits into a genre that includes the formula "vote with their feet." Her performance is legitimate in the same way as Rawlinson's malapropism was legitimate, because it so clearly references a widely familiar topos in contemporary public discourse, itself already legitimate due to that familiarity.

Further caveats and distinctions

In overview, political speech is judged by the inevitably aesthetic standards of success or failure that apply to all public performers; we might imagine those standards as infinitely diverse and complex, but the culture of professional politics does not allow it. Within the profession, both the performances themselves and the critical appraisals of them are heavily guided by convention, which is to say that the body of political speech clearly constitutes a discourse genre, more specifically a poetic tradition. Every political speech is informed by – recalls and anticipates – every other political speech, in the sense that all political professionals belong to the one community of practice, a 'public' that sustains and recreates itself (Warner, 2002) throughout the history of human society. Across that ambitious span of the imagination, we may reliably ascribe to all politicians a concern with fashioning messages for target publics to notice, remember, and appreciate. Certainly, written and, more recently, audio and video records of speeches, allow us to infer a constant focus on how to prompt such responses in audiences. The important distinction for a speechwriter is that he or she must first manage the attention, memory, and imaginative engagement of the speaker. The speechwriter develops messages and presents them in an effort to persuade the speaker, just as (and because) he or she hopes the speaker will use them to persuade the audience.

If differences in their mnemonic properties are fundamental to the relationship between speech and script, the common practice of publishing 'great speeches' as scripts in collected editions – often these are bestsellers – begs a question about the relationship between a speechwriter and the public memory of a speech he or she wrote. Does a speechwriter aim for the moment of performance, or for the posterity of readers as well? Of course, it is not always possible to distinguish the prepared script from the words as performed: with most known speeches, a transcript or eyewitness report is our only surviving evidence. Thus, for Abraham Lincoln's famous Gettysburg address (Lincoln, 2004 [1863]), we can only reconstruct his performance from the journalists' written accounts of his spoken words, plus their written discourses about the performance and its context.

Viewing this question from the opposite angle, whereas much critical discussion canvasses problems with transcript – the written record of performance – a speechwriter's script is always in prospect, not retrospect. A script anticipates deeds by the performer whom its writer serves, to whose performance the writing service is necessarily subordinate. Thus the cover page on a publicly released script for a political speech in English is typically marked with some version of the caveat 'check against delivery,' meaning the remarks of the speaker may depart from the script, and so the script will be redundant as a record of discourse to the extent that they do. Roland Barthes might dub it a *speakerly* text: not the finished speech-product itself, but rather a moment in the process of producing speech (Barthes & Balzac, 1990). Whereas a transcript of a speech is a written record – however accurately or inaccurately compiled – of the phrasing of the speech itself, a script can never record more than intentions about things to say. Even read long after the speech has been delivered, a script can only ever look forward in contingency to the things a speaker might say. This is a striking example of Eagleton's phenomenological theory of poetry (Eagleton, 2007): a speechwriter's script is always in the act of becoming a speech, but it can never

complete that action, can never achieve that status, without ceasing to be a script.

Conclusion

The creative tension that lies at the heart of speechwriting work is one between the situation of a speech, with its pragmatic requirements for style and content, and the opportunities to introduce new meanings which that situation represents. This tension between requirements and opportunities, which we are accustomed to view through the lens of public relations, is also familiar throughout the literature of poetic composition – across cultures ancient and modern. A speech situation sets aesthetic norms for performance that are, in effect, the verse-form or poetic genre a given speech attempts simultaneously to comply with and to harness. It is a speechwriter's job to recognise the qualities that a given situation requires, the opportunities it affords, and to compose a script that navigates these dynamics to the greatest strategic advantage for the speaker.

On a final point concerning creativity, the suggestion that a speech situation sets out the ideological norms or grammar for a speech performance to navigate does not mean they are immovable. As the grand example of King's 'I have a dream' shows for writers and performers alike, there is scope for innovation. Done effectively, such innovation changes the norms for future speakers. Poets worthy of note are forever experimenting with form, stretching the boundaries, enabling audiences and readers to understand new truths by creating new ways of presenting them. As we see in this article, the poetic faculty for language is one that public communicators need to tap into constantly – and so, ubiquitously, speechwriters are employed to fulfil the same purpose.

References

- Barthes, R., & Balzac, H. d. (1990). *S/Z*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Clark, T. (2006). Towards a poetics of contemporary public rhetoric: The performer's need for platitude and cliché. *International Journal of the Humanities*, 4(2), 15-22.
- Clark, T. (2008). The cup of John Howard's poetry. *Overland*, 190, 22-28.
- Clark, T. (2009). Towards a formulaic poetics of contemporary public language: The poetic formula in focus. *AUMLA – the Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association*, 111, 103-129.
- Coe, R. N. (1965). Eugene Ionesco: The meaning of un-meaning. In *Aspects of Drama and the theatre: Five Kathleen Robinson lectures, delivered in the University of Sydney, 1961-1963* (pp. 1-33). Sydney: Sydney University Press.
- Crozier, M. (2007). Recursive governance: Contemporary political communication and public policy. *Political Communication*, 24(1), 1-18. doi:10.1080/10584600601128382
- Crozier, M. (2008). Listening, learning, steering: New governance, communication and interactive policy formation. *Policy and Politics*, 36(1), 3-19.
- Eagleton, T. (2007). *How to read a poem*. Malden, MA; Melbourne; Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gillard, J. (2009). ABC Insiders Program. Retrieved from: <http://www.abc.net.au/insiders/content/2009/s2579218.htm>
- Hansen, D. D. (2003). *The dream: Martin Luther King Jr. and the speech that inspired a nation*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Hardgrave, G. (2006, April). *What is quality? Perceptions of quality from around the world*. Address at the International Education Forum, Brisbane. Retrieved from: <http://www.dest.gov.au/Ministers/Media/Hardgrave/2006/04/H001050406.asp>

- Johnston, J., & Zawawi, C. (2009). *Public relations: Theory and practice*. Crows Nest, N.S.W: Allen & Unwin.
- King Jr., M. L. (1963). I have a dream. *American Rhetoric top 100 speeches*. Retrieved from: <http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihaveadream.htm>
- Lincoln, A. (2004) [1863]. Lincoln rededicates the union at Gettysburg. In W. Safire (Ed.), *Lend me your ears: Great speeches in history* (pp. 59-60). New York, NY; London: W. W. Norton.
- Lockyer, P. (2008). *Transcript: Jana Rawlinson prepares for Beijing*. Retrieved from: <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2007/s2217820.htm>
- Obama, B. (2008, March 18). *Transcript: Barack Obama's speech on race*. CBS News. Retrieved from: <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/03/18/politics/main3947908.shtml>
- Ong, W. (1982). *Orality and literacy: The technologizing of the word*. New York, NY; London: Routledge.
- Tanner, L. (2009). House of Representatives: Official Hansard. No.9 (Forty Second Parliament, First Session – Fifth Period), 04/05/2010.
- Warner, M. (1990). *The letters of the Republic: Publication and the public sphere in eighteenth-century America*. Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press.
- Warner, M. (2002). *Publics and counter publics*. New York, NY; Cambridge, MA: Zone Books.
- Watson, D. (1995). Foreward. In M. Ryan (Ed.), *Advancing Australia: The speeches of Paul Keating, Prime Minister* (pp. xiv). Sydney: Big Picture.
- Watson, D. (2002). *Recollections of a bleeding heart: A portrait of Paul Keating PM*. Milsons Point, N.S.W.: Knopf.

Author contact details:

Dr Tom Clark
Senior Lecturer
Victoria University, Melbourne
tom.clark@vu.edu.au

Copyright statement:

The author of this article has elected, in the interests of open dissemination of scholarly work, to provide this article to you in open access format. This means that, in accordance with the principles of the Budapest Open Access Initiative (<http://www.soros.org/openaccess/>), you may freely copy and redistribute this article provided you correctly acknowledge its author and source, and do not alter its contents.

Notes:

¹ This article in part builds on work previously presented to conferences at Nanyang Technical University, Singapore (IACSIT 2009) and the University of NSW, Sydney (AULLA 2009). I am particularly grateful for the structural and theoretical suggestions of the two anonymous referees who reviewed it.