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School of Media, Creative Arts and Social Inquiry

The Cross-Cultural Corridor: Performing Māori/Pākehā  
Identities

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Declaration:

To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material, which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

Human Ethics The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) - updated March 2014. The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC 00262), Approval Number #MCCA-01-14.

Signature:

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## Abstract:

As a child of mixed Māori/Pākehā heritage, I looked and passed as white. This strategy of fitting in, persisted into adult life when, through my experiences, family stories and visual art practice, I began to understand what I had been doing and what I had lost. I began the process of finding out where I fitted.

The PhD project, which combines artwork and exegetical narrative, produces, accelerates, contextualises and deepens that process. It also theorises and seeks to understand, in the context of ongoing research within the area of mixed ethnicity/race in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The narratives and artworks are presented and understood through my personal life experiences, and the contextualised family histories of my Great-great-grandfather, who left the white world to live as a Māori, and my Great grandmother who disguised aspects of her Māori self to live in the white world. All have shaped who I am, my art practice and what it produces, and my behaviours (past and present).

I began this PhD with the production of three series of artwork. The "*Blanket Cloak*" series, tells the story of Rewi life as how he lived when *he took the blanket*; also acting as a material metaphor for how the *other* is positioned. The Tiki tour "*Place Mat(p)s*" series exists as an assemblage of place, my connection with Granny and belonging to the memories and experiences of living in an in between space. The last series "*Masked*" is a commentary on the struggles of living with my identity masked by skin colour and colonisation.

The stories passed down through my family form the framework that supports the development of both my creative practice and exegesis. These specific stories provide the critical platform for the investigation of the broader questions around what it is to perform a Māori/Pākehā identity. The stories highlight the challenges associated with living in a corridor, where two cultures meet, in a circular process of separating and coming together. I describe my place within this cross-cultural corridor as an "un-marked space", in that my physical appearance hides my Māori descent and affiliation with Māori culture. As a space that cannot be marked or labelled, yet as I acknowledge where I come from, it is marked and labelled by historical discourse bound to racial categories and theories.

## Abstract

The exegesis seeks to uncover and analyse the broader implications placed on me, and the generations of my family, living within a cultural-corridor of mixed Māori/Pākehā ethnicity/race. With the bringing together theoretical context and conceptual framework, the document is divided into three major chapters: the first structured by my Great-great-grandfather's story; the second, my great grandmother's; and the third, mine. These chapters also interweave theoretical research with a creative arts practice.

Drawing on theorists such as Homi Bhabha for the concept of third space, hybridity and postcolonial studies, Butler for theories on performativity, Frantz Fanon's postcolonial critical theory and Michel Foucault's power and knowledge, plus other academic writers and contemporary artists, I examine the challenges of inhabiting this ambiguous space, this cultural corridor of in-betweenness referred to above. As these three chapters, and the introduction include theoretical context and discussion, they also describe the methodologies of the art practice, and how it relates to the building and the masking and unmasking of me and my family's stories and identity. The art becomes another space where I perform and uncover through conceptualised research and knowledge and different insight, with the language of materials, this can be read as a socially informed document, re-storying the unordinary.

Identifying with relearning and unlearning has been a critical component of the research area of performing Maori/Pākehā identity in a cross-cultural corridor. I had to unlearn my Anglo-centric knowledge and begin to see life with a Māori lens. I am challenged to relearn my history and to know who I am and where I fit, but most importantly I found that I do have a place, a place that was contested by living my earlier life as a white girl. Through the discoveries and insights achieved – outlined in the conclusion – I seek to contribute to the continuing debates regarding racial identity by renegotiating a space to perform and by promoting a greater understanding of cultural in-betweenness.

Introduction

*"Despite all our desperate, eternal attempts to separate, contain and mend, categories always leak".*

Trinh T. Minh-Ha<sup>1</sup>, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Post-coloniality and Feminism*.

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<sup>1</sup>Professor Trinh T. Minh-Ha, Vietnamese filmmaker, writer and literary theorist deals with feminism and post-colonialism, cultural politics.

*Once upon a time, there was a little girl. I was that little girl, about the age of 8 or 9.*

*I knew; I don't know how I knew, but I just did. I was a member of the white club, free from the brown colour of my cousins. I fitted in and looked and lived the part.*

*I played with the Māori kids, but they weren't my best friends.*

*We weren't rich, but my dad was trying really hard. He was going to give us everything. I remember, we could see our home from school and one day I saw a TV aerial on the roof. Well, I couldn't contain my excitement and as soon as the school bell rang, I was off. I had never run home so fast, wasn't even scared of the ghost house. On this day, it was the least of my concerns.*

*I just wanted to get home and see our new TV, and I made it in the door puffing – where is it, where is it? Mum said that the TV hadn't arrived, only the aerial, but I was still happy. From the outside, it looked like we had a television and I could pretend that we were rich, just like I pretended we were white.*

*This was the first moment I can remember being confronted by my identity and by the choices I made at that time. That day we were just like everyone else in the neighbourhood. A family coming up in the world, I knew then that we really belonged to this lifestyle; we had the proof that we belonged. That metal television aerial announced to the world, "Look at us, we had made it just like everyone else". Now I look back and see how superficial this all is, one metal aerial sitting on our rooftop to proclaim, "Look at us". That day I felt superior. That superficiality continued with me for many years; it covered over the hollowness lurking inside of me, the triviality of things seems to be all that I needed.*



Figure 1 Leonie Mansbridge, *'Masked Series'*;<sup>2</sup> 2016, Photocopy, Masking Tape 84x60 cm.

The telling of stories that shaped who I am: A few things about me.

I do not have any of the phenotypes of my Māori culture. To others, I appear white due to the fairness of my skin and my Māoriness is camouflaged.

How identity is framed or considered through hidden identity markers? Henni Collins<sup>3</sup> states, "We have little choice as to how others perceive us and can face disbelief if our appearance does not match our self-identity" (Collins 1999, 8).

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<sup>2</sup> Masked Series one of the many pieces I developed using masking tape, paint and spray paint.

<sup>3</sup> Henni Collins a former newspaper journalist, author from Wellington Aotearoa/New Zealand who coined the phrase 'Nga Tangata Awarua' in her investigation of mixed Māori/Pākehā descent.

## Introduction

This research project explores the mental negotiations that determine performances of Māori/Pākehā<sup>4</sup> identity, cross-cultural corridors that are understood through personal life, individual family narratives and experiences that have shaped who I am. They have also shaped my behaviours, past and present. The tales or oral histories passed down through my family form the framework that supports the development of my creative practice and exegesis. In other words, these specific stories provide the platform of lived experience, which demands an investigation of the broader questions around what it is to perform a Māori/Pākehā identity. Fanon *Black Skin, White Mask* first published in 1952, explored the “Lived experience of the black” (Fanon 2008, ix). Fanon suggests “Ontology does not allow us to understand the being of the black man since it ignores the lived experience” the indifference of the cultural ‘other’ were eradicated as they opposed the way of the new colonial world (Fanon 2008, 90). Since the 1980s, there has been an alternative method of research that seeks to understand lived and cultural experience (Ellis 2004, 90). Autoethnography can be used to resist colonialist exploiting culture and the disregarding of cultural stories, opening a space for resistance, where there are no longer others to speak for us. Re-writing of selves in the social world enables a voice that has previously been silenced. Minh-ha questions that before we, the ‘selves’ had a voice, facts and truths were represented by the dominant culture of the West. “What I resent most, however, is not his inheritance of a power he so often disclaims, disengaging himself from a system he carries with him, but the ear, eye and pen, which records in his language while pretending to speak through mine, on my behalf” (Minh-ha 1989,48). They highlight the challenges associated with living in the corridor where two cultures continually meet in a circular process of separating and coming together.

Being concerned with how I am shaped through storytelling, the exegesis also includes short segments of memoir-style writing, similar to the beginning of the introduction, standing in as a storytelling voice. In some of these passages, I am in conversation with myself, in others with my Great- great-grandfather and my Granny. While my father's role is integral to my research, Dad's story is for another time. I reference him as he is the link thought-out my research but not the content or context. My Australian/English mother is also not discussed in this research, even though her bloodlines and descendants are very much a part of who I am. I am not distancing myself from that side of my identity, but this research is about identity that has been camouflaged and denied by colonisation and which I am now reclaiming.

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<sup>4</sup> Pākehā, is a Māori term for the white inhabitants of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Merriam Webster Dictionary: A person who is not of Māori descent; *especially*: a white person

## Introduction

My mother appreciates and supports the importance of belonging to that part of my identity that was invalidated during my upbringing.

This voice complements academic theory by contextualising and facilitating a subjective account of identity exploration. The research, as an integrated whole, is driven by a dynamic connection between the exegetical writing, research, and my creative practice as an artist to explore and engage with my particular version of this cross-cultural corridor.

Data collection used in the thesis comes from archival and library sources, discovering a range of relevant documents such as newspapers, bureaucratic documents, historical studies, and texts that cited people who lived through the period and who may have met Rewi. These resources were then engaged in close textual analysis of the materials found.

Through conversation over meals, sharing old photos and family gatherings the family stories corroborated my memories and established the family narrative upon which the thesis draws. Note taking was unnecessary as these oral korero (stories) served to reinforce my existing memories.

The required ethics clearance is founded on this methodology of data collection.

The autoethnographic method was particularly relevant, taking the self as a source of information and study and also being critically aware of, and acknowledging the subjective nature of such recollections. This critical self-reflexive approach relied on three different methods for obtaining data on family history: research and analysis of primary and secondary source texts; anecdotal/conversational exchanges with others and subjective/autoethnographic narrative.

Leavy suggest that Art based practices have established a new methodology since the 1990s, she establishes that art based research "allows research questions to be posed in a new way" (Leavy 2009,12). Leavy also implies that Art based practices "can be employed as a means of creating critical awareness or raising consciousness" (Leavy 2009,13). My art practice can be seen as an adaption of traditional research methods in a similar way that I have used autoethnography methodology that acknowledges storytelling as an academic method.

The term Pākehā is used in this study to denote the cultural experiences and practices of the dominant white population in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Pākehā represents a historically and culturally specific understanding of white identity in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Aotearoa will also be used with New Zealand to acknowledge the Māori name for New Zealand. It has a literal translation, *Land of the Long White Cloud* (Encyclopedia of New Zealand 1966).

The investigation includes creative art practice; and the art is discussed in relation to the language of materials, theoretical research on third space, hybridity, the construction of other, autoethnographic and exegetical writing. Although the art practice methodologies are outlined and discussed in all chapters, autoethnography is outlined as part of the introduction. Autoethnography acknowledges storytelling and the production of a text (Denzin 2003, 246,261 Wall 2008, 40), and it is included in the exegesis as an authentic academic method.

As Jennifer Houston<sup>5</sup> suggests, autoethnography is a discourse on the margins, where an insight by the researcher who can write from the perspective of the '*Other*' may be heard (Houston 2007,45).

Linda Tuhiwai Smith<sup>6</sup> suggests that storytelling is a fundamental part of Indigenous Research; that such stories are a way of passing down indigenous philosophies and cultural values; individual stories of lives and the collective life of the community, these everyday stories connect us to the past (Smith 1999,145). Carolyn Ellis<sup>7</sup> and the other authors previously referenced indicate that autoethnography, as a method, is a way to illustrate and investigate personal experience, delivering considerable authentic cultural experience. The relational practices of autoethnography and shared experiences support a better understanding of the cultural space that is inhabited (Ellis 2011,3). The "*Other*" have had their voice taken from them and re-voiced by the oppressors; Much like Rewi's<sup>8</sup> life as it was recounted in newspaper reports, autoethnography gives the option of the first-person voice where the personal and culture come together.

My experiences through reflection, examine the personal self, bringing attention to participation and representation as the subject, not as the object. McIlveen<sup>9</sup> suggests that "autoethnography is not an autobiography, as in "not simply telling of life" but "it is a specific form of critical enquiry that is embedded in theory and practice (practice as a researcher)" (McIlveen 2008,3).

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<sup>5</sup> Jennifer Houston Lecturer University of Tasmania.

<sup>6</sup> Professor Linda Tuhiwai Te Rina Smith is professor of indigenous education at the University of Waikato North Island Aotearoa/New Zealand. Author of Decolonising Methodologies: Research and indigenous Peoples.

<sup>7</sup> Carolyn Ellis Distinguished University Professor at the University of South Florida has an international and distinguished reputation on autoethnography.

<sup>8</sup> Rewi is my Great-great-grandfather also known as David Colburn, his Māori name is Rewi.

<sup>9</sup> Associate Professor Peter McIlveen School of Linguistics University of Southern Queensland.

## Introduction

Autoethnography, at last, offers the opportunity to contest the epistemology of western research on indigenous culture, and the approaches made in researching the 'Other' through a western lens. These stories and lived experience are not just stories as they challenge the untruth that the dominant culture has disseminated for years with their discourse on colonisation; they also offer redress. The theoretical research includes post-colonial cultural theorists Homi Bhabha, Franz Fanon, Michel Foucault, Edward Said, Robert Young, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, gender theorist Judith Butler, and writers such as Toni Morrison.

The research will also focus on primary source material in the form of historical newspaper articles specific to my Great-great-grandfather's story. Relevant contemporary artists such as Destiny Deacon, Tracey Williams, Robert MacPherson, Louise Bourgeois, and Colin McCahon will be examined.

As my family's stories are the kernel of this work they have established the structure, and consequently I have divided the writing into three chapters: The first animated by my great, great grandfather's story; the second by my great grandmother; the third and final, is where I come fully into view.

I explore the life of my great, great grandfather, David Colburn, whom the Māori called Rewi (Māori name for Davy or David); from the years he *took the blanket*. This is a colloquial phrase that was used to describe Pāhekā, or Europeans, who left the white world to live with the natives, the Māori. Most Europeans who did this found their clothes ill-suited to life in the bush, discarding their trousers or uniforms for a more comfortable blanket (Bentley 1999, 170).

Rewi's choice, to extricate himself from the world he knew for an unfamiliar place, was made in 1865. In chapter one, I look at the blanket as a material for my artwork and discuss other artists that use the unassuming blanket as a vehicle for visually articulating the effects of colonisation on a native populace. I also examine how everyday language, through newspaper articles, can activate assumptions in a concealed way to drive a racist agenda, motivated by the colonial power of oppression.

Chapter two is my continued journey of Rewi to Mere, his daughter and my great grandmother. My close relationship with Mere moves into a spiritual joining to her and our land. Referencing Edward Casey and his concept of body memory I redevelop this notion in my art practice by using placemats as the support for my *Tiki Tour series*, an assemblage of place and belonging. This creative research acknowledges my belonging to my *Tangata Whenua* (People of the Land).

Chapter three starts with me growing up, with stories of how I fitted into society. Understanding where I belong through the legacies that Rewi and then Mere left behind. I move into my masked body of works that become the indicator to signify that identity is more than appearance. I look to other artists who question identity, investigating how colonisation nearly trapped me by blanketing over my heritage. Running alongside the theoretical questions as a visual artist, I employ the actions of doing and making and the language of materials in order to further reveal a Māori/Pākehā identity.

Embedded throughout this research project is the question, How can storytelling, visual and written text, be used as methods for dismantling and reconstructing identity?

Moveability of Identity by Performance: "I'm being seen, is anybody looking?"

In the following chapters, the italicised writing is an autoethnographic marker of the personalised stories and conversations that I have with my ancestors and with myself. In telling and retelling these stories, greater discourses are at play, a perspective that gender theorist Judith Butler<sup>10</sup> supports. Although Butler's focus is on gender, the issues she addresses are relevant to groups that sit on the margins of identity.

Butler argues that our identity is not essential or innate, but performative, and not dependent on the individual alone. Instead, the "performance of gender is compelled by norms (traditional master narratives), none of us chooses these norms but is the condition of our agency; they also limit our agency" (Butler in Olson 2000,729). Butler contends that discourse constructs the subject and, through this process, identities are performed.

She suggests that discourses that encourage individuals and communities to play out established parts (in my case, "the white girl") are fundamental to political agendas that serve dominant political objectives (Butler 1993,4). I suggest that in examining the constraints of my subjecthood, my Māori/Pākehā identity has been subject to renewal through the very process of writing this exegesis and through the development and production of the related visual art practice.

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<sup>10</sup> Judith Butler Maxine Elliot Professor of comparative literature California University Berkeley; Philosopher and Gender theorist

## Introduction

The studio practice utilises masking and unmasking, packing and unpacking, deconstructing and reconstructing as agencies for visualisation. These agencies establish a framework in this project that illustrates how Māori/Pākehā have lived and are living, acting out a set of rules that have been socially established, straddling the divide between both colonisers and colonised.

Butler acknowledges this acting as a changeable concept: "In [these acts] its very character as performative resides the possibility of contesting [their] reified status " (Butler 1988,520). With the possibility of creating a different act of performance, I have chosen to test my ability to destabilise these constructions by declaring myself a half-caste.

I unashamedly reveal the part of my identity that is hidden by the external colour of my skin. I have confronted a world weighted with a history that causes discomfort through the subtexts that surround racial impurity. Is it possible to shift the registers associated with such a provocative term as half-caste in order to question the master fictions that have served supremacist attitudes around racial purity? The attachment to *not quite pure*, where one is a half, not a whole is often associated with the language of colonisation.

Butler acknowledges that in calling commonplace language into question, discomfort is a necessary byproduct of attempting to formulate something new. This is what Michel Foucault refers to as "the politics of discomfort" (Olson 2000,731). The defamiliarising of what we know, pushing to the uncomfortable, through the questioning of our common beliefs, is crucial to this critique. The challenges that using the term half-caste have presented will be addressed more fully in chapter three.

Living in a cultural corridor exists subjectively as a way of being in the world. It is a space that oscillates between Māori and Pākehā identities and allows for an engagement with both sides affording the freedom to be able to identify and be identified as both: half of one thing and half of the other; a half-caste. This is explored more fully in chapter two by way of critical theorist Homi Bhabha's notion of the third space (1994,55). Briefly, Bhabha proposes the third space as in-between/hybrid space, enabling the third space to emerge (1994,55).

What does it mean to be not one or the other, but one and the other at the same time? This third space, while useful, is too generalised, creating a challenge through the use of the binaries *them and us*.

## Introduction

Paul Meredith<sup>11</sup> confronts these binary assumptions as problematic to the politics of Aotearoa/New Zealand. He suggests a reconsideration of *us/them*, to *both*, therefore, not only recognising difference, but also affinity (Meredith 1998,1).

Much like Meredith's suggestion of 'both' the half-caste sits in both spaces of Māori/Pākehā, and this thesis will consider, as have many scholars, that the third space is at best incongruous. These concepts are explored and discussed in more detail in chapter three.

The choices I made without knowing the consequences: Being misled

I did face the enigma in my early childhood of choosing between either one identity or the other. I now realise that by participating in that act of opening and shutting the division, I had been colonised. We, young and old, make performative choices within the framework of the pervasive discourse. Butler clarifies performativity as a reiterated act, not as a single action (Butler 2007,xv). She implies that "repetitions become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony" (Butler 2007,189). Blue is for boys; pink is for girls, boys play with trucks girls play with dolls. Today there is a move away from these paradigms, but we are still inundated through the media with what we should wear and how we should look. At least partly as a consequence of this, as a young child, performing the white girl side of my identity appeared consciously or unconsciously, to be the best way to handle the situation.

It is only now, on reflection, that I can consider and clarify my feelings within the context of that time. Over fifty years have passed through my personal, cultural corridor, and I now know that at the time, I did not understand the direct ramifications of my actions even though I felt them. I was living a lie and, I carry this guilt with me to this day.

*I felt superior when I was down the country with my cousins; I knew that I could go back home to the white world, shoes on my feet and a bow in my hair. I loved the freedom I had in the country; we would go down to the river and catch eels, wander the farm paddocks looking for mushrooms, making cubbies in the hayshed. Kids were having fun, more than kids, family. Kaylene, Linda and Mary were more than cousins to me, more like sisters.*

*But I lived in the city; the big smoke, with my bedroom, no one sharing a room, shoes on my feet.*

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<sup>11</sup> Paul Meredith is the Pou Hautū and supports the activities of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Māori). Meredith has taught in the Faculty of Law, the History Programme and the School of Māori Studies at Victoria as an adjunct lecturer.

Melinda Webber<sup>12</sup> argues that as a Māori/Pākehā, racial identity is more complex because of the problems of negotiating the contextual spaces of Māori, and of Pākehā (Webber 2008,81). Webber negotiates her life as a half-caste and walks the path of in-betweenness with apprehension, coping with comments about her fairness, being subjected to overt racism. In her professional life as an academic, Webber has an awareness of both mainstream and Māori domains, but her difficulty is that in both these territories, she is seen to have a minority voice (Webber 2008,11,12).

The concept of identity is very complex, and how one's identity is experienced is negotiated by social context. Triggered with changing societal probabilities identity varies at different moments, my own self-definition has moved throughout my lifelong journey. Not being distinguished as Māori I did not have to mention who I was, for my colour announced my whiteness. Now my skin colour distorts, as I identify myself as Māori and reveal my own experiences of the mobility of identity through my writings.

Fanon proposes, "I must constantly remind myself that the real leap consists of introducing invention into life". "In the world, I am heading for, I am endlessly creating myself" (Fanon 2008,204).

Avril Bell's<sup>13</sup> position on cultural identity comes from a cultural studies perspective. Her analysis suggests that our way of thinking is influenced by history, particularly colonial history and the ways it denoted Māori/Pākehā identities.

These constructions continue to prevail, painting ideologies of European racial dominance over the other.

The dominant ideology of racial theories presented the Māori as less developed a savage. In contrast, the Europeans were a superior race, and it was this superiority that justified the European civilising mission (Bell 2004,126). In Aotearoa/New Zealand and elsewhere, this history and its contemporary consequences are set out in detail later in this exegesis.

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<sup>12</sup> Associate Professor Melinda Webber Auckland University. Ngāti Whakaue; Ngāpuhi.

<sup>13</sup> Dr Avril Bell explores the ongoing effects of colonialism on the construction of Māori and Pākehā identities. Identity politics concerning associations amongst indigenous and settler peoples, is at the focus of her research.

## Introduction

Considering Meredith's views on *hybrid*, he applies the collaging together of the term to the racial term half-caste. "I am not alleging that I am biologically constituted 50/50 per cent Māori/Pākehā. I am not, and quite frankly do not subscribe to an identity based on quantification of blood. What I do mean though is that my father is a Pākehā and my mother is of Ngati Kaputuhi, Maniapoto" (Meredith 2004,2). Here Meredith, like Bell sees hybrid as half-caste and in a position to advance relations and understandings between Māori and Pākehā (Bell 2004,128).

Meredith unravels the question of identity for Māori/ Pākehā, locating and positioning in in-betweenness. Meredith has always been very clear about who he is, "I am simply a half-caste; I am both Māori and Pākehā" (Meredith 2004,2).

Webber writes of her awareness of both cultures because she also lives as a half-caste. She admits to being seen as a minority voice, but with education and with working as part of a collective, she believes she has the potential to get louder and louder (Webber 2008,12). Meredith indicates that with the slow changing of societal attitudes towards half-castes, "there is a great opportunity to address our position and to rid the negative attitudes directed at us from both sides" (Meredith1998,4).

A kind of particular understanding in the margins:

This position may be perceived as being advantageous, where we have the authority to help consolidate cultural principles to close the gap between minority cultures such as ourselves within dominant Aotearoa/New Zealand culture.

I would argue that the term hybrid is complicated and unadaptable and therefore problematic when used in the context of mixed identity.

I live with the contradiction of being both coloniser and colonised, yet I use this position as an opportunity to resist, retrench in the margins, and retrieve what we were to remake ourselves. I am proud to be a half-caste, Māori/Pākehā, belonging to a third space that contradicts the two binaries of colonisation, so the enigma is what do I name myself?

Professor Ken Gelder<sup>14</sup>, in his article *Postcolonial Voodoo*, relates to Leela Gandhi's<sup>15</sup> views in *Postcolonial Theory: An Introduction 1998* where Gandhi advocates that the commonly established understanding that ethnicity is positioned in the margins or the fringes of the majority can create obstacles to dismantle these foundations, constructing an entity that Associate Professor Mike Hill,<sup>16</sup> identified as "Whiteness wants... is something that whiteness cannot have and still be white". Gandhi views that ethnicity is not to be confused with something less than whiteness, but to be looked at something additional that whiteness has been deprived of " a certain abject yearning: a yearning to be in possession of an ethnicity that always seems to lie elsewhere" (Gelder 2010,89).

"Although white is white and privileged, there is an abject desire to be in ownership of an ethnicity with a certain fascination that is continuously inaccessible" (Gelder 2010,89). This ownership can never be bought or acquired; the ethnicity, of whiteness, will always lack the cultural diversity that I, as an in-betweener encompass and honour. I often reflect on the substantial gift that Great-great-grandfather bestowed on me, that day in 1865, where he left the white world to live with the natives.

History: A state of affairs.

Aotearoa/New Zealand history dates back 1000 years with the arrival of Polynesians. The European discovery of Aotearoa/New Zealand dates from the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman in 1642 and then 1769 with Captain James Cook. European settlement did not begin until the 1830s when Māori chiefs participated in the affiliation of the European, which was then considered advantageous to both. Māori became adaptable and restructured their living habits to produce crops for trading with the Europeans.

This encounter saw the peaceful trading of flax, timber and food in exchange for muskets, blankets, clothing and tools (Orange 1987,16).

During the 1830s American and French interest in Aotearoa/New Zealand was becoming noticeable, resulting in cautionary concern for the British traders and missionaries.

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<sup>15</sup> Leela Gandhi Professor of Humanities and English at Brown University Rhode Island USA; a noted academic of Postcolonial theory

<sup>16</sup> Mike Hill Associate Professor of English University of Albany USA; Research area Race Studies

## Introduction

In addressing this issue we see the modelling of Māori attitudes toward the English Crown.

The Chaplain, Samuel Marsden, endorsed the recognition of the Crown as having a concern for Māori Welfare.

Māori were familiarised with government circles. With these relationships, Māori believed their support for settlement was shared on equal grounds. In 1832 James Busby became the King's Man, an intermediary between the races, specifying the British acknowledgement of the Māori people as their equal. In his address of 17<sup>th</sup> May 1833, Busby revealed that the King was "honouring them, by his appointment" (Orange 1987, 13). Busby then completed his speech with a sermon on how the advancement of the Māori depended on their heeding the word of God. From this, their land and trade would flourish (Orange 1987,8-13).

In 1837 William Hobson arrived as a mediator to some inter-Māori fighting, although his services were not then needed. In February 1839 Hobson accepted the post of Consul of Aotearoa/New Zealand and his principal task was to secure the sovereignty of Britain via treaty (Orange 1987,8-13).

The resultant Treaty of Waitangi would provide the Māori people with the status of British subjects. They were assured that the diplomatic function of the Crown was to enable the progress of peaceful colonisation. The transferral of power to the Crown was de-emphasised, or masked, as Māori were reassured of official recognition of Māori individuality.

The notion of masking, to cover over/cover-up is integrated into my art practice, where I use everyday masking tape, a non-art material, to implicate the masking of my identity and white skin. The masking tape is similarly used to mask over the background in photographs, highlighting the negative space as a positive space, a reversal of masking /covering, thus recognising that language may be measured and manipulated to mask meaning. Masking can also be a way of de-emphasising the images used, covering with paint, dots and embellishments. This art strategy is seen in connection to the Waitangi Treaty as it intended to take the focus away from the colonial power the Crown wanted to impose.

The Taranaki Land Wars began in 1860 and ended in an uneasy truce in 1861. Māori believed that the issues instigating the war were unresolved. Consequently, in 1868-69, the second Taranaki Wars were ignited as the Māori tried to keep control of tribal land; this war saw Rewi, my great, great grandfather fighting with the Māori against the Crown. The unfortunate outcome of these wars was the enforced confiscation of Taranaki land (Cowan 1969,143 147).

In his book *Land of the Maniapoto* (my tribal land), author Dick Craig wrote a chapter on Famous King Country Families; he talks about the Louis Hetet family whose history is well infused into the Maniapoto Korero (stories). Academic Researcher Paul Meredith is descendant of this family (Craig 1951,43). Craig recalls the importance of those Europeans who had married into the tribe acting as intermediaries and councillors of the chiefs, Pāhekā were a highly prized resource. Craig also mentions David Coburn Rewi. He says "Coburn was torn away from his duty in North Taranaki during the Māori war" where he joined Maniapoto's chief Wetere te Reranga's Taurekareka (Slave) (Craig 1951,45). Perhaps Rewi was not spoken about with the same high regard as the other Europeans like Hetet, but Wetere te Reranga always treated him with respect. Rewi became part of the tribe. He was given five wives and was a father to over 25 children. To my knowledge, the Colburn<sup>17</sup> name is well known around Mokau, even though I have only found my Granny, her Brother Pou and two other sisters.

The Massacre at White Cliff, in which Rewi was allegedly involved, was one of the very last acts of the Māori Wars, a war that was considered over until this incident occurred. Rewi was implicated in the Whiteley Massacre at Pukearuhe in 1869. Refuting his involvement in the Massacre the Ngati Maniapoto natives of Mokau gave numerous conflicting accounts. Hone, Wetere te Rerenga made a statement in 1882. However, his version is not dependable, due to conflicting accounts, given by other natives and Colburn. He claimed Rewi (Colburn) called out, *shoot him; dead men don't tell tales*. The Reverend Whiteley was killed instantly. Wetere te Rerenga gave the names of the whole party that fired, Colburn, Philips (half-castes), Ben Titokorangi and other natives. Wetere te Rerenga stated: "He was powerless to prevent the murder and turned away so that he should not see it" (Taranaki Herald,1871).

Colburn declared that he was inland of Mokau at the time (Auckland Star, 1931). Whatever really transpired at White Cliffs will never be known.

In 1944 James Cowan<sup>18</sup> wrote *Tales of the Māori Border*, Raupo Books. In the chapter, *A Basket of Peaches* is the story of great, great grandfather Rewi (Colburn). It tells the tale of how a beautiful Māori maiden with a *Kete* (basket) of *Pititi* (peaches) lured him into the Māoridom. Colburn set up home in a *whare* (*home*) with her at the foot of Puke-Kiwi Hill Mokau. *Kete pititi* was only one of his wives. Cowan described Colburn as a "type of rebel against civilised society" (Cowan 1982,72).

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<sup>17</sup> There have been many different spellings for Coburn/Colburn and Coburn so where these have been used it is as he was named in the article.

<sup>18</sup> James Cowan (14 April 1870 – 6 September 1943) was an Aotearoa/New Zealand non-fiction author, noted for his books on colonial history and Māori ethnography.

The consequence of Colburn being lured from the Military Settlers, he was indicted for insubordination, resulting in two tots of rum being withdrawn as punishment, seven days without grog (Cowan 1982,72-73).

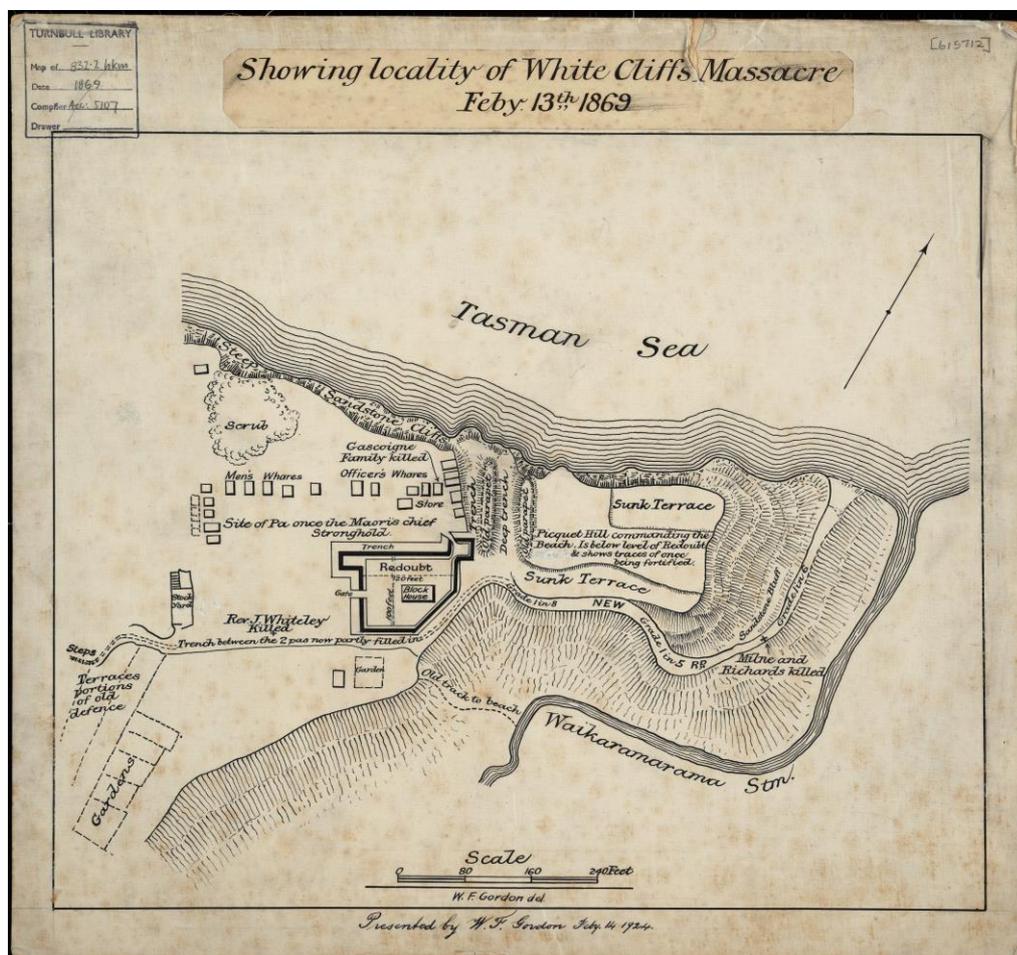


Figure 2 Gordon, William Francis Robert, 1846-1936. Gordon, William Francis Robert, d. 1936: Showing locality of White Cliffs massacre, Feby. 13th. 1869. [ms map]. W. F. Gordon, delt., [1869]. Ref: MapColl-832.2hkm/1869/Acc.5107. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. [/records/23045505](https://records.23045505)

There has been some speculation that the Māori Maiden was a fictitious story and he just walked away with his rifle, believing there must be more to life.

Who knows the events of that day in February 1865? He was comparable to Kimble Kent, another well known, Pākehā/Māori, whom Cowan knew well, both having come into disagreeable encounters with their military superiors and absconded to the Māori. In 1864 Colburn was a Military Settler stationed at Pukearuru near White Cliffs, the place that in five years became the scene of the massacre of Lieutenant Gascoigne and his family, Rev John Whitely and other soldiers. Colburn was blamed for initiating the massacre; he refuted this claim in one of the last conversations he had with Cowan (Auckland Star 1927,12).

Cowan describes Bent and Colburn as renegade soldiers who *took the blanket*.

His version states that like Bent, Colburn was demoted to the lowest stratum in Pākehā-Māoridom. Their place was of a servant. Wetere te Reranga the chief became Colburn's master and owner. However, Colburn was treated well by Te Wetere (Cowan 1982,73). Cowan meets Colburn up in the Mokau river area in 1904, nearly 40 years after he had left the white world. Colburn's arms and chest bore tattooed names. Unfortunately, Cowan never recorded them. Colburn told Cowan that *Kete-Pititi* (Basket of peaches) was only the first of his five wives (Cowan 1982,75). I like to believe that Rewi was lured away with a basket of peaches and a pretty maiden.

Having engaged with some of the historical, cultural background and experiences of Great-great-grandfather, I can now identify with much of the phenomenon of his time. The languages and history of classification were used to identify the *other*, which were used as a strategic aim of control and power. These features are reflected in this research project, through an inquiry that evolves studio-based research, theoretical research and autoethnographic exegetical writing.

Art is integral to this research, weaving its way throughout the theory and storytelling. The methodologies of art are managed in a similar way to the research through theory, doing, making, reading, and using the semiotics of the material as a directional device to demonstrate outcomes.

The resultant artworks are conceptual, offering a minimal and often colourful presentation to the audience. The works also offer coded interpretations of the dominant messages and the underlying, confronting emotions emerging from these personal stories.

*I have played the game most of my life. I learnt from an early age, to make the visible invisible, just like the TV aerial showed the neighbourhood that we had made it, but it was a facade, just like our identity.*

*I am not undermining my childhood; we never missed out, only my culture. Life was good.*

*As a young girl, I sat at my treadle sewing machine, stitching away, making my clothes. I only had one simple pattern, but I adapted and changed that pattern using different materials, stitches and embellishments to construct new outfits. Now I adapt my identity. I am the same me, but the invisible is now visible. With five generations of colonisation behind me, I am performing in my cultural corridor.*

## Introduction

Rewi as a white man was socially constructed as *other*. Granny lived with the invisibility of her culture through the conventions that sanctioned how she should act. My father enacted, a generation later, the performance that was socially established for assimilation. I will explore how my identity was developed by these complex histories, and how I have managed, through art practice and theory, to resist and rework that development.

Great –Great-Grandfather: Chapter One

Great-great-grandfather: Chapter One

*"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it." Atticus Finch.*

*Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird. (Lee 1973, 35)*

*Rewi I'm telling your story. You are an important person in my life, and your life's journey needs to be re-told as a counter-story to uncover some of the colonial un-truths spread by journalists in the newspapers of the time.*

Remembering, the beginning-ness of:

This chapter reveals aspects of the life and times of Great-great-grandfather, at the age of around twenty, his life changed for him and for generations after. I refer to Homi Bhabha's ideology of in-betweenness as necessary to this research. The connection language plays as a colonising tool to othering my Great-great-grandfather and his descendants. Artworks have been and will continue to be, the focus of this inquiry. Materials such as the blanket are presented as both a political and anthropological artefact employed in the creation of artworks with analysis of contemporary artists that use blankets in their practice. Robert Young will introduce the understanding of the modes of engagement used to analysis the notion of race. Remembering that the past is pivotal to where we have come from and to an understanding of what has come before us, the repatriation of family stories helps to create the foundation of where I belong. The starting point is an introduction to Great-great-grandfather, David Colburn. David, along with his family, arrived in Lyttelton, Aotearoa/New Zealand after journeying from Gravesend, England on board the ship *Chrysolite England*. He was born in Lanarkshire, Scotland on September 18, 1843. Arriving with David were his mother and father and their other five children. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 1863 David, aged around twenty, enlisted in Otago for the Taranaki Militia Settlers. This action was the start of his transformation to where he *took the blanket*, living his life as a Pākehā/Māori within a space of in-betweenness.

The space of in-betweenness is reflected through several concepts from post-colonial theory, including hybridity, third space, the construction of other, and resistance.

Post-colonial theorist Bhabha (1994) questions the west through key concepts of the third space and hybridity (Bhabha 1994,2). Bhabha looks to any occupation of the liminal space that occurs between cultures as transitional. He proposes that liminal space does not assume a marginal position. Instead, he suggests that cultural containment is impossible, and through this impossibility, another space opens up, which he refers to as the third space. This space/place is in a constant state of flux, born out of being in a perpetual state of motion where things pass into and out of simultaneously.

Bhabha's argument is regarded as an important stance within the explorations of ideologies of the *other*. He talks (Bhabha 1994,54) about incommensurability within cultural groups and recognition of this *third space* that pushes past existing cultural binaries. However, what is problematic when exploring my own identity is that Bhabha does not come from a position of *us/them, half-caste, mixed* where both spaces are simultaneously occupied. Instead, he negotiates from the locus of *other*, as in a separate them and us positioning. Bhabha sees how colonised societies maintain order by categorisation, relying on a separation of the European and the native.

The native has been stereotyped as *other* through the discourse of colonialism (Bhabha 1994, 96). Bhabha and I both are stereotyped as *other*, but unlike Bhabha, I occupy the space of both other and them, belonging, and yet not belonging and this liminal space is not as defined as Bhabha's third space. Everett Stonequist's<sup>19</sup>, book *Marginal Man* which develops into an investigation of groups living as mixed-blood/ living with-in two cultures, also addresses the complexities of this position: "The duality of culture produces a duality of personality, a divided self "(Stonequist,1937,217).

While Bhabha's work on the third space does provide some useful insights that relate to my sense of in-betweenness, a more resonate response is provided by Aotearoa/New Zealand writer Heeni Collins, who proposes a concept called *Ngā Tangata Awarua*. She states: *Awarua* can mean either the flowing of the two rivers, a corridor or passage; *Nga Tangata* means the people (Collins 1999).

To understand and survive outside of the narratives of the centre, while exploring identity, is to confront many questions of exclusionary existence, especially for those who exist in an in-between position. My ancestor, David Colburn, entered an in-between space in colonial Aotearoa/New Zealand, by crossing the threshold of the white world to integrate into a different culture, thereby placing my family and myself into a space of in-betweenness. In 1865 David Colburn *took to the blanket*.

According to the *Te Ara, The Encyclopedia of New Zealand* a Pākehā-Māori was a European, often a deserter shipwrecked seaman or a runaway convict, who fell into Māori hands and escaped death or slavery by becoming a tribal member.

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<sup>19</sup>Everett Stonequist 1901-1979 American Sociologist best known for his book *Marginal Man*.

They married one or more Māori women, often became tattooed and frequently reached a prominent position in the tribe, acting as an agent between Māori and Pākehā in their trading activities, thereby raising the status of the tribe (The Encyclopedia of New Zealand).

A White Man... Is the audience coloured?

When David Colburn, then known by the Māori as Rewi Colburn, disengaged from the white world, he became a Pākehā/Māori marking his descendants for generations after as half-castes, in-betweeners; I am one such descendant.

I never met Great-great-grandfather, and there is no known photographic record of him, all that exists of his life and extraordinary cultural shift, a moving away from the world he knew into an unknown culture, are mainly disparaging articles that found their way into contemporary newspapers<sup>20</sup>.

These reports describe and stigmatise him as a deserter, an undesirable and a man guilty of the alleged crimes. In one example: "I should have mentioned that with these rebels at Mokau, there is a white man living, who has adopted their habits. His name is Coburn<sup>21</sup>; the natives state that this man incited to kill the Rev. Mr Whitely" (Otago Times 1871,3).

The choice Colburn made has placed me in an in-between position of cultural ambivalence between Pākehā and Māori. However, the time lapse between his life and mine and the subsequent shifting of social and political views means that, despite its challenges, I perceive this in-between, uncertain space to be one of opportunity and adventure. Perhaps David Rewi Colburn also perceived his move into the Māori world to be one of opportunity and adventure, just as I have recognised this phenomenal legacy bestowed on me and gone on my journey.

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<sup>20</sup> Nelson Examiner 1869, Otago Witness, 1871, West Coast Times, 1871, Otago Daily Times, 1872

<sup>21</sup> There have been many different spelling of the name Colburn, Coburn and even Kopana.

*Who are you Rewi?<sup>22</sup>*

*Who are you Rewi?*

*My Great-great granddad*

*I've never seen your face*

*But you are no stranger*

*I know you, not by what the papers had written about you*

*They didn't know you*

*But I know you*

*I knew Granny who was part of you*

*You took the blanket and shaped my life*

*You followed the brown-eyed Māori maiden*

*"Pititi Pākehā"*

*She began to sing*

*You lived your life and left your mark*

*I know you*

*My Great-great-grandfather.*

*In retelling your story through my visual art practice great, great grandfather, I consider the language of the materials I use, and the signs that are embedded in them tell more of your story than words.*

The materiality of material.

The term, Language of Materials was used by artist and academic Annette Seeman<sup>23</sup> during the mid-1980s when I was introduced to the ideas and methods relating to *The Language of Materials and Materiality* (Seeman 2004) during undergraduate study. A lecturer in the then Curtin University art school, and studio major coordinator for the Fibre/Textiles Department, Annette Seeman has a background in anthropology as well as art and introduced ideas and methods from this field into what became my major studio discipline.

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<sup>22</sup> Un-Published poem written by Leonie Mansbridge for David Colburn. 2014

<sup>23</sup> Annette Seeman, Associate Professor in the School of Arts & Sciences Note Dame Australia University Fremantle

Seeman proposed during the mid-1980s that within studio practice an artist might describe the idea that materials and materiality evoked a lexicon of meanings and associations that could be used and manipulated in the manner of language and text within art practice (Seeman 2004). Drawing on her knowledge of material culture, Seeman introduced this approach to material understanding as an alternative methodology for developing an art practice unencumbered by the primacy of Fine Art histories and theories. As a new student at the university I had yet to be introduced to ideas and theories relating to *third space, otherness and race*; but what was clear and familiar was, again, my sense of *in-between-ness* when it came to having to choose a studio major in either sculpture or painting. Both majors, predicated on established histories of practice, dictated and prescribed much of what was to be learned in the undergraduate programmes offered. Perhaps the narrowness of studio practice was determined by content or people or both and what had initially seemed a disappointment turned to opportunity when I finally selected the fibre/textiles department as a studio major. In so doing, I became exposed to the possibilities of the language of materials and of otherness as integral to developing a creative practice.

By employing the language of materiality as a methodology to create material metaphors, the use of the domestic blanket has now become the form and the material base of Rewi's story and serves as a resource for a symbolic representation. Here, the blanket functions as a beginning, both practically and symbolically. It represents an ordinary domestic object, yet is never neutral referencing personal daily narrative. Objects, like blankets, carry with them traces of the semantic context and content, which can further enhance specific meanings and gestures within the artwork.

I learnt that materials, their materiality and material relationships could speak more than words about my sense of self-identity. The allusion to cross race narratives and attendant memories, manipulated materials, collaging and making-do could allude to the fabric of my person, my history, who I am and where I came from. Materials and things exist in the world and cannot be denied or silenced as easily as words, words that were never my strong point. As a woman of cross-race identity, materials offered a visual form of communication, a practical existence, consistent, less clever, less tricky, and less insulting. The materials could be loud in their presence and aesthetic, not silent, as I was. The importance of materials and things over words and language is significant to the research methodologies, particularly as the dominance of the word relegates the significance of the object and things.

Daniel Miller refers “to the humility of things” (Miller 2010,50). Materials and things are often taken for granted, insignificant, ordinary and every day, and it is these qualities that seem more appropriate to the intent of this creative research project.



Figure 3 Army blankets

Materials and objects can present as being invisible and unremarkable, a state achieved by being familiar and taken for granted, a somewhat unexpected capacity of objects (and materials) to remain peripheral to our vision, and yet determinant of our behaviour and identity (Miller 2010,51).

In a review of The Venice Biennale 2017 *Viva Arte Viva*, Imogen Racz noted that objects, making and materials engage in a crucial role, significantly needed where the textiles that support cultural and vital memories activate worldwide tactile memories.

The blanket cloaks evoke ideas of memory and dislocation as the textile fragments of the army blanket suggests an official colonial army, and through the embellished materiality of the woven cloth, they can also suggest the *other*.

The incorporating of materials and techniques in Rewi’s *Reputation Cloak* (fig 4) makes deliberate use of the found object, making do and collecting while employing particular techniques, as with the traditional weaving of the feather cloak supporting the tartan blanket. This combining of materials and processes, contemporary and traditional, seeks to expose and activate memory.



Figure 4 Leonie Mansbridge *Reputation Cloak* 2018 130 x 84 Blanket, Feathers, Medallions. Detail John Curtin Gallery, Perth. Photographer Bo Wong.

The Blanket: A political and an anthropological artefact.

When Rewi *took the blanket*, he shifted sides and transitioned from a world he knew to a challenging, unfamiliar lifestyle, language and culture.

*As I tell your story Rewi working with these blankets I have a tactile connection with you. While I work stitching I feel the warmth and comfort the same comfort that you would have felt, most of us feel warm and nurtured wrapped in a blanket. I wonder if this brings thoughts of your family Rewi? Through my narratives, I transcribe you onto the surface linking the past to the present, my way of knowing you Rewi and getting close to you.*

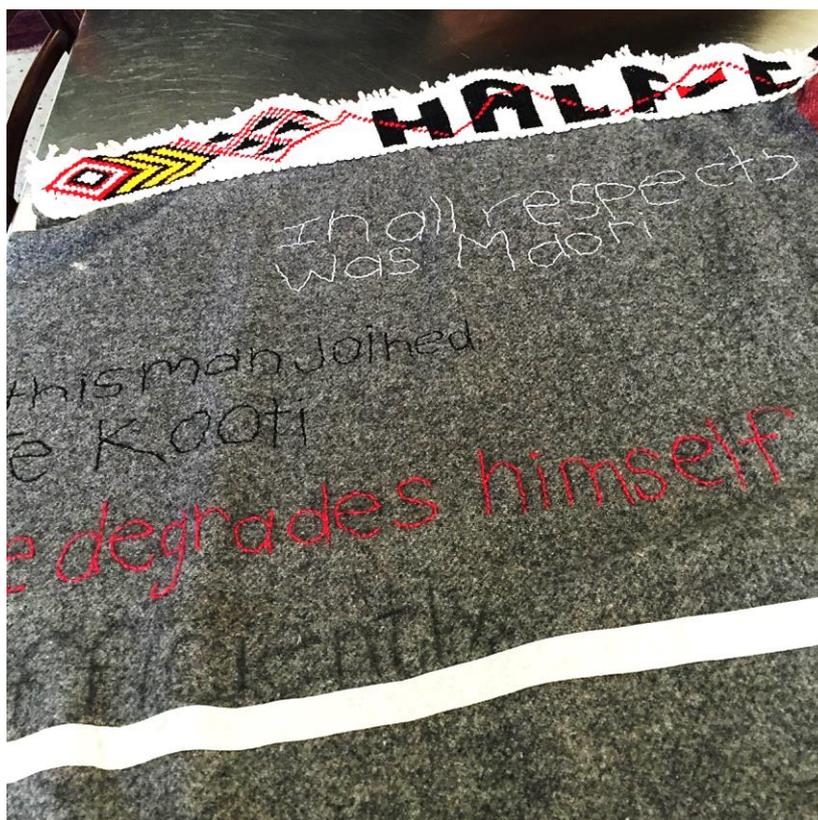


Figure 5 Leonie Mansbridge *Portrait of Rewi* 2016: Army Blanket, wool, found objects. 141x108. Work in progress. Photographer Bo Wong.

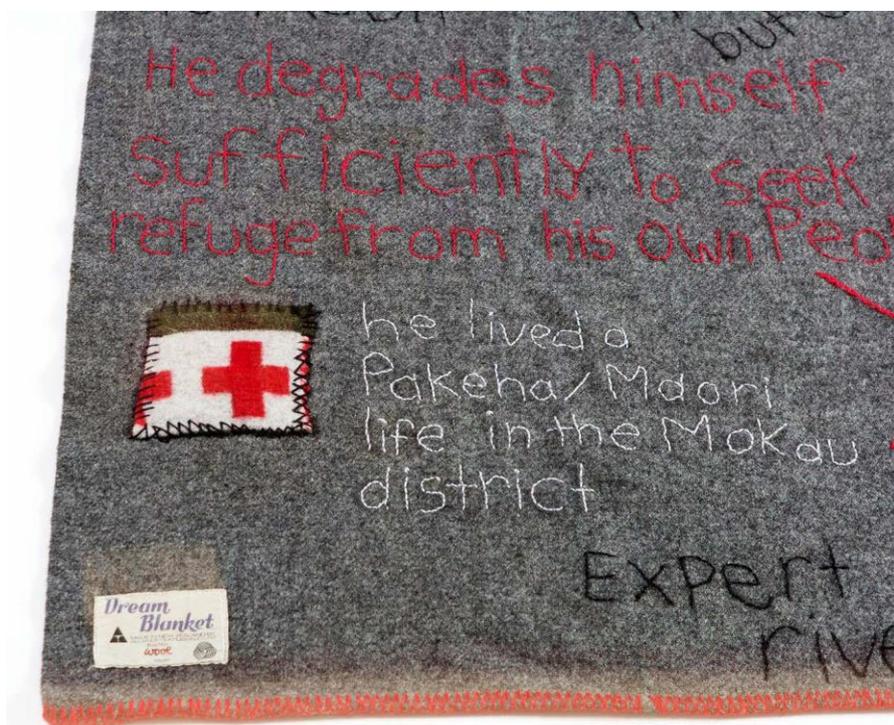


Figure 6 Leonie Mansbridge *Portrait of Rewi* 2016: Army Blanket, wool, found objects. 141x108 Detail. Photographer Bo Wong.

European settlers commonly traded woollen blankets and muskets in exchange for Māori land. In 1840 George Clark, a Māori advocate, negotiator and government land-sale negotiator, purchased about 3,000 acres in Auckland from the Ngati Whatua tribe. Clark paid sixty-six pounds in cash and the balance in goods worth two hundred and fifteen pounds. Listed in those goods were 50 blankets (Sorrenson, 1959,9).

The blankets traded by the English were also treacherous items. On the surface blankets were a seductive comfort object to be used as a cloth for body wraps and cape-like garments that offered warmth. In reality, they were often active conduits for the spreading of European infectious diseases (Lange 1999,25).

From the 1820s preference for the blankets was at the forefront as favoured clothing. Blankets replaced the mats and cloaks of traditional wear (Anderson 2014,168). The Europeans used the concept of giving gifts to encourage blankets as a bartering tool. These blankets fascinated Māori as they established a connection to English dress, and they made a majestic appearance when converted into Māori traditional mats and cloaks. In his book, *'Pākehā Māori*, Trevor Bentley<sup>24</sup> describes how the blanket was everyday wear for Pākehā/Māori (Bentley 1999, 170). "Enthusiasm for the new style of dress appears as a fascination, but Māori health suffered from wearing blankets" (Mitchell 2007,183).

Blankets often irritated the skin and concealed pests like mosquitoes and mites. Unlike the traditional Pake or Hieke, rain cloaks that were made as a protective waterproof garment to keep their wearers dry and warm, blankets held the damp and moisture (Mitchell 2007, 183). Consequently, the Māori became more susceptible to influenza epidemics, whooping cough, scarlet fever, diphtheria, smallpox and measles, diseases carried by European sailors arriving by ship. Māori had no immunity from these infections and mortality rates, especially amongst the young, were high. With the arrival of more ships, after the 1840s, these pathogens thrived in the ports and ran riot through the tribes (Monin 2001,165). Many deserters discarded their uniforms for blankets, and *taking the blanket* became an everyday saying from around the 1840s (Bentley1999,170).

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<sup>24</sup> Doctor Trevor Bentley is an Historian and author; his ongoing interest is with European and Polynesian culture-crossers.



Figure 5. Burton, Alfred Henry, 1834?-1914. Great chiefs at whare komiti, Haerehuka, King Country. Ref: PA7-36-30. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. [/records/23035083](https://records/23035083).

Back row on the far right is Hone Wetere Te Rerenga, the Māori chief whom Rewi Colburn was a taurekareka (enslaved to). Here all the Ngati Maniapoto chiefs wore blankets.

In his article *Thing Theory*, Professor Bill Brown<sup>25</sup> borrows from Heidegger to argue that history can manifestly begin with things; objects became things when they no longer held their purpose. I contemplate the blanket/a thing, as a storied object gaining meaning through the history of use. Once things capture us through our encounters with them, we can project ideas that cause us to question how and what they reveal about history, society or culture. When we engage with the different connection that certain things afford us, they become ciphers to our understandings (Brown 2001,3).

The blanket, as a thing, evokes a multitude of associations that determine our relationship to the woven material.

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<sup>25</sup> Bill Brown, Professor of English at the University of Chicago, and co-editor of the Journal *Critical Inquiry*.

*I reflect on these associations as I stitch and alter the old blankets my mother and cousins gave me. From warm and nurturing to the emotional contemplation of my Great-great-grandfather and the impact of colonisation.*



Figure 6 Leonie Mansbridge, 2014 *Graph paper and marker pens Studio drafting my design for the Tāniko<sup>26</sup> (Traditional weaving technique 'twining')*

I remember how the mnemonic value of blankets was illustrated by an unknown artist aboard Captain James Cook's ship through the picturing of Māori men and women wrapped in blankets. Blankets typecast the depiction of Māori as colonised *other*, and later the portraits of Māori men and women wrapped in blankets, painted by Gottfried Lindauer (1839-1926) and Charles Goldie (1870-1947), served to cement these colonial stereotypes. The exchange of goods for Māori was customary practice, but European goods were exceptional, and the likes of blankets and hatchets were always sought after (Salmond 1997,52-58).

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<sup>26</sup> Tāniko is a traditional Māori weaving process related to *twining*.



Figure 7 Strutt William 1825-1915: *Hone Ropiha*, (on the left) a powerful chief in the Taranaki district, wearing a cap, European clothing covered with a traditional cloak. Top right, Hone's father *Rawiri Waiaua* a fully tattooed chief reclining, wrapped in a red blanket, bottom right *Rawiri*, seated wrapped in a red blanket 1856. <https://tiaki.natlib.govt.nz/#details=ecatalogue.306648>



Figure 8 Goldie Charles F. *Memories: Ena Te Papatahi, a Chieftainess of the Ngapuhi Tribe* 1906  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, bequest of Emily and Alfred Nathan, 1952.  
<https://www.aucklandartgallery.com/explore-art-and-ideas/artwork/1907>

Contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand artist Tracey Williams<sup>27</sup> also uses woollen blankets in her site-specific work *My Ship Tēnei Wakahēra*, 2009 exhibited at Tauranga Art Gallery, Toi Tauranga (artgallery.org.nz). Here, Williams constructed a model ship, which was then dressed in blankets and embroidered tablecloths. In this context, the uses of domestic objects/things intrinsically cite *otherness* by signifying craftwork, women's work, labour, colonisation and the gifting and trading with Māori for land.



Figure 9 Tracey Williams, *My Ship/ Tēnei Wakahēra*, 2009 Tauranga Art Gallery.

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<sup>27</sup> Tracey Williams Art. <https://www.artgallery.org.nz/my-ship-tenei-wakahera-tracey-williams/>

According to Williams, her blankets were manufactured by Aotearoa/New Zealand mills that were in production from the nineteenth century to support the supply and demand of a valuable commodity in Aotearoa/New Zealand (artgallery.org.nz). The first woollen mills were built in 1871 in the South Island, later in the North Island. Most mills employed women as they were paid much less than men (Tolerton 2010, 2).

Australian artist Robert MacPherson<sup>28</sup> is also a collector of things. His artwork reveals a similar interest and respect for the things of everyday life. MacPherson uses words and ready-mades as his subject matter to suggest ideas, meanings, and contexts. There are private jokes, puns, layers of reference and grounds for interpretation. MacPherson's use of blankets resonates with my practice. He names one of his works *Murrnji*, which is the name of an unused stock route in the Northern Territory. This work comprises fifteen blankets that invoke hardship, the history of the life of the Aboriginal rural labourers, of exploitation, mistreatment by the colonial pastoral community, and loss of identity. Here, the blanket stands for warmth and comfort when working the stock routes. However, there is another reading, an underbelly of associations with MacPherson's blankets, that alludes to the stencilled letters M&B693. These letters stand for the name of a sulphanilamide drug (antibacterial medication), which was available as a gonorrhoea treatment before penicillin in the 1930s.

Much sexual behaviour of white people resulted in the transmittal of sexually related diseases in the Indigenous population. It has been suggested that this widely distributed drug was not made available to Aboriginal men and women (O'Brian 2001,77).

The experience of seeing MacPherson's exhibition at the Art Gallery of Western Australia became a pivotal moment in the development of my art practice. Semiotics and materiality have become an essential part of my studio practice since I viewed this exhibition. In a similar way to Annette Seeman, who introduced me to the language of materials, MacPherson showed me the value of deconstructing materials to find new possibilities and deposits of inherent meaning as a valuable way to communicate with the viewer.

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<sup>28</sup> Robert MacPherson is a leading Australian conceptual artist.



Figure 10 Robert MacPherson Murrnji: *15 frog poems, a keening* 1996-97  
in exhibition *The Painters Reach*\_2015 Gallery of Modern Art

*To return to you Rewi, the series of blanket cloaks I make as contemplation portraits of you are not exclusively about you as an individual, isolated from the cultural frameworks that shaped the time you lived in.*



Figure 11 Leonie Mansbridge Installation John Curtin Gallery, Perth, Photographer Bo Wong.

*This series, Portrait of Rewi, Reputation Cloak and Rangatiratanga cloak 2016-2017, represents your continued presence and the conflicting public and private narratives that my research uncovers. Drawing on the old newspapers, books and family archives relating to you, I stitch into the blankets with materials that provide semiotic meaning to represent your life. The conflict I refer to exist because of the way the newspapers frame*

*you with the prevailing colonial attitudes of the time. They are at odds with the stories passed down through our family.*

A stitch in time: The power of women's work.

Hand sewing and stitching have long been perceived to be women's work. It is associated with domestic spaces, darning, and repairing, acts of making do. Sewing carries European associations and connections. Well-mannered English women could afford the leisure of sitting and sewing in a peaceful, domestic space. (Breitenbach,2013 Tyner,2016 and Gold,1996). Stitching was perceived as a suitable occupation for women, a profession that was deemed respectable women's work in Victorian times. Increasing market demand for cheaper garments opened the door for slopwork, piecework, for meagre rates. Women and children were exploited, and stories of cruel and miserable conditions have been exposed, the needlewomen's predicament uncovered. The plying of the needle can be seen as evidence of genteel women's work, but it also unmasks how poor women and children were misused by the middle class.



Figure 12 Victorian family at work stitching, Image courtesy of [www.eriding.net](http://www.eriding.net)

The process of stitching also connects to the Māori tradition of weaving harakeke (flax) for clothes and cloaks, embellishment on garments and the whare (meeting house). (Evans, Ngarimu, 2005, Pendergrast, 1994, Te Awekotuku, Te Kanaawa, Te Kanawa and Moke 2015)

In many cultures, an arcane process is an opportunity for an intensely personal, meditative and laborious means of constructing an image and artefact. The Tāniko I use on my cloaks is a traditional Māori weaving process related to *twining*.

These Tāniko patterns can be reduced into a grid as they translate into a geometric pattern. I use the traditional process but create designs, incorporating the word Half-Cast, and three triangles which represent the Aotearoa/New Zealand Army identification rank of Sergeant, which I believe very fitting for Rewi.

*Such a process seems poignantly appropriate for you Great-great-grandfather, whom I know only through the shreds of historical evidence that I attempt to join together.*

*The activity of stitching connects directly to my past. As a girl, I sat stitching on the treadle sewing machine, making do with permutations of one pattern to create lots of variations of clothes for myself. Shop clothing was far too expensive.*

*I now employ stitching to highlight the words that the newspaper used to describe you, Rewi. The words become the portrait, executed by the loving hands of your great- great-granddaughter, not the hands of a European reporter of a colonial newspaper.*

In an interview from 2000, Judith Butler expresses a connection between language and our understanding of the world. Butler has written and spoken extensively on how commonplace language reflects and influences the way the world is structured to formulate specific perceptions of reality. She urges an unpacking of these established perceptions by analysing what is hidden or blocked within the commonplace language. She also proposes a reconfiguring of ways in which grammar is received in order to interrogate assumptions and formulate something new. One of the conditions of postmodernism, she argues, is to acknowledge that there is no common language, no set commonplace reality in the public sphere (Olson, 2000,728).

My visual practice operates similarly, in that I use existing signs such as family snapshots, Korowai and tourist placemats, these placemats are made from images of Aotearoa/New Zealand's landscape.

Through these *ready-mades* I shift meaning by playing with their visual language to make the object occupy and serve different aims, for example, with the *Tiki Tour Place Mat(p)s* and the use of masking, unmasking and glitterising, the Aotearoa/New Zealand landscape is altered from a tourists' representation to an exaggerated Western framing of landscape.

Landscape alongside culture has been an object of study, represented in a particular way to the West where land was viewed as something that could be tamed and exploited (Smith 2003,51).

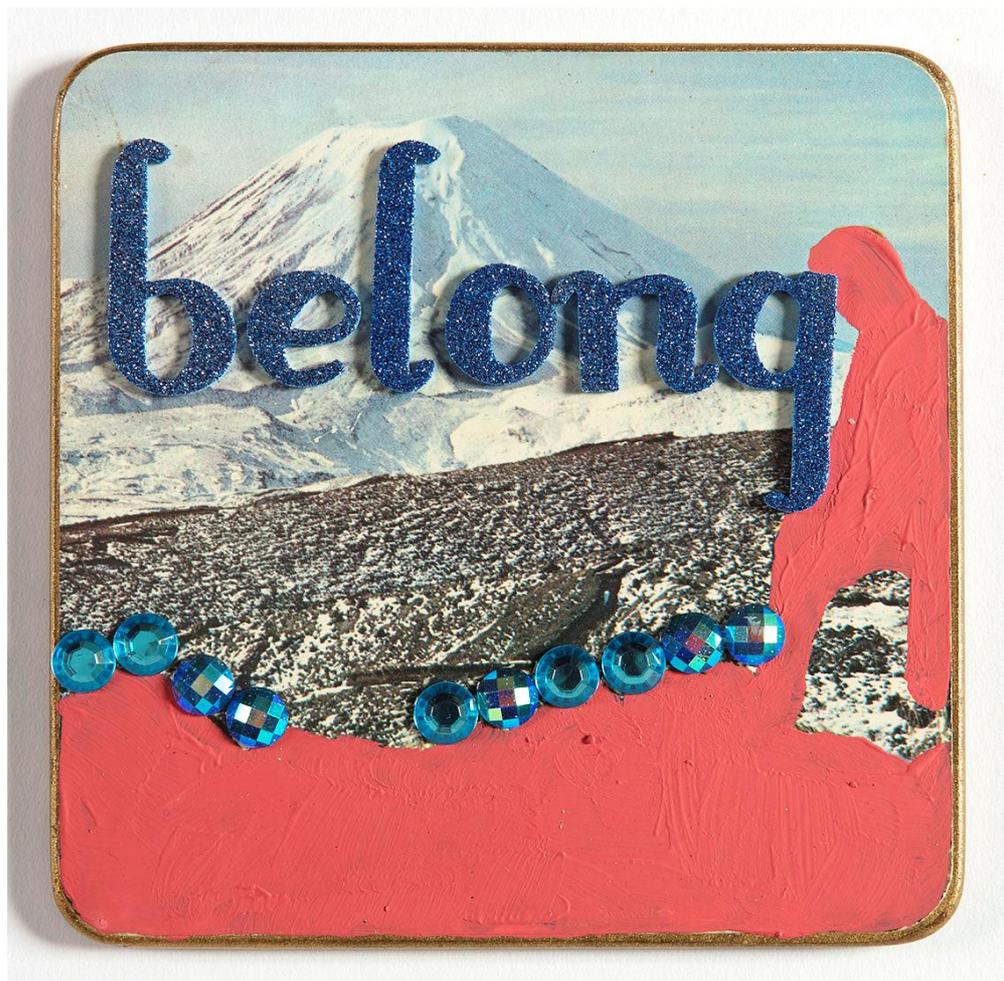


Figure 13 Leonie Mansbridge *Place Mat(p)s* 2017 Place Map, acrylic paint found objects.

Formation of words: They make you and who you are.

With Rewi's blanket cloaks, I deliberately changed the spelling from half-caste to *half-cast* as a way of blanking over something, to cloak or smother actual meaning. Part of this art methodology is to use codes and directional devices, pointing to a specific idea or place if you choose to go there. Absence can be negated to the unknown and unseen, just like the missing

E in half-caste. Not only does absence change the meaning of the word, but it also points to a missing space, the place of in-betweeness that has been denied or been suppressed, muffled or silenced by the blankets of colonisation.



Figure 14 Leonie Mansbridge, *Rangatiratanga Cloak* 2017, 134 x 101 Tāniko on the Rangatiratanga Cloak, with the deliberate missing 'E' Fremantle Studio

The intention of misspelling the word caste is also to concede that language has the power to manipulate assumptions. Where we cast judgment on a word such as half-caste, by simply removing a letter or adding more, we find that half-cast is also a medical term for a splint, which supplies less support than a full cast. With knitting, you are casting on. The changing of this word gives you an instant, a pause, before becoming a racial *half-casting*. I am re-casting/re-cast myself through the process of decolonising, simply by retelling my story, and acknowledging how colonisation embedded their ideas into our life.

My visual art practice is my knowledge, so similar to the ways of my Māori relatives, who used creative work, such as weaving, carving, kowhaiwhai (painted patterns on rafters in meeting houses) and Tukutuku panels (latticework panels), not only as decoration but also are a source of knowledge, a telling of tribal connections and histories.

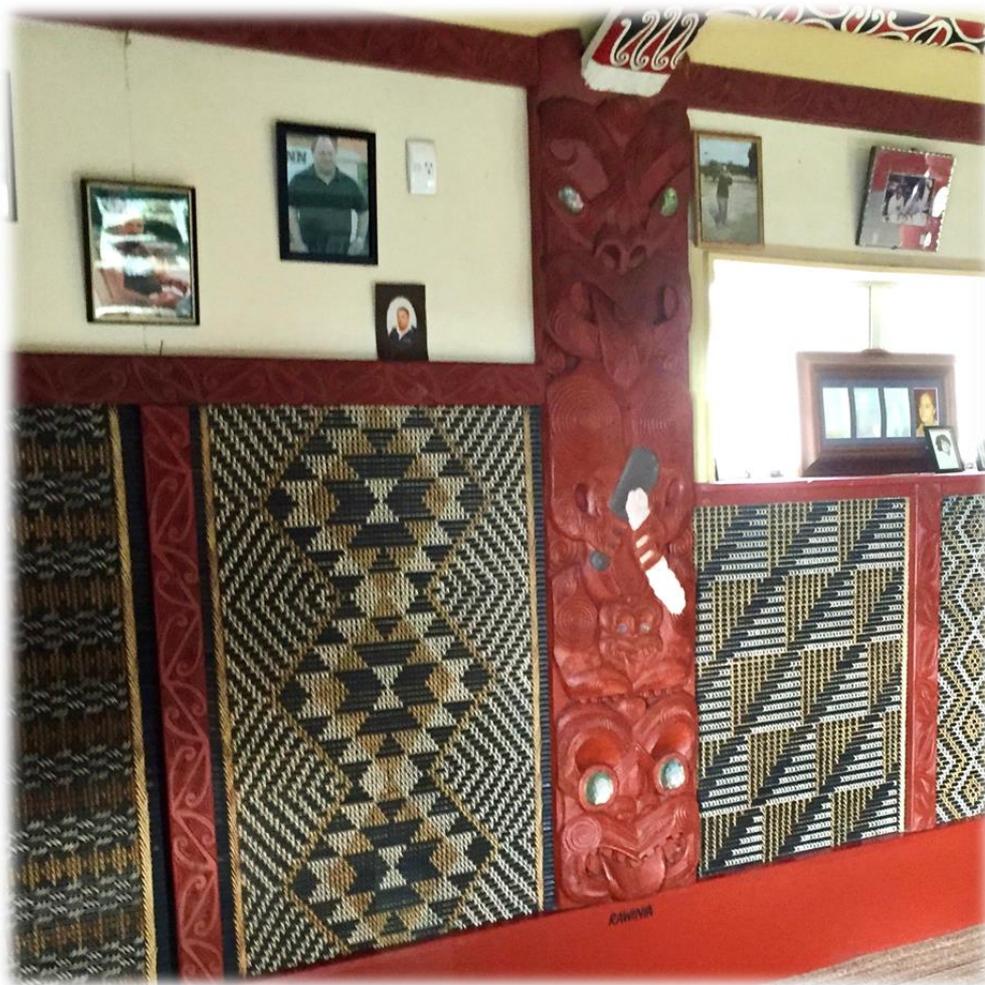


Figure 15 *Oparure Marae Te Kuiti North Island, Aotearoa/Aotearoa/New Zealand 2015*  
Inside details my Marae Oparure Te Kuiti. with Tukutuku panels, carved panels and  
Kowhaiwhai rafters

Stitching on being in-between:

When I stitch, I see a correlation with French-American artist Louise Bourgeois<sup>29</sup>, and her relationship with a broad range of materials and methods such as canvas, paper, metal, wood, and the needle.

A small domestic tool, the needle made its appearance frequently in Bourgeois' artworks (Tilkin 2012,120). For Bourgeois, the needle symbolised a return to her youth. Through the act of sewing, the small tool invokes her past and attendant memories by reconstructing a material narrative (Tilkin 2012.14).

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<sup>29</sup> Louise Bourgeois: 1911-2010 French-American Artist

Bourgeois turned the needle into an instrument of women's creative power far removed from the gloom of needlework that performs the same task over and over again and is forever relegated to the realm of domesticity. Dolls were patched together with the stitching clearly noticeable; words were embroidered in red thread on a sheet or other household fabrics to demonstrate psychological states of being (Tilkin, 2012,47).



Figure 16 Louise Bourgeois *Seven in Bed* 2001, fabric, stainless steel, glass and wood  
29.2x53.3x53.3 © the Easton Foundation/VAGA at ARS, NY.

Like Bourgeois, I use stitch as a creative gesture, but it also provides a way to affirm my power and the ability to re-story Rewi with the marks and stitches on the blankets. Using a needle and thread is a comfortable way to make a *mark* by adding text. I could print it, and it would be more graphically efficient, but too mechanical and removed from an immediate engagement with the process.

Bourgeois' practice centres upon the reconstruction of memory and self. Her visual language comprises objects such as spirals, spiders, cages, medical tools, and sewn appendages. My visual language consists of erasing, masking and unmasking with dots, spots and found materials. Dots and spots were a pervasive iconography in this practice for the last twenty years; initially using dots as another form of language, a system of telling stories, anecdotal stories of lived experiences.

Through a working methodology of the found object combined with dots and spots, the works slowly reveal themselves. Layers of meaning are embedded in the image in numerous ways, and through the language of materials and the titles, viewers are asked to use their implicit knowledge to interpret the work on multiple levels.

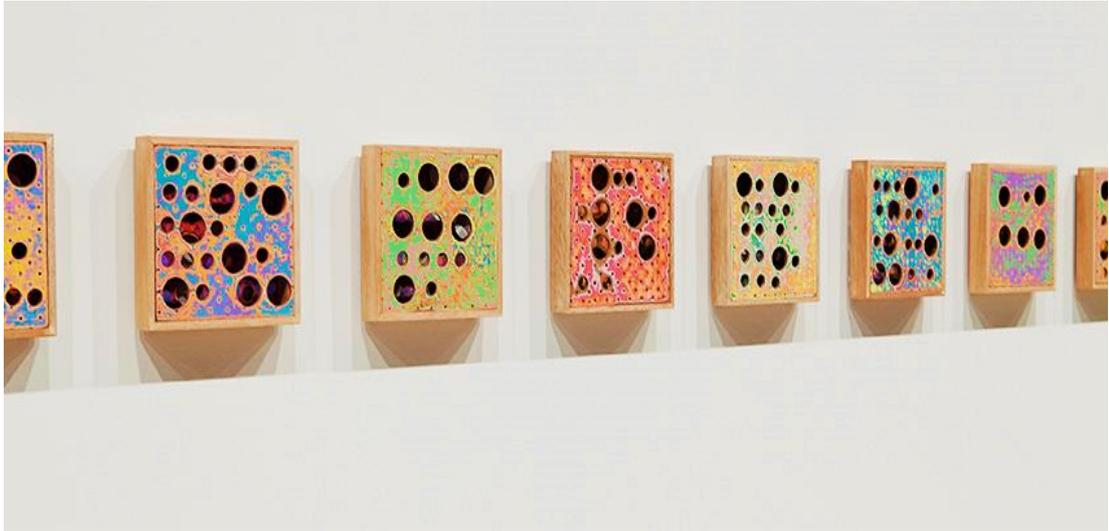


Figure 17 Leonie Mansbridge *Parihaka Series* 2009 Pegboard, acrylic paints, 23.5 x 23.5The series consists of 41 works, which tell the story of Parihaka. Parihaka is a site of passive resistance against the taking of Māori land. John Curtin Gallery, WA.

An alternate process of telling.

The use of dots began following a story my father told about when he went to war as an under-aged country boy, who at that time had never seen the ocean, even though he lived in Aotearoa/New Zealand, islands surrounded by water. He was taught Morse code, a language he could never quite master. All he could send was *Mary had a little lamb*, which was a practice line, not very useful if you were being shot at when flying over and protecting the Pacific Ocean during World War Two. This dot-dot-dash language expressed the idea of how symbols are used, like hieroglyphs in ancient cultures.

Unlike the hieroglyphic formula where pictures represent a word or syllable, I use dots to represent fragments of information and thereby turn them into an uncluttered space of open interpretation. My dots are irregular in shape, size and colour; I refer to them as land clouds. What they hold is intangible in the physical sense, but they allude to a clear and definite system of oblique storytelling.

Dots, spots or codes may be interpreted as constructing an unreadable language, like the story of hidden Māoriness in my language. Alternatively, the dots could be an ellipsis, an omission of words that are understood only from other clues. These dots, spots or codes are suggestive of an attempt to obliterate traces of an absence that erases the hidden and negates that which cannot be clearly seen, like my identity. This layering of code and the physical cutting out brings the eye into the gaps between worlds, with the structured order of the code bringing together connections.

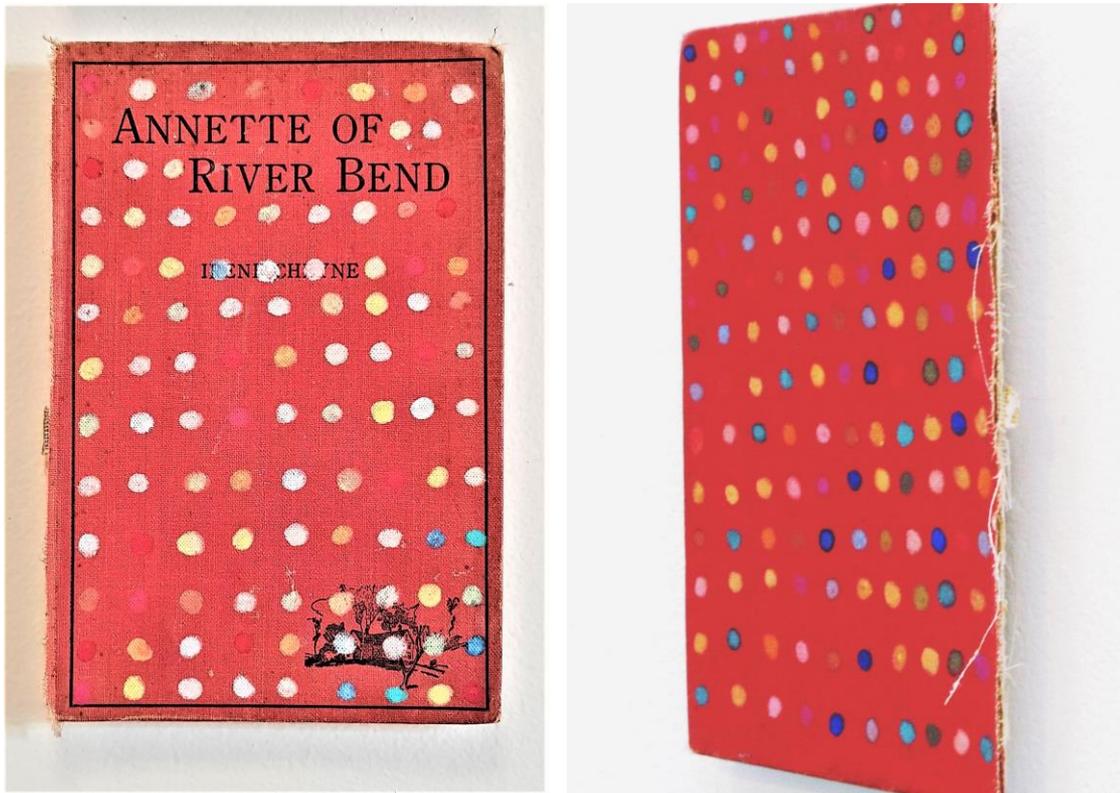


Figure 18 Leonie Mansbridge Covered Series 2010, old book covers, watercolour pencils, variable dimensions. 1 of 50 old books covers in coded language. Curtin University, MA exhibition. 2010

Fanon was only too aware of how language can be open to interpretation, suggesting language is used to direct meaning and words come into play as a tool for manoeuvring the desired outcome, where the dominant voice can undermine the *other*. It is this operation of language that directs and implies superiority of Western culture, reconstructing words to lay claim that West is dominant, while Other is devalued. Being colonised by language has a greater implication for how one is perceived. "To speak means to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilisation" (Fanon 2008,18).

Fanon implies that for him and or the black man speaking French one accepts the shared realisation that the French/west identifies blackness as evil and sin. The Other is then participating in a society where cultural values come into being, and racist culture is the norm. "There is nothing more sensational than a black man speaking correctly, for he is appropriating the white world "(Fanon 2008,19).

Not only are layers of meaning embedded by the person who is using the language, the very fact that the other who participate in the dominant language signifies a conflictual situation of assimilating into the colonized world.

*I pick up the blanket, Rewi, I am stitching into your Rangatiratanga/red cloak. Immediately I have a connection to you through the cloth and through my mother's prior ownership. I sense your being wrapped in blankets.*

My mum found the red blanket in the op shop in which she worked. It originally came from a ski lodge not far from where my mother and father live and, most importantly, it was made in New Zealand. The grey blanket belonged to cousin Hutchy. It was given to him while serving in the Army, Aotearoa/New Zealand made and militarily, an allusion to the colonial power, which Rewi left to *take the blanket*.

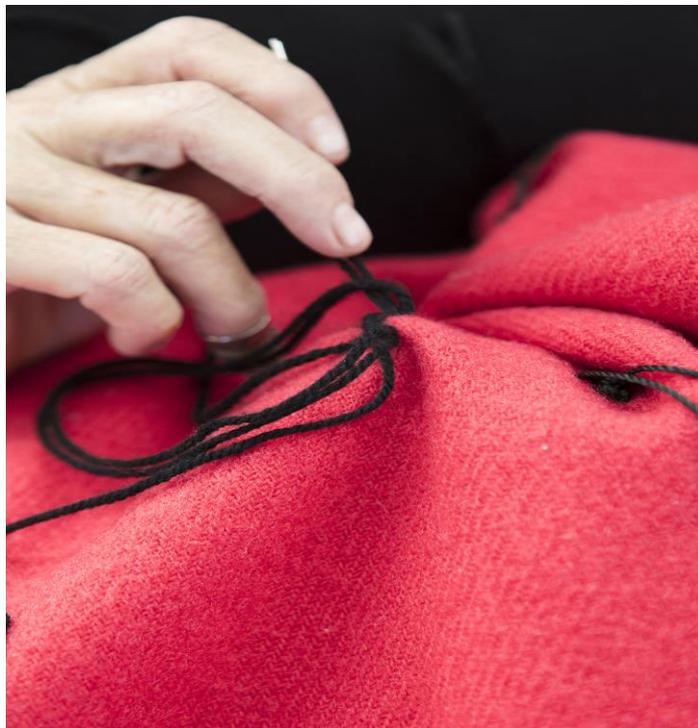


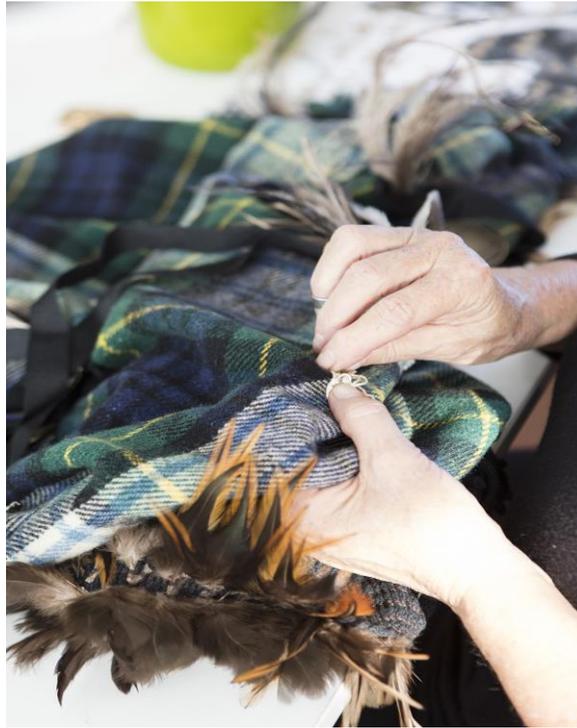
Figure 19 Working on *Rangatiratanga* blanket cloak in Fremantle studio. 2017. Photographer Bo Wong



Figure 20 Working on Rewi *Portrait Cloak* in Fremantle Studio 2017. Photographer Bo Wong

Again, I *pick up the blanket*, the third one in this series. It is Rewi's Reputation Cloak 2016, and my fingers connect with him as I stitch all the carefully chosen elements, the language of his life, together. Another cousin, Annette, gave me the Black Watch Tartan. She found it in an op shop in Ngaruawahia. Tartan speaks of Rewi's Scottish heritage, while the feathered shoulder Korowai references his decision to live as a Māori.

I embellish the cloak further with sport medallions and emu feathers. Rewi's Great-great-granddaughter is presenting him with medallions such as *Good Conduct*, *Champion* and *Participant* in recognition of *Service to Country*. In so doing I am reframing his past and offering an alternative perspective, one of newly found acknowledgement of his choice to leave his white culture.



*With this Reputation cloak, I salute you Rewi Colburn.*



Figure 21 and 22 Leonie Mansbridge *Reputation* Cloak 2016, 130 x84 Blanket, feathers, and medallions. Fremantle Studio 2017. Photographer Bo Wong

I am reminded of Cuban born visual artist, Felix Gonzales-Torres, who suggests that the transference of a photographic portrait into language: *sparkling eyes* and *he looks happy* is still a form of portraiture, albeit a reversal (Godfrey 1998,3670). Gonzalez-Torres employed simple everyday material, paper, light, beads and puzzles to address his themes of love and loss, sickness and rejuvenation, gender and sexuality. He asked viewers to participate in establishing meaning into his work. In the same way, I attempt to connect to the audience. Through the absence of a descriptive image of the subject, presence is established through the signs we use. Gonzalez-Torres conjures his lost lover through lolly wrappings, significant times and dates and crumpled bedsheets.



Figure 23:Felix Gonzalez-Torres *Untitled*, 1991 Billboard Dimensions vary with installation

Installation view: *Felix Gonzalez-Torres: "Untitled"*. Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ. 21 Oct.

16 Dec. 2013.© Felix Gonzalez-Torres Courtesy of The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation

*I conjure you Rewi through these blankets, words, medals and feathers. Touching and manipulating these materials is a way of negotiating across the boundaries of time as I attempt to understand you, my Great-great-grandfather, 'to climb inside of your skin and walk around in it' (Lee 1973, 35). These blankets personify you, Rewi Colburn. I imagine you wearing a blanket around your waist, and the act of hand sewing words describes you and stitches you into my life. It brings you into being with an intimacy that defies those distant newspaper reports. The more I handle these blankets, the closer connection I have with you Rewi. It's a bit like knitting a jumper for a family member. I stitch with love.*

In this context, the blanket is an object that sits in an ambiguous space. On the one hand, it constructs images of Great-great-grandfather and the newspaper articles that tell of him wearing a shirt and blanket. The blanket becomes a part of him and references the narratives of his life. On the other, I have situated the blanket in the period in which he lived and considered how it was used as a coloniser's tool of trade and a spreader of European disease while simultaneously reflecting the ingenuity of the Māori, who used this commodity (King 2006,73). They found it to be an easy and adaptable item for bedding, clothing, and shelter, an article that could be traded for food. Michael King<sup>30</sup> reports that traditional Māori clothing had gone out of general use by the 1850s, although it would be donned, especially cloaks, for ceremonial occasions. Māori were wearing European clothing: suits, shirts and blankets for the men, skirts, and shirts for the women (King, 2006,77).

Blankets are used in the practice as a dual signifier, working to make both a political and an anthropological artefact. Can these objects unmask the colonial baggage that is integrated with associations with the colonial power? Blankets can be transformed into a palimpsestical thing/object, transferring the traces of the past into new stitches, a new beginning. With the washing off of colonial discourse, we can begin by renewing our future, not forgetting our past. We will always have an imprint, but over that imprint, we can re-write and re-story our independence.

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<sup>30</sup> Michael King 1945-2004 Aotearoa/New Zealand Historian. While not an Māori, Michael was well respected for his knowledge of Māori Culture; King was well aware that he was Pākehā writing about the Māori and established close ties with the iwi and hapū when he wrote about them (King 2003).

This process is much like the blanket portraits that transform this family's story into new visual and material, evidence, that, when taken back to be exhibited in Aotearoa/New Zealand, resonates with a Māori/Pākehā audience<sup>31</sup>. The portraits trigger associations of the uncertain and vulnerable narratives that inform those of us, the in-betweeners who have been formed through the duality of living between empowered centred and disempowered marginalised groups.

The dominant historical discourse of Western high art rarely perceived the material presence of blankets and the process of sewing as commanding much aesthetic or cultural value. This is because blankets and stitching are associated with domestic space and women's stuff, to be relegated, at best, to the realm of craft. Within the hierarchies of art, hand-sewn blankets may as well be invisible. As such, they act as a material metaphor for how *other* is positioned as a site of neglect, with half-castes placed in an ambivalent and at times, invisible space.

What colour is the audience? Seen but not heard.

Russian literary theorist and philosopher of language, Mikhail Bakhtin argues, "we never speak in a vacuum" (Holquist 1981 360). A word or utterance has a history of usage to which it responds. An utterance is termed as a unit of speech that has a point of view (Holquist 1981,325). Although active in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bakhtin is considered a post-structuralist. His work is continuously engaging, giving the voice a viewpoint and authority within the context of the world that surrounds us. Bakhtin insists that "literariness", as conversations, letters and diaries are all used to influence our way of thinking. Truth becomes something that is negotiated and questioned (Holquist 1981,383).

Can we re-define language to distance ourselves from the past? American writer, Toni Morrison, highlights the validity or vulnerability of a particular set of assumptions in the literature, which are circulated as knowledge.

Morrison questions how literary whiteness and literary blackness is made, and what are the consequences of these constructions. Fanon suggests that to language the dominant culture is to surrender to their beliefs (Fanon 2008,2). In other words, we forfeit our cultural originality when we express the world through a language that is ambivalent about who we are.

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<sup>31</sup> I am liaising with galleries in Aotearoa/New Zealand at the moment no details or dates have been confirmed.

As a Black writer, Morrison endeavours to expose language that imposes or evokes hidden signs of the dismissive. *Othering* is the word used to describe social distance due to the difference (Morrison 1992,4-8).

This section explores the language of materials and explains that, through the art practice, materials are intrinsic to the art in the same way that theory is to the exegesis.

Historic discourses of the *other* can be perceived to be as exotic or destructive, a way of objectifying those that are different to a dominant social or political group. The practice is driven by an examination of how historic discourses of the other have created identity and that of my family. In later sections of this chapter, I examine the positions of theorists such as Edward Said, Linda Tuhawai Smith, Robert Young, Edward Stonequist, Albert Memmi, Hommi Bhabha and Alain de Botton, to construct a clearer understanding of how colonisation has affected colonised people. As well as focusing on Māori I will explore the impact in relation to other marginalised cultures, including Black Americans, First Nation American, First Nation Canadian, Australian Aboriginals and many more first nations' people. By drawing on similarities that have been enforced upon such peoples, I can generate a broader picture of how power and control was a significant contributor to colonisation.

The newspaper can provide us with many examples of *othering*. Author Alain de Botton<sup>32</sup> claims that the news "is a record, a phenomenology of a set of encounters with the news" (de Botton 2014,15).

He sets about exploring what constitutes the framework of these encounters. Quoting Hegel, he writes: "Societies become modern when news replaces religion as our central source of guidance and our touchstone of authority" (de Botton 2014,11). He also draws an analogy between the way that both the church and newspapers expect to be treated with the deference belonging to a higher order of faith. In colonised countries like Aotearoa/New Zealand, preaching from the pulpits and preaching from the press were seen as guidance to the masses, a form of knowledge to educate the settlers.

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<sup>32</sup> Alain de Botton is a Swiss-born British author and founder of the School of Life. He is also known for relating philosophical concepts to everyday life.

Then, like the church, the media presents its perspective and reproduces the dominant status quo. In Rewi's time, this perspective was influenced by the dominant Western ideology of religious and secular colonial discourse. Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith reinforces this idea when she acknowledges that the tales of travellers, who had intermingled with Indigenous people, were dispersed throughout Europe. These sensationalised distorted stories of cannibalism; witch doctors and tattooed heads generated demarcations by the *other*, thereby reinforcing news reports and the preaching from pulpits (Smith 1999,8). They helped to construct a negative view of the Māori in New Zealand.

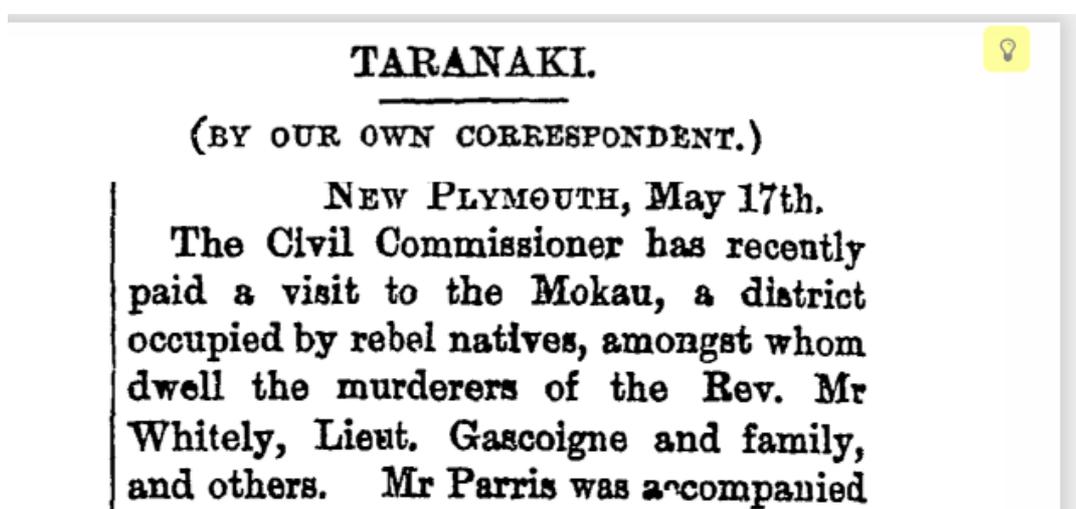


Figure 24<sup>33</sup> Otago Witness June 1871, reports *A visit by the civil commissioner to Mokau, occupied by rebel natives.*

This is a negative construal on the part of the media because this was the natives' land. The *natives* are only rebels in the eyes of the church and of the government who were defending the colonial position that justified the confiscation of Māori lands. The Western Christian Church of Europe has only one God, and one belief system, unlike the belief system of Māori, which was thought to be barbaric with European missionaries being sent to enlighten and educate in the ways of the West (Smith 1999,43).

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<sup>33</sup>Throughout this exegesis I have inserted the original newspaper article rather than typing the words, as a visual artist, to see the original text is a more effective and commanding way of how the past histories were recorded.

Subsequently, another newspaper article makes mention of, "A white man living with these rebels who has adopted their habits" (Colonist 1871,3).

**I should have mentioned that with these rebels at the Mokau, there is a white man living who has adopted their habits. His name is Coburn, and he was formerly a military settler in Captain Carthew's company. He is a man between 20 and 30 years of age, with light brown hair, and little or no whiskers or beard. His eyebrows project, and his forehead is square and prominent. His complexion is pale, and eyes sunken. The countenance of the man, I hear, is repulsive, especially as his cheeks were daubed with a red paint. The natives state that this man incited them to kill the Rev. Mr Whitely. He was with them when Gascoigne and the others were murdered, and when the Rev. Mr Whitely appeared on the scene they were about to leave, but Coburn urged them not. Coburn then fired, and they did the same. This is the native story, but whether true of course is not known ; at any rate, I think it necessary that the authorities should do something to have him arrested, even if they have to pardon some of the natives in doing so.**

Figure 25 Part of the article in the Colonist Newspaper 1871 page 3 <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz>

The white man mentioned was Rewi Colburn, my Great-great-grandfather, who was accused of instigating the infamous White Cliff Massacre. The old newspaper articles I have about Rewi presented conflicting accounts of his involvement in this historic massacre.

White Cliffs was a military settlement near where Rewi lived. During the White Cliffs massacre, all the inhabitants were killed, and one account claims that Rewi incited the massacre (Otago Daily Times 1871,3).

Other reports say that Rewi denied these accusations, saying that he was inland at the time of the killing (Taranaki Herald 1907,3). Newspaper reports about Rewi portray him as a deserter. "Living with a degraded lot of natives. He is described as medium-high, with a square forehead, projecting eyebrows, sunken eyes, and cadaverous face, sullen and gloomy. The countenance of this man, I hear, is repulsive, particularly since his cheeks were daubed with kokowai" (war paint, a red pigment created with red ochre, obtained from clays) (Otago Witness 1871,6).

Historical justification of *othering* is outlined in this section, which we can still see infiltrating contemporary western society. With these descriptions of Rewi, I cannot help seeing a parallel with the work of phrenology, used to establish character based on the shape of the skull. The scientific work of Josiah Nott and George Gliddon helped influence ideas of racial differences (Young 1995 93,123). Their scientific work recognised the tenets of polygenes, which stated that the races were separately immutable with distinct origins.

Craniometrist Samuel Morton, a Philadelphia physician and founder of the field of craniometry, developed techniques for measuring skulls, suggesting the intellectual ability of race, by skull capacity. Morton's investigation heavily influenced Nott (Erickson 1986,104), who believed that: "Southern Negro mulattos also suffered depressed stature and intelligence; they were less prolific than whites; because mulattos were degenerate, they were hybrids of distinct natural parent populations, which Nott called species. Sooner or later, hybrid mulattos would become extinct or revert to one of the parent's species" (Erickson 1986 113). Nott contended that what he called Negroes occupied, "The lowest point in the scale of human beings and the prospect of their interbreeding with whites is insulting and revolting" (Erickson 1986,113).

These racist scientific theories supported slavery in the context of their time, arguments of inferiority guided political thought and action in nineteenth-century America. However, these undertones of the inferiority of races can still be seen in society.

How labels evoke a lexicon of meanings.

We see our Australia Football League's recent controversy of the racist abuse of Adelaide Crows star Eddie Betts. An Adelaide woman posted racist comments on her Facebook page, calling Betts an *ape* (Herald Sun April 11<sup>th</sup> 2017).

Cesare Lombroso<sup>34</sup>, the founder of anthropological criminology, claimed that there is a relationship with physical anatomy and criminality. He suggests that criminals have smaller, deformed skulls with sloping foreheads and other features tending towards physical weakness (Lombroso 2006,9) These theories were widely published when the news articles about my Rewi were written. Alongside other racial theories, these beliefs helped to establish a justification for colonisation, providing a rationale for civilising and controlling the natives for the sake of their evolution.

In labelling Rewi with the following descriptive terms, taken from the press articles, we can compare him with *the full criminal type* (Lombroso 2206,10).

By defining him as an undesirable, savage man guilty of all these alleged crimes (Otago Witness 187, 6), the press characterised Rewi as an enemy to be excluded and marginalised. He was re-identified as *other*. The othering of his character served to strengthen opposition towards the colonial renegades who had gone native (Bentley 2007 15-21).

de Botton's detailed analysis provides us with an understanding of the structures through which media methodologies are employed. "The news knows how to render its mechanics almost invisible and therefore is hard to question. It speaks to us in a natural unaccented voice, without reference to its assumption-laden perspective. It fails to disclose that it does not merely report on the world, but is instead constantly at work crafting a *new planet in our minds* in line with its own often highly distinctive priorities" (de Botton 2014,11). The public is presented with what de Botton says is the disguise of fact or common sense. Here, de Botton's point is that the authoritative voice becomes one of factual objectivity. This disguise of bias encourages readers to accept what is given as fact. This also supports Bakhtin's argument that "we never speak in a vacuum" (Holquist 1981,325).

Although Rewi's involvement in the massacre at White Cliffs is at best speculative, the colonial news reporters approached the telling of Rewi's story from a colonial position. Here are power and knowledge acting in alliance with each other as they use slanderous and defamatory text like "Rebelled against civilised society" (West Coast Times 1871),

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<sup>34</sup> Cesare Lombroso professor and criminologist, born in Nov. 6, 1835, renowned for his studies and theories in the field of characterology, or the relation between mental and physical characteristics, Lombroso's approach is a direct descendant of phrenology.

“He must have reached a low stage of demoralisation to live such a life” (Taranaki Herald 1871) and “Colburn deserted to live with this degraded lot of natives” (Otago Daily Times 1872).

These reporters had never met Rewi and, presumably, even if they had, their perception would have been clouded by the biased discourse of the time. One act of defiance sentenced Rewi to a life of otherness and marginalisation.

What comes into play here is a social construction of identity categories formulated by the controlling powers of colonisation. Foucault looks at how subjectivity becomes both product and basis of knowledge and power; constructions of identities are seen as a province of historical discourse, producing the by-product of power/empowerment and disempowerment (Foucault 1972,13). Newspapers are part of a power/knowledge nexus working to discursively produce identity, working together with the scientific discourse on race which position colonised races as other and lesser.

Media consumers are frequently confused by headlines that do not help readers to fit the stories into larger themes. The story of Rewi belongs to the larger theme of racial discourse, a grander underlying subject (de Botton 2014,27). When following the news, de Botton claims that we “can count on learning some extremely dark truths about the people around us” (de Botton 2014, 38). He cites such examples as murders and physical assault stories and claims that such stories work to enforce discursive positioning. These examples “Seep into our minds and colour our view of strangers” (de Botton 2014,38). Newspaper reports of Rewi as the *deviant other* operate in the same way feeding the fear of any intermingling with the other. de Botton critiques this focus on *darkness* versus more positive events (Note the analogy of dark and light so inherent in our language)<sup>35</sup>. He states that the media is responsible for national induced depression and claims that the news needs sales based on audience agitation, rage and fear (de Botton 2014,45).

Did colonialists need to demonise the other to justify their pillaging of the territories they claimed?

Smith, the author of *Decolonising Methodologies*, suggests that to believe indigenous races were not fully human empowered and authorised the colonial powers to substantiate their actions of advancing while de-humanising and governing through policies driven by taming and control (Smith 1999,26).

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<sup>35</sup> Although de Botton does not make the connection it is interesting to note this comparison.

Smith highlights the dehumanising of indigenous cultures by quoting French writer Albert Memmi<sup>36</sup> who indicated that Indigenous Nations were not civilised, or literate, and as such could never be seen as progressive races. Instead, they were seen only as a collective object. Through this position, Memmi denies Rewi all normality (Memmi 1992 83-87). In other words, Memmi positions indigenous cultures as forever primitive. Bentley also indicates that the whites that lived as Māori were represented as a threat to the colonised way of life.

These *in-betweeners* raised questions such as: Was the distinction between primitive and civilised real? Was it possible to transform self so fundamentally? Could one fall out of one's birth culture and return to a primordial state? One can imagine that these were not questions that the settlers wanted to be raised or answered at a time when the untamed descriptions of Aotearoa/New Zealand were being replaced with the notion of civilised towns that conformed to colonial models. The literature of the time was used to emphasise the achievements that were made by European settlers (Bentley 2007,12).

In attempting to understand further how these currents played out in my family's stories, I reflect on how Great-great-grandfather's in-betweenness came from his choice to move from one cultural world to another. I identify how it is different for me, because it is my inherited genetic *colouredness* that determines my in-between-ness.

Not wanting to be in-between anything.

In his book *Colonial Desire*, Robert Young<sup>37</sup> refers to this position as being placed within the landscape of the great divide, the Prime Meridian or Longitude Zero that acknowledges this riven or crack (Young 1995,1).

Said identifies some of the deeper drivers of colonial attitudes to their superiority, addressing this divide on a global level and raises the question of "whether modern imperialism ever ended" and suggests that the "construction of identity involves establishing opposites and re-interpretation of their differences" (Said 2003,332).

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<sup>36</sup> Albert Memmi Tunisian-Jewish French writer. Memmi writes that he was "sort of a half-breed of colonization, understanding everyone because I belonged completely to no one".

<sup>37</sup> Robert J.C. Young: Postcolonial theorist, cultural critic and historian.

Thereby sustaining negative stereotypes and keeping the great divide divided through binary classification. Promotions of these beliefs surround us every day, the prime meridian brass strip, the media as noted earlier in this chapter, the stories we were brought up on, Noddy with the naughty Golliwogs, even my story of Rewi and the pretty maiden. We are still surrounded by memories of the colonial ideologies of culture and race theories that we believe have been discarded, but we reinstate them covertly in language and concepts every day.

There it is set on a hill; the Prime Meridian reminds us every day of the divide. I find it interesting that this brass strip, the Prime Meridian is set on a small hill in Greenwich, England. This zero point of the world on a green hill is a reminder of the nursery rhyme I sang as a child: "I'm the King of the Castle, and you are the dirty rascal".

*Rewi, did you ever play games with your children, or sat and watched them? I wonder what games they played. Did the boys learn the Taiaha? And the girls learn Poi? I have read that knucklebone was a pre-European game for children using stones. I played this myself with the knuckles from beef until I got my very own shop-bought metal ones. But I'm the King of the Castle was a favourite, just like my dad playing a similar version. Here we sang this to assert that we were the winners and as such were to be given control of the next game. Little did I realise the significance and power behind these words. But kids are always kids, just running around having fun.*



Figure 26 Leonie Ngahuia Mansbridge standing on the *Great Divide*  
Greenwich England 2013

Hybrid... Am I a car?

Young discusses the discourse that surrounds the term Hybrid. This term is based on the scientific theory of difference and W.F. Edwards's "idea of reversion" (Young 1995,15). Robert Knox, a racial theorist alongside Edwards, suggests that the idea of hybridity is instanced as degenerate. The corruption of the original is a debate of two leading positions: monogenesis, originating from the bible that all humankind comes from the Garden of Eden; and polygenesis, which posits the view of humankind coming from different human species. However, we can still appreciate that both positions promote awareness of difference and inequality. Monogenesis claims that we come from one species, but there was never sameness; race was categorised and classed. Similar to the way polygenesis promoted difference, by racial theories based on comparative anatomy and craniometrical studies (Young 1995,130-135).

It is this undoing of authority in the language where Bhabha has extended the notion of hybridity to include a counter-authoritarian *Hybrid displacing or Third Space*, which intervenes to cause an effect of some kind. The idea of a *Third Space* that can dis-articulate and re-articulate as a form of subversion coexists with the space I occupy. On the other hand, as indicated earlier in this chapter, I sit in an ambiguous space of not one nor the other, but in the space of both. The various distinctive positions on human hybridity that Young has examined, developed through the diverse opinions on the theories of monogenesis and polygenesis, appear to be contradictory (Young 1995,3-19). These views further encourage other arguments, like the amalgamation thesis of James Cowles Prichard<sup>38</sup> and Arthur de Gobineau<sup>39</sup>, where we see that humans can interbreed successfully producing a new mixed race. "Amalgamation was used before the word miscegenation was invented in 1864" (Young 1995,9).

An Anonymous writer on colonisation in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand comments in 1838 that: "In may be deemed a cold and mercenary calculation; but we must say, that instead of attempting an amalgamation of the two races, -European and Zealanders, as is recommended by some persons, the wiser course would be, to let the native race gradually

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<sup>38</sup> James Cowles Prichard 1786-1848 British physician and ethnologist His influential research on mankind and evolution.

<sup>39</sup> Arthur de Gobineau 1816-1882 French aristocrat who helped legitimises racism by the use of scientific racist theory, and for developing the theory of the Aryan master race.

retire before the settlers, and ultimately become extinct” “Anon The New System of Colonisation” (Young 1995,9). Similarly, the decomposition thesis first advanced by William Frédéric Edwards<sup>40</sup> claims that the amalgamation between people can take place, but that mixed breeds die out quickly or they regress back to one or the other race. Further arguments from Josiah Nott<sup>41</sup>, George R Gliddon<sup>42</sup>, Pierre Paul Broca<sup>43</sup>, Charles Darwin<sup>44</sup>, Herbert Spencer<sup>45</sup> and Francis Galton<sup>46</sup> explore the spaces where hybridity fluctuates between proximate and distant species. Unions between similar races are fertile, between distant races are infertile or inclined to degenerate. This concept became the prevailing view from 1850 to the 1930s, covering the years of Granny’s and my father’s births. A negative perspective on the amalgamation thesis was miscegenation, which produced the idea of a mongrel group that was seen as the corruption of the originals, degenerate and degrading, undermining the pure races that they come in contact with (Young 1995,18).

Whatever the arguments, there seems to be no precise concept of hybridity. Certainly, there was no space or theory that mixed race people could engage with or one that was adequate. Rewi’s position, even though he was not mixed race, mixing cultures, seems to have been as big a transgression.

African-American psychiatrist, philosopher and critical theorist Franz Fanon<sup>47</sup> investigates through first and third-person perspectives the lived experience of being black. In other words, what it is like to be human (Fanon 2008,2). Fanon gave the name Sociogeny to this new knowledge, which has come to be known as Fanon’s sociogenic principles.

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<sup>40</sup> W F Edwards 1777-1842 French physiologist and anthropologist.

<sup>41</sup>Josiah C Nott 1804-1873 American Physician influenced by the racial theories of Samuel G Morton (who collected human skulls to classify them)

<sup>42</sup> George Glidden 1809-1857 another of Morton followers and a supporter of Polygenism.

<sup>43</sup> Pierre Paul Broca 1824-1880 French physician anatomist and anthropologist

<sup>44</sup> Charles Darwin 1809-1882 English naturalist, geologist and biologist best known for his contributions to the science of evolution.

<sup>45</sup> Herbert Spencer 1820- 1903 English Philosopher, biologist, anthropologist and sociologist, he developed the concept of evolution

<sup>46</sup> Francis Galton 1822- 1911 psychologist, anthropologist coining the term “nature versus nurture”.

<sup>47</sup> Frantz Fanon. 1925 –1961 was a psychiatrist, philosopher and writer whose work is significant to post-colonial studies, critical theory, and Marxism.

He deals with the subjective feeling of being *other* (Fanon 2008,95), and suggests that there is a defect with ontological explanation, which does not allow us to understand the experience of being black. Through the eyes of the white man black cultures have been annihilated (Fanon 2008,90).

Fanon's politically driven *Sociogenic principles* suggest that when we look at the social world, we should consider that social structures do not escape human influence, for Man initiates society. Fanon uses psychoanalysis to explain the way black people appear to depend on the white world to meet their emotional needs. This apparent need, Fanon suggests, stems from the lack of self-worth that has been inflicted on them from the years of racial abuse and the erasure of their native cultures. Consequently, they doubt who they are. This is evidenced in their attempts to assimilate into the dominant culture. Can the pressure to assimilate be seen as a survival method? I am sure my father saw our living in the white world was beneficial to our survival, in the way of education and work opportunities. Fanon makes us aware of the tactics used to disarm the colonised subject psychologically by the disintegration of their culture (Fanon 2004,90). He explains that the more assimilated "a black person is to the cultural values of the centre, the more he casts off the bush" (Fanon 2008,2). The lack of self-confidence and inferiority that is felt by the colonised comes from the misguided theories that emerged during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Robert Young helps to explain that culture is unable to move into a position of fixity, that there is a continual assembling and then a disassembling of cultures and cultural difference, which is triggered by an imbalance of the capitalist economies that produce them. Young suggests that this is how European society has established itself and culture has always marked cultural difference by creating the *other* (Young 1995,53).

It is this dissimilarity that makes racism an integral part of the culture. Fanon asks; how to shift the substructure of our established society without returning to the Victorian concepts of polygenesis and monogenesis? The consequences of both of these theories result in the promotion of racial discrimination and come from a belief in the superiority of one race. They advocate awareness of difference and inequality (Young 1995,21). Young also argues that there is a clear relationship between racial theories of white superiority, which justified the West's profit from slavery, colonial expansion and Christian missionary work (Young 1995,92).

These racial theories have been the measure through which the West looks at the *other*. While white culture might have freed us from nature, it did so with the neutralisation of our culture and with the placement of black people into the category of the *other*. In his book *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault pointed to man as a new conception of the human that had been invented by a particular culture, that of Western Europe, during the sixteenth century (Foucault 2002,386).

This concept was confronted with a conundrum bound in a medieval religious identity. Anthropologist Jacob Pandian explains that the Christian self and un-Christian self led to the invention of a new form of *Otherness* by Man with a secularised identity. Christians expressed the human, principally the religious subjects of the Church. All who fell outside of this category were *other* and as Christian, the West was left with the task of converting indigenous people, categorising their physical differences into the untrue Christian Other to the normative True Christian self. Europe was to invent the *other* to *man* in two aligned forms. The man was now posited as a supra-cultural universal. Its *other* was to be defined as the human other (Pandian 1985,6). And so we witness the laying of the foundations of the *other* constructed by Europeans and emerging Christian religion.

Was my Great-great-grandmother the exotic other?

From Medieval times the hierarchy was mostly ordered around religious beliefs. The supra-cultural universal comes from the Bible; both old and new testaments, suggesting that there is a message to be found that is appropriate to every place, culture and every period of the world. In other words, not only do we have *man* and *other*, but we also have only *One God*, further reinforcing that *other* cultures worshipping many Gods are non-Christians. In this way, the West has justification for civilising the native heathens (Pandian 1985,3-9).

Cultural theorist, Jonathan Rutherford<sup>48</sup> gives us one example of how white superiority views the other by analysing the film *Lawrence of Arabia* 1962. This film positions Lawrence of Arabia in a space where he is forced to confront issues of identity. He is caught between his white centred masculine identity and the Arabic culture. Like Rewi, Lawrence inverts the dominance of the centre by moving away from, not towards it. Such a shift forces Lawrence into a position of uncertainty, an in-between space. According to Rutherford, the desert in this film becomes a metaphor for the loss of cultural identity and subsequent displacement through the allure of the fascinating exotic, yet feared, alien other.

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<sup>48</sup> Jonathan Rutherford formerly a Professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Middlesex

This is how the hierarchical structures of the West have viewed marginalised cultures (Rutherford 1990, 10). Fanon also emphasises that the white man has fabricated *black* people out of a thousand details, anecdotes and stories (Fanon 2008,91). This is how the West invents the *other*. Edward Said<sup>49</sup> indicates that the construction of identity is through a depository of experiences, which encompass the creation of opposites and the other, using truism for interpretation and re-interpretation of their difference from us.

This identification of other is challenged through the social, historical, intellectual and political process (Said 1979,332). Writers like Joseph Conrad, who construct the Congo jungles as Vast Darkness, make such oppositions evident. Here, the association between black and dark are to be treated with caution. Conrad also creates a beautiful native woman who is Kurtz's mistress by turning her into an exotic other. The undertow warns, be vigilant because she was the one who caused his undoing and was a bad influence (Conrad 1973,109). Furthermore, Kurtz represents the ideologically charged horror posed by the civilised White European who, like Rewi, has *gone native*; he is represented as crazy and savage (Conrad 1973,113).

Said's pivotal work *Orientalism* (1978) opened up discussions about culture, society, politics and a plethora of intersecting arguments about history and the West. European domination and abuse of power established the boundaries, which defined *the orient* simply as *other than the occident*. These long-entrenched beliefs still influence western ideas and, because they do not allow the east to debunk these accusations, thin perspectives prevent the capability of a true understanding.

The preface Edward Said wrote in the twenty-fifth-anniversary edition of *Orientalism* (first published in 1978), says that he set about to change the way the *Orient* was represented. It reflectively questions how much has changed since 1978. This question is posed in response to an increase in the misrepresentation and misinterpretation of the Orient. In Said's (1994) Afterword to his original 1978 work, he points out that the "construction of identity—involves establishing opposites and *others* whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences."(Said 1994,332). Said suggests that the boundary notion of the East and West are locations where identity is contested, fought over and interpreted within an us/them relationship and it is these boundaries, imaginative and geographical, that explicate the division made between East and West (Said 1994,201).

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<sup>49</sup> Edward Said was a professor of literature at Columbia University, a public intellectual, and a founder of the academic field of postcolonial studies.

Fanon goes so far as to suggest that in every community, society requires a form of catharsis to release energy and aggression. He examines the ways that illustrated comics for children are used. Tarzan and even Micky Mouse encourage children to become explorers and adventurers, but these comics are written by white men for white children and so influence the mind of the white child. The renegade or rebel character that is portrayed as the devil, wicked, evil and savage is almost always represented as being black or American Indian, thereby forging the myth of the white hero and the dark/coloured villain

(Fanon 2008,125).

*Rewi, the story goes that you were lured away by the 'exotic other', the beautiful maiden carrying the kete (basket) of peaches. Later, you married her. So, do I have to thank this beautiful exotic other as well as you for being in this space of in-betweenness? But on the other hand is my beautiful maiden being stereotyped like Kurtz's mistress the exotic other as the seductress and she was the cause of Rewi undoing by turning him to the dark side?*

The image of Rewi, the *savage*, daubing himself with Kokowai (red ochre) as a way of establishing his place in the culture he has chosen, is an image that positions him in a state of becoming the exotic other. He announces to the white men attending the Hui (meetings) where he belongs. "The countenance of this man, I hear, is repulsive, particularly since his cheeks were daubed with kokowai" (war paint, a red pigment created with red ochre, obtained from clays) (Otago witness 1871,6).

This difference is perceived to uproot the certainty of political white centred structures.

Rutherford suggests that in politics, identities seem always to be formed through the polarities of empowered centred and disempowered marginalised groups (Rutherford 1998,88). Both need the other to exist, so when Lawrence of Arabia or Rewi, people from the privileged position of whiteness cross over, their abandonment of the white world is perceived to be a rejection of their own culture.

Looking back and moving forward, can we reframe these so-called transgressions and see them as role models that offer an opportunity to embrace difference as a way of creating new social and political positions that resist essentialism and mono-culturalism (Rutherford 1990 12).

Fanon argues for a new humanism that recognises all persons forming a community that respects plurality, diversity, and difference while promoting inclusive equality (Fanon 2008,204).

Eighty years have passed since Stonequist analysed the *Marginal Man*. Professor Robert Parks from the University of Chicago presented the term *marginal Man, cultural hybrid* in 1928, and in 1930 Everett Stonequist considered and developed the term further. Parks and Stonequist describe the *Marginal Man* as an individual who has been created by one culture, then transported within another culture of different content, by birth, marriage or other ways. This connection with two or more historical traditions, language and cultural understandings places you in the margins of each culture, belonging to both, although not really belonging to either (Stonequist 1937,3). Stonequist suggests that mixed races are not a new occurrence. The fusion of races between the conquered and the conquerors have been evident throughout Europe, but what become problematic manifests in the mixed-blood offspring of parents from different cultural groups as the offspring are put into an anomalous position, not fully belonging to either parents' race (Stonequist 1937,11).

Where is in-between? Is it safe?

As a young person, I identified with the dominant white culture and absorbed the prevailing feeling of superiority. At the time I had the (dis) advantage of not understanding the real position I was in. Like Butler, Stonequist indicates that from the instant we are born, we encounter social influences that are termed culture and we learn to adapt to the expectations of our social unit. This progression takes place effortlessly when you live in a structured society. However, Stonequist identifies with the experience of the *Marginal Man* fixed or permanent adjustments become impossible because we, as mixed-race/half-castes, fall between two cultural groups. We are members of each, but a member of neither (Stonequist, 1937,1-4). In the margins of each, we can be found anywhere. Some can show the evidence in their skin while some can slip through unnoticed. Stonequist goes on to explain that marginal individuality is found within all races and all cultures.

Furthermore, he upholds that no two marginal persons have similar experiences.

There is a suggestion that there are three substantial phases associated with people who belong in between First: where there is no awareness of the racial differences. Second: a stage of awareness of your position. Three: perpetual adjustments to find your place (Stonequist 1937,121-122).

*Rewi, these phases resonate for me as I deal with the questions around my own identity within my creative art practice and my exegesis. Your actions placed me in a state of in-betweenness and as I reflect back, I talk about the first stage of awareness when I was young. Before I reached the age of eight I had no inner conflict. Then my consciousness of difference arose, but I contained the situation internally, not realising the extent of the predicament I was in. I lived with this un-ease for many years quashing the discomfort and living a twofold life; my city life as a white girl and the country life as one of the whanau (Māori family).*

*Many years passed, parties, fun, travel, marriage took over my life. Never once did I wonder who I was or where I fit. I left Aotearoa/New Zealand in the 1970s and with hindsight I realise that moving away from Aotearoa/New Zealand was an escape from this conundrum, as I did not have to deal with the swing of cultures.*

*This lasted until I started doing things for myself, like enrolling in an art course at TAFE. Several years later, I had the realisation that my art was all connected to the 'margins'. I was using rulers and books and language. The rulers talked about how we measure people, how stories are told through books and history, and how language is used within the domestic realm. (See my drawing of Mix-master and beat(h)er). Nonetheless, the awareness did not connect with what I had been hiding from for years, the inequalities of being part of one, part of the other, and part of/belonging to? Nothing. In my second year at University, it became personal as I embarked on a journey of self-analysis and reflection.*



Figure 27 Leonie Mansbridge *Beat(h)er* 2006, 91x60 Old wallpaper, pencil, and pastel Fremantle Studio photo by the artist.



Figure 28 Leonie Mansbridge *To Judge and Measure* 2006, 19x18 books Tape measure. Fremantle Studio photo by artist.

Having examined my practice in the context of the influence of the events surrounding the life of Rewi, it is interesting to note that I align with both the historically placed theorist, Edward Stonequist, and the more contemporary, politically driven commentator, Franz Fanon.

The *Marginal Man* is generally representative of racial and cultural hybrids. For example, within the colonised and the coloniser, we see two value systems struggling for survival. The controlling group uses a collective approach focused on the group as a whole as the *coloniser* responds with fear and antagonism amounting to *othering* and racial discrimination. Whereas, the *other*, the colonised, are fighting back to denounce the conversation that placed them into cultural conflict (Stonequist 1937,21- 215).

Beyond the unmasking and masking, erasing and uncovering.

Even as I look to the past to unravel the histories that have informed my family's identities, I am conscious that I can recreate myself. Through the materiality of found things, I erase, unmask and uncover stories conveying them in a visual language that seeks to invent new positions. For instance, when working with blankets, I use them as a signifier that offers a direction for new communications. As Rutherford suggests, new spaces can be generated for resistance. An example that Rutherford cites is how the politically marginalised can create spaces of resistance outside of the centre "where new terms and new identities are produced on the margins" (Rutherford 1990,22) for example gay liberationists. Gay Pride, feminists, Sisterhoods are Powerful, and black people, Black are Beautiful all "Break the logic of the otherness of binarism" (Rutherford 1990,22).

On an individual level, I am engaging in the activity of dis-assembling and re-assembling my family and my identity. In this process of engagement with the identity work of male post-colonial theorists present some problems as a Māori woman due to the apparent gender blindness. This gender bias is noted in Fanon's and Stonequist's language, which adopts the linguistic convention of a male-dominated West, of consciously or unconsciously *othering* women by referring to humans as men, they promote the notion of a *new man*. This new man understands the need black people have to be whiter, while simultaneously not rejecting their blackness. He proposes a path of assimilation, which appropriates so that marginalised identities can become less, disfigured by colonisation and learn how to become fully postcolonial in their thinking.

Fanon is suggesting the *other* ignores history and recreate new identities that initiate new freedoms, which discard the past and look towards a new future. Fanon exposes injustice by writing about, the experience, the same way as I am using my autoethnographic research method to establish an authentic experience from the space of a half-caste/in-betweeness.

In her book, *Decolonizing Methodologies* Smith outlines how, through the eyes of the West, knowledge about indigenous people has been collected and classified. Her book identifies research methodologies that grapple with the ways of knowing the *West* and the ways of the West are refusing to accept the ways of the *other*. Smith suggests that indigenous communities do not differentiate scientific or *proper* research from other approaches such as filmmaking, oral storytelling style, frontier yarns and the journalistic anecdote (Smith 1999 36-37).

Adopting such an approach was Aotearoa/New Zealand reporter James Cowan, who reported history by collecting information through frontier yarns, anecdotes or fables. Cowan refers to his most valuable source for his writing: "My best authorities are, or were the human document, not other people's books" (Hilliard 2007,222). Cowan's work was criticised because historical and theoretical research undertaken in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was manipulated to suit the perspective of the dominant Eurocentric discourse and people's oral stories were a poor fit for such agendas. They wrote what they saw as they did not have an understanding of the *other* or Māori culture (Hilliard 2007,223). Unlike the colonial reporter, Cowan had several encounters with Rewi, and in his book, *Tales of the Māori Border* (1944), he retold narratives as authentic historical material of colonial frontiers. "The recruiting sergeant's bait two-and sixpence a day and two tots of rum with a 50-acre section after two years' service; the glorious adventure, fighting the wild Māori and raking in piles of loot. If this eternal sentry, drill and fatigue were an adventure, then he was full up of the stuff. There was not a sign of Māori, whether Hauhau or friendly since he landed in New Plymouth from the old Stormbird's surfboat'. Until the girl with "a basket of peaches". In 1940, nearly forty years after Coburn had become a Pākehā/Māori I met him on my way up the Mokau by canoe and heard from him much of his history (Cowan 1944,40-44).



Figure 29 Collis, William Andrews, 1853-1920. Photograph of a surf boat used for landing early settlers at New Plymouth. Ref: MNZ-1501-1/2-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. [/records/23187820](#)

*So looking back at your life Rewi I ask myself about the truth of how your life was lived.  
Did you know that you were written about and demonised?  
Did you ever have doubts about the choice that you made?*

Smith argues “to acquiesce is to lose ourselves entirely and implicitly agree with all that has been said about us” (Smith 1999,4). She argues that we should not stand back, but unify against the ideologies of the West. “To resist, retrench in the margins and retrieve what we were is to remake ourselves. Our past, our stories, our communities, culture, languages and social practices; all may be spaces of marginalisation, but a space for re-telling and recentering” (Smith 1999,29).

*Rewi, Great-great-grandfather, your actions on that day in February 1865 changed my Whakapapa (lineage).*

*The choice you made linked me to my Māori/Pākehā heritage and my Granny. Throughout my research journey, I methodically speculated on the day you took to the Blanket.*

*Do you have any inkling of the legacy you left our family?*

*Over one-hundred-and-fifty years have travelled through this cultural corridor. We all make choices in our lifetime. We are sometimes conscious of the effects we leave, but then there are others where no conclusion is contemplated.*

*I am indebted to you Rewi, as your choice on that day has given me an all-inclusive position, and an opportunity to tell our stories as a communicator disseminating an understanding of 'in between' cultural identities.*

*If you were present now, you would see I have attempted to retell your story by unravelling the threads woven by a colonial framework and unstitched by post-colonial positions.*

*In the next chapters, I will show how these conundrums are threading their way through to Granny and myself.*

This chapter has identified how actions can interrupt one's world, through the choices Great-great-grandfather made and what he thought was an opportunity. Our world is ordered on the discourses of master narratives functioning from a dominant power to control, as shown throughout this chapter. Critical insight on the materiality of the blanket exposes the variety of ways the relationship of an object can be conceptualized and transformed into a visual art practice.

Granny and Apple Trees: Chapter Two

*"The story never stops beginning or ending. It appears headless and bottomless for it is built on differences. Its (in)finity subverts every notion of completeness and its frame remains a non-totalizable one".*

*Trinh Minh-ha, Woman, Native, Other: Writing Post-coloniality and Feminism.*

Connecting the Dots.

Chapter two continues the journey from Great-great-grandfather Rewi, to his daughter Mere Colburn born 1881. I refer to Edward Casey's and Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan's analytical understanding of the connection between body memory and memory of place. This experience of connecting to place, an occurrence that is felt within my body when I go back to Aotearoa is transformed through storytelling. I consider ways body memories enable placement in the land and how to language this sense of placement. Storytelling then becomes a decolonising research methodology and reflects a personal journey and the weight of personal experience. That I belong to the land spiritually is a significant and vital part of this research. My connection through the mobilities of place has questioned my belonging; this displacement of belonging and culture can be understood and transformed into visual art practice, examining the embodied experience of place.

Mere was my Great-Granny. Known as Granny Ansell, I reflect on memories of Granny and her place; the way Granny lived her life and her relationship to two worlds. Edward Casey's critical insights into body memory and felt experience support the conceptualisation and visualisation of the *Place Ma(p)t* series, a way of transforming my cultural relationship of place into visual practice. (Casey 2000)

*Tēnā koe (hello) Granny, it's Leonie, it's been a long time since we spoke, but you know you are always with me. I heard your Karanga (calling).*

*I sometimes wonder why you choose me to make this journey. I think you knew that I would find my place and where I belonged. I often wish we had spent more time together, but I cannot change the past. I know you have shaped me as a person, your strength and the indefatigable defender of your family, zealous commitment to life, which has passed on to me as I pursue my undertaking to discover in my cultural belonging. I have learnt so much and become competent; this my culture. This research is just the beginning, as from here I still have much more to learn, I am starting to learn Te Reo (Māori language) then I will pass my knowledge on to my mokopuna (grandchildren).*

Granny brought up Dad, James Raymond Scott, (known as Posh Ansell, later on as Ray) from the age of five, and also his older brother Norman then aged six. Their mother, Jessie died of consumption, pulmonary tuberculosis, and known then as a wasting disease.

The boys had a younger brother Keith, who was looked after by another relative. Dad always mentions how when Keith was still in a shawl, his mum died.

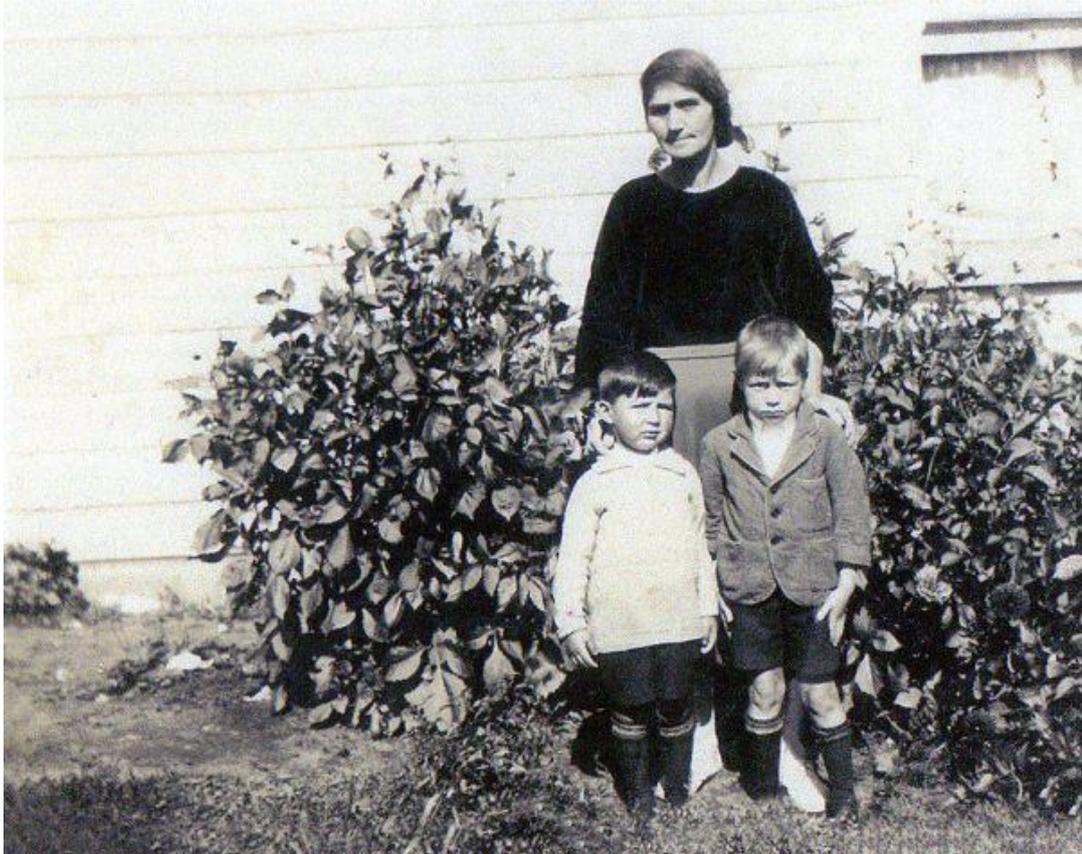


Figure 30 Granny Ansell, (Dad) Ray in the white shirt, Norman in a jacket. Taken outside Granny's home in Aria. Around 1929/1930

Keith, however, did not meet up with his brothers until he was about three. Granny married David Ansell on June twelfth, 1899 at the age of eighteen. She was unable to write and signed her name with a cross. In the registration parent column, there is an entry with a David Cockburn, crossed out and rewritten as Coburn (many different spellings, Cockburn, Coburn and even Kapanā) that lists him as her father, mother not known.

I also have a record that names Tiritia Ngawhiro as being married to Rewi. However, we do not know if she was Granny's mother because the story goes that Davy Coburn had five wives and fathered over twenty-five children!

Granny only spoke about her brother Robert Pou Colburn, who was a member of the Māori Rugby League team that toured Australia in 1905/1906 and her sister Enoni Mason Atutahi. Enoni was married to a Māori Chief and lived at Oparure Marae in Te Kuiti, North Island Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Dad was sent to live with Enoni at her Marae; he said he did not like it, he said, "There were too many kids".



Figure 31 1909 Group of Māori forwards from left: Punga Pakere, Ariki Haira, Te Rira Pukere, Puhipi Rukutai, Pou Kopana, Te Kanawa Wi Neera, Rewi Manipoto. 'Granny's brother Pou third from the right'. <https://johnjamesstanaway.com/alexander-stanaway-ariki-haira-1886-1972/>

Granny was brought up on the Pā at Mokau. Mokau is a small town on the North Island, Aotearoa/New Zealand, at the mouth of the Mokau River. Today we refer to Pā as Marae. The Pā were usually built on a hill, a ridge or another site that offered a natural obstacle, such as a river, lake or swamp.

To the Māori, a Pā was their safe place (Phillipps 2008,65). The Pā offered Granny a life of communal living where the community looked after the children. Communal gardens were worked, and tasks were shared. Maybe this is why Granny never knew her mum; we were told that Granny was moved around living for a time at the Parihaka Marae. Parihaka is located in the Taranaki region on the North Island of Aotearoa/New Zealand between Mount Taranaki and the Tasman Sea. Parihaka was known to be one of the largest Māori villages in New Zealand, a village of peace in the 1870s/1880s.

I had heard these stories of Granny living at Parihaka when she was a young girl, though I have found no evidence as yet. Parihaka was a safe place for Māori, maybe with the rumours of war, Granny was sent there to be safe.



Figure 32 Mokau Pa. Ref: 1/2-028055-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. At the mouth of the Mokau River where Granny lived as a child. The River is used as a natural obstacle. [/records/23142369](#)

Parihaka was known as the site of a resistance campaign, a campaign then hoping to stop the government's confiscation of Māori lands.

Regrettably, on the fifth of November 1881, Parihaka changed when the Government staged a violent military attack led by Lieutenant John Bryce<sup>50</sup>, Minister of Native Affairs.

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<sup>50</sup> John Bryce. As Chairman of the Native Affairs enforced laws against the Māori who resisted the separation of their lands. Under the direction of Bryce, armed constabulary marched on Parihaka, ordering the destruction of the village, imprisonment and dispersal of the occupants. Bryce and the constabulary were meet by women and children singing. Te Whiti's son Nohomairangi recalled the soldiers called the women "bloody black niggers". In the centre of the village they were meet with approximately 2,500 Māori sitting peacefully waiting for their arrival. Bryce arrived on his white horse reading the Riot Act arresting the two chiefs Te Whiti and Tohu the government passed an urgent law to allow Te Whiti and Tohu

The village was looted and destroyed and the land confiscated. The residents consisted mostly of women and children. Those that were not arrested were banished without food or water. In 1889 work began to restore the village on a 48-acre site, the only remains of the 1600 acres taken by the government (Scott 2008,111-205).

While I am not sure of Granny living at Parihaka, before the invasion, Parihaka was known as one of the largest Māori settlements in the country with an abundance of food (Scott 1975,32). So perhaps Rewi considered this an excellent environment for his daughter to live. Due to her inability to read and write English, Granny developed systems to mask what she felt were her inadequacies as measured by society. She was bi-lingual, the local midwife, a farmer (her apple orchard was legendary), mother and Granny. Granny was named as a half-caste Māori/Pākehā, she constructed her social identity to hide her real self and to fit into the white world.

Can we consider naming as an extension of language, we name to classify and help with our understanding, but on the other hand this naming is used to denigrate, words can have a transformative power that can influence one's identity. Young suggests that cultural concepts such as alternate naming is reaffirmed and rehearsed covertly in our language "every time a commentator uses the epithet 'full blood', for example, he or she repeats the distinction between those of pure and mixed race (Young 1995,27).

Dad explained that Granny always spoke English and only spoke Māori to her brother Pou at the farm gate. Pou Colburn drove the cream truck, picking up cream from all the local farms daily, so he and Granny would have a *korero* (talk) at the farm gate. Granny's husband, David Ansell, my great English Grandfather, would not let Granny speak Māori in the house or around him so she really could not acknowledge her Māoriness, living her life as the white wife.

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imprisonment to be indefinite. After the village was plundered, Bryce ordered a media blackout of the events Journalist were threatened with arrest if they defied the orders (Scott 2008, 113-117).

I remember the crisp stiff white sheets always fluttering in the wind on the clothesline; a wire strung between trees. A branch from a *manuka* tree (tea tree) with a V at the top was used as a prop so the line would not sag with the weight of the clothes.



Figure 33 *Robert Pou Colburn*, Granny's brother, Aria 1902 Photo belongs to the Great-great-grandson Billy Colburn

I also remember the antimacassar<sup>51</sup> on the chairs. The white lace, so English, was somewhat out of place on a farmstead out in the boondocks of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

*It's quite enchanting Granny that these images activate my memories. What was my fascination with white sheets and antimacassars? Was it that they acted as a sign for 'whiteness' or was it just such an unusual sight for me?*

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<sup>51</sup> Antimacassar, is a small cloth placed over the backs or arms of chairs, or the head or cushions of a sofa, to prevent soiling of the permanent fabric.

Great-grandfather did not want to acknowledge Granny's Māoriness but was content to take Māori land for his farm. He acquired this land through Granny and her brother Pou.

An article by the Taranaki Land board, found in the King Country Chronicle, twenty-seventh November 1912, approves Granny's brother's application to take D Ansell as a partner for land. Note how Granny's brother is formally known as R.P. Coburn but within the family, he is named Pou.

**R. P. Coburn, holder of section 8, block 5, Aria, asked to be allowed to take his brother-in-law, D. Ansell, as a partner in section. —Approved.**

Figure 34 King Country Chronicle 27<sup>th</sup> November 1912

Dad would tell us stories about Granny, how she rode her horse bareback all over the countryside. She would take him with her on occasions. Grabbing his arm to sling him up to the back of the horse, off they would gallop. Dad said he would always hold on to Granny's waist for dear life. Her long black skirt, worn regularly, would flap up and slap him in his face, obscuring his view of the countryside, until they arrived at their destination.

These were his cherished moments with Granny, their time together.

#### Distance and Memory

Aria, Aotearoa/New Zealand, where Granny and dad lived is a small township supported by farms. After the Second World War, the population dropped down to about four hundred residents.

*Aria is my place of memories, a felt place I visit whenever I can, heading for Granny's farm driveway. I sit by myself on the bonnet of the car, connecting and feeling with place and Granny. I have never seen another person on the visits; it's just the animals and me. After time at the farm, I drive back up the road crossing the one-way bridge, responding to the connection I have to this road, Granny and my dad. Feeling and knowing they have both made this same journey many times before, I travel in their footsteps. The next stop is a visit to whanau (family) at the urupā (cemetery). There I sit.*

Granny raised eight children in Aria, Jessie (my Grandmother), aged twenty-four and her sister Bessie, aged thirty-two both died of consumption. Their brother Roy died as a prisoner of War in 1944 aged twenty-nine. He was captured in North Africa and then moved to Germany as POW. The other two girls married and moved away, and the three boys lived and worked on the farm.



Figure 35 Leonie Mansbridge 2016 Granny's farm, the home was located among the trees. The smaller trees on the left are the camellia trees where the photo of Granny, Dad and Norman was taken. (Fig1) You can still see the long gravel drive which Granny walked down every day to leave the cream and talk to her brother Pou.

*Granny I have walked that drive many times, tracing your footsteps. The home has gone now, but the memories stay with me. I took away a fence post and turned it into a lamp; I know you would have touched this post, I feel it.*

Felt Memories.

When I think of Granny, I envisage myself, for we have an intangible rapport. I was only thirteen when she passed, and I now attempt to fathom this *felt* connection to her that continues to make its home inside of me.

Philosopher Edward Casey<sup>52</sup> delves into the concept of body *memory*. Body memory is a lived bodily experience, but, as Casey suggests, body memory is seldom of the *body* as it approaches us with a noticeably *felt* attribute. The felt experience reveals itself as moving from a dormant and inarticulate state to voicing moments. Casey acknowledges this felt stage to be characterised by a *density in depth*. Casey goes on to clarify that there is a distinction between the density of depth in recollection and body memory. In re-collection, we do not strongly associate with the depth of the scene (Casey 2000,163-168). For example, we remember, the places we visited on our holidays, how the memories evoke the atmosphere of the place, though the feeling of belonging is not measurable in these visualised images. Whereas body memories belong to the lived body sharing the boundaries of place, their density in-depth and *felt*-ness is detected through conditions of immenseness, instincts and that, which cannot be articulated.

These felt memories declare themselves in our physical bodies, masking and unmasking, immersing themselves in memory depths beyond the memory of re-calling. While body memory suggests the past, it does not return us there. It reveals a sense of attuned space that allows us to feel at home in a different place. Body memory formulates a familiarity with the memories we are at home with, witnessing a close relationship with the memory of place, infiltrating place with memory.

Nonetheless, Casey suggests that for body memory to be activated, it is the *scene* of the remembering, the *place*, which serves as a signal to retrieve details for our memories, projecting our position in a place relative to us Casey 2000,183-187). This *place* aids and holds our memory. It is a felt place that contains our memory, a placeholder.

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<sup>52</sup> Edward Casey is a Philosopher and a University Professor at Stony Brook University New York whose research investigates Place and Space, landscape painting and maps as approaches to representation that encompass philosophies of perception, feeling and emotions. In his book '*The Fate of Place*' Casey is concerned with the unexploited possibilities of silence and absences within the theoretical investigation into space and place.

Casey reaffirms this notion in his book *The Fate of Place*. Here he states that places gather familiarities, histories, language and ideas. His idea of *gathering* is not one of collecting. Instead, it is more aligned with a hold in place. As Casey put it, “the silence and absences within, the hold is held” (Casey 1998,54). It is holding together in a specific formation, which acknowledges certain things from people and thoughts that can be present or distant recollections, unrelated or interrelated.

This hold is a holding in/on, and without this hold, the place would be nothingness (Casey 1998,54).

Fanon also maintains that “for colonised people, the essential value, because it is the most meaningful, is first and foremost the land: the land, which must provide bread and, naturally, dignity” (Fanon 2004,9). We become grounded with the land, and this grounding leads to the dignity of our ways of being, doing and knowing.



Figure 36 Leonie Mansbridge, *Aria* 2017. My Placeholder, Aria, I do not inhabit this place and never have, it is the feelings, stories, memories and experiences that will forever bind me.

When I return to the place of my birth, Aotearoa/ New Zealand, body memory and memory of place is activated, and I feel a host of familiar associations that evoke I am back home.



Figure 37 Leonie Mansbridge, *Aria* 2017, The Road to Granny's, this is a local road to somewhere, for me it is the link I use to experience my placeholder.

Māori use the saying *Tāngata whenua*<sup>53</sup> people of the land, with no concept of ownership, but a deep connection to the land. Consider the puzzle of identity, that sense of, or experience of belonging, akin to finding that piece of the jigsaw that eludes you, and then one day you find it, and you place it where it belongs. Through the immersive nature of being in the studio, place is conceptualised and reimagined as a site where memories can survive. Creative practice methods enable a visual art practice through which I explore and reveal the experience of living an *inbetween* existence within the third space that Homi Bhabha acknowledges as a space that can coexist within two or many cultures, a replacing to a remembered place (Bhabha 1994).

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<sup>53</sup> Tāngata whenua is the Māori term for indigenous people of Aotearoa /New Zealand. It literally means "people of the land" tangata 'people, man or human being'. Whenua is 'land' and 'placenta" Māori regard the land as Mother.

(Williams 2006,494)H.W Williams, *Dictionary of the Māori Language*, Seventh Edition ed. (Wellington, New Zealand: Legislation Direct, 2006).

I have that feeling when I return to Aotearoa/New Zealand, particularly when I head to the King Country Aria, my *Whenua* (land). Granny is always with me on this journey. She is my *wairua*<sup>54</sup> (spirit), my shadow, even though she passed away many years ago.

This land was taken and traded for blankets and guns. However, as the proverb below validates, with the inclusive Māori beliefs and respect of *Papatūānuka*<sup>55</sup> (the earth mother) the land will never be taken.

Māori Proverbs: Whatungarongaro te tangata toitū te whenua. As man disappears from sight, the land remains (Mead 2007,425).

Making Home.

Referring back to Casey, why do we need to represent place when we already have the familiarity through our experience?

By observing the way internationally acclaimed Aotearoa/New Zealand painter Colin McCahon<sup>56</sup> (1919-1987) paints his landscapes through an unswerving stillness and sense of place. McCahon visualises the feelings within his painting (Bloem 2002,9-13).

In the painting *Six Days in Nelson and Canterbury*, there is no suggestion of the work belonging to a specific local without the title that is written on the lower right-hand side. The six views offer a *felt* place of shadows, quietness and space.

The understanding that McCahon offers his viewers is through observing an infinite depth punctuated with the lightness of the sky.

The painting beckons a time for contemplation and feeling to be provoked through memories. As with Casey's thoughts on a geographical scape, they are treated as methods of assemblage with place, (Casey 2002,264) in much the same way McCahon responds with his scape.

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<sup>54</sup> Wairua: spirit, soul - spirit of a person, which exists beyond death. (Williams 2006,477)

<sup>55</sup> Papatūānuka in Māori tradition, Papatūānuku is the land. She is a mother earth figure who gives birth to all things, including people. Trees, birds and people are born from the land, which then nourishes them. [www.teara.govt.nz/en/papatuanuku-the-land](http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/papatuanuku-the-land)

<sup>56</sup> Colin McCahon 1919-1987 Modernist Painter of New Zealand. McCahon style developed into an unpretentious bent, like erasure-ing, what had come before. Developing his own iconographic symbols text, crosses, games and numbers. He was dedicated to the environment. Landscape and religion were fundamental to his practice.

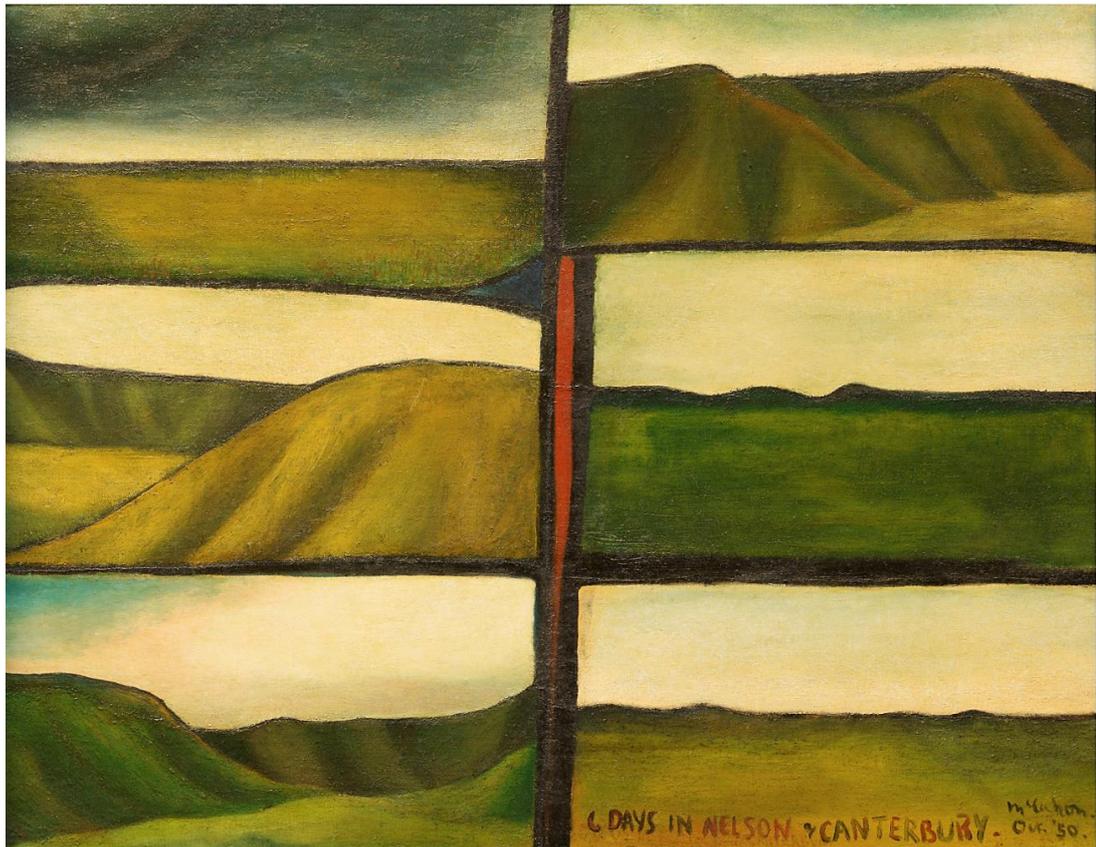


Figure 38 Colin McCahon *Six Days in Nelson and Canterbury* 1950 Oil on board 885x1165 mm Collection of Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

Casey's conversations encompass the sense of attuned space that comes with the connection between body memory and memory of place. Further, Casey indicates that body memories reside on the margins of our lives and are called upon as part of our familiarity.

My interest lies in the locus of habitual body memories so entrenched in our performance that they become part of the reserves we can draw on to fluently activate the contextual fragments that make up our lives. This way of being is embedded within the margins and only activated affectively when we remember what we did in the past. It is akin to learning to ride a bike.

I have not ridden a bike for over 40 years, but by triggering my body memory, I guess I could get on a bike today and ride as I did all those years ago.

Benjamin Morison<sup>57</sup>'s *On Location: Aristotle's Concept of Place, 2002* explains Aristotle's concept of place as being, "the place of something *x* is the (inner) boundary of the thing that contains or surrounds, *x*" (Morison, 2002,3).

I take this idea of a container with no boundaries, which I find compatible with my Māori cultural philosophies on *Tangata Whenua (people of the land)*. It belongs to nobody, but everybody. It is a spiritual place of belonging. Edward Casey re-enforces the idea of a container as a place that assists the circumstance of all living things. Not only does the notion of place relate to a position or situation place also goes with the notion of being, "To be is to be bounded by place, limited by it" (Casey 2000,186).

Further unpacking connection to place I turn to Geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan<sup>58</sup>, who writes about the spiritual connection to the land. He acknowledges how human groups tend to regard their homeland as the centre of the world, thereby claiming an inescapable worth for their location. Tuan attaches one condition for this claim through a spiritual connection to the land, a phenomenon that is not limited to any particular culture (Tuan 1977,154). This land and space are part of my identity; my ancestors walked, worked and lived on this land.

In the 2011 Boyer Lectures, author Geraldine Brooks<sup>59</sup> talks about *The Idea of Home*.

She explains that the Indo-European root of the word *home* is *haunt*, and this is why she is haunted by "absence and distance, dissonance and difference" (Brooks 2011, 14). Brooks was born and raised in Sydney and is now living on Martha's Vineyard Island, USA. She suggests the idea of home is also more significant than a floor plan and a post-code (Brooks 2011, 38).

Like Brooks, I have lived a great deal of life away from my home, and like Brooks, am haunted by absence, distance, dissonance and difference. These feelings are explored and made physical through creative practice.

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<sup>57</sup> Benjamin Morison: Professor of Philosophy Princeton University USA.

<sup>58</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan: Chinese- American Geographer Emeritus Professor University of Wisconsin-Madison, his book *Space and Place* investigates how people respond to space and place, and how they comprehend their thoughts of home, neighbourhood and nation.

<sup>59</sup> Geraldine Brooks: Australian foreign correspondent, author now living in USA.

Creative Perceptions Of Home.

The *Tiki Tour*<sup>60</sup> series 2017 using the found placemats, evokes a personal narrative based on place memories that recall images and words associated with touring the countryside; old barns, lines of trees, listening to parents conversations from the back of the car. I have created a visual diary based on senses and experience of *home* as represented and symbolised through the use of my mother's placemats and many more collected in recent years.

I transform these familiar, everyday domestic objects, often associated with the '50s and 60s scenic travel memorabilia, often used in private spaces, small things often gendered and as such commonly seen as unimportant, certainly unheroic. The images and reference to such objects are activated into memory objects that serve as a series of placeholders.

Significant events, often nostalgic and a reflection of the intimacy always associated with another, either through presence or absence. These objects become props in a reconstructed event.

Where Am I Sitting?

Mum's placemats were initially designed to be placeholders for table's plates and dishes and other bucolic domestic tropes associated with white middle-class family living, now I have altered them. They have been *whitewashed* with gesso, *glittered*, *romanticised*, *painted* and *masked out* with masking tape veiling the original scene, making the original image almost imperceptible.

These processes are purposefully chosen as analogous to a personal exploration of cultural erasure and identity way of reconfiguring.

The objects might be considered banal and unheroic, their genesis in the anthropology of the private world of work, often associated with the female, the use of hands (handwork) and technologically simple making strategies. Sited in the home, the methodologies employed to transform these found objects are the same; introspective, private, labour intensive and repetitive; very much unheroic.

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<sup>60</sup> Tiki Tour; according to *'The Book of New Zealand Words'* tiki tour is a roundabout trip, short sightseeing tour, or a look around. I just grew up with this colloquial phrase as my everyday language. Dianne Bardsley, *Book of New Zealand Words* (Wellington New Zealand: Te Papa Press 2013).



Figure 39 Leonie Mansbridge *Tiki Tour series* Place Mat(p)s 2017 23x18 Placemat, acrylic paint, rhinestone beads, stick-on letters, Fremantle Studio.

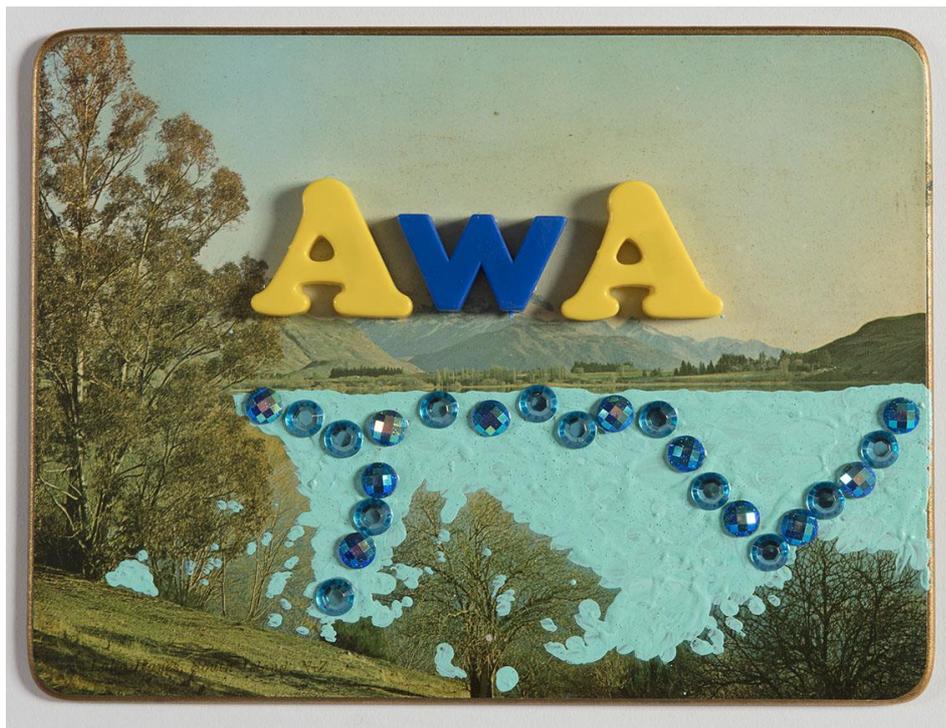


Figure 40 Leonie Mansbridge *Tiki Tour series* Place Mat(p)s 2017 23x18 Place Mat, acrylic paint, rhinestone beads, Placemats magnetic letters, Fremantle Studio.

The *Tiki Tour Place Ma(p)t Series* exists as an assemblage of place. I can look at the unassuming placemat and speculate on relationships with these domestic things. They are recognisable imaginings of New Zealand, which are significant to my belonging. The placemats are also a thing, and I am reminded once again of cultural theorist, Bill Brown's *Thing Theory* where he discusses how *things* become codes to us. I look at placemats as a code for defining someone's place/space at the table. They mark a well-defined area of place. We could look at objects as a thing, then again the word thing can assign both the tangible and the obscure. Placemats as a thing may mark someone's place at the table; they also evoke a thing I feel (a feeling) inside of me, similar to coming home. A thing can manoeuvre as a chosen indicator for a word, (that thing I wear around my neck), a conundrum for no words (there is something strange about her), or an object, (can you pass me that thing).



Figure 41 Leonie Mansbridge *Tiki Tour Place Mat(p)s series* 2017 23x18 Place Mat, acrylic letters and acrylic paint, Fremantle Studio.

Whatever way a thing is used, our relationship with it exposes the codes of how we comprehend our space in the world (Brown 2001,4).

Things can reveal who we are, culturally and historically. My things, the placemats, reveal a spiritual connection to place and Granny. Brown's thing theory offers a framework for this aspect of the research. In its most predictable place, the word thing is an indicator of the liminal, or what Bhabha refers to as a third space. This space is still a thing to me. Brown expresses it as a "threshold between the nameable and the unnameable, the comprehensible and incomprehensible, the identifiable and unidentifiable" (Brown 2001,5).

Directing this comparison to my space, I recognise these descriptive words as relevant to the proclaiming of the space. However, the suggestion that my space sits on the threshold is not appropriate to my specific locus. I cannot choose to step over the threshold or even stand on the threshold.

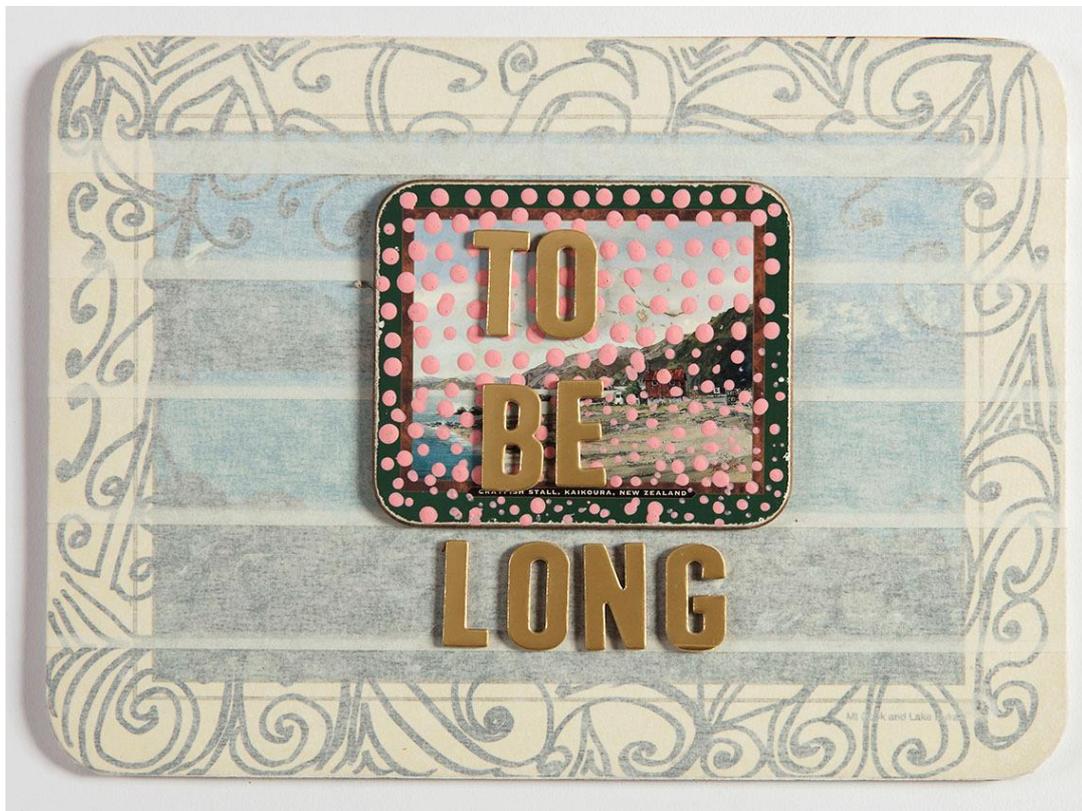


Figure 42 Leonie Mansbridge *Tiki Tour Place Mat(p)s* Series 2017 23x18 Placemat, gold letters acrylic paint masking tape, Fremantle Studio.

There is no going back or standing and looking in. I was born into this space, a space that is unidentifiable to most of the outside world because of the part of me hidden by the whiteness of my skin.

The placemats are produced in the way of a series from the actions of patching up, outlining, highlighting and erasure-ing with consideration.

In the production and making of the *Tiki Tour Place Mat(p) Series*, there is a preference for low-tech materials. Intuitively, these non-art materials fit with the methodology of the practice and these works. When I contemplate an idea for an artwork, I make a conscious decision to use materials that work to bring meaning to the project. Also, I have a natural tendency to consider materials that I know are familiar, ready at hand, and that I can use directly. I find supplies for the material for making in toy stores, hardware shops, two-dollar shops, and non-art shops.



Figure 43 Leonie Mansbridge *Tiki Tour Place Mat(p)s* 2017 17x14 Place Mat, gold letters, acrylic paint masking tape, Fremantle Studio.



The placemat interventions oscillate between elements of recognisable imagery and a sense of lively dissonance as the artificial colours sparkle and vibrate on the surface. This juxtaposing of colour and things entangle the work, so we see what others do not.

The artificial imitation of landscape reframes the Aotearoa/New Zealand landscape, a place/space that I connect to through my *whakapapa* (genealogy). It is a place that is redolent with the spiritual so much more than a landscape that the tourists see.

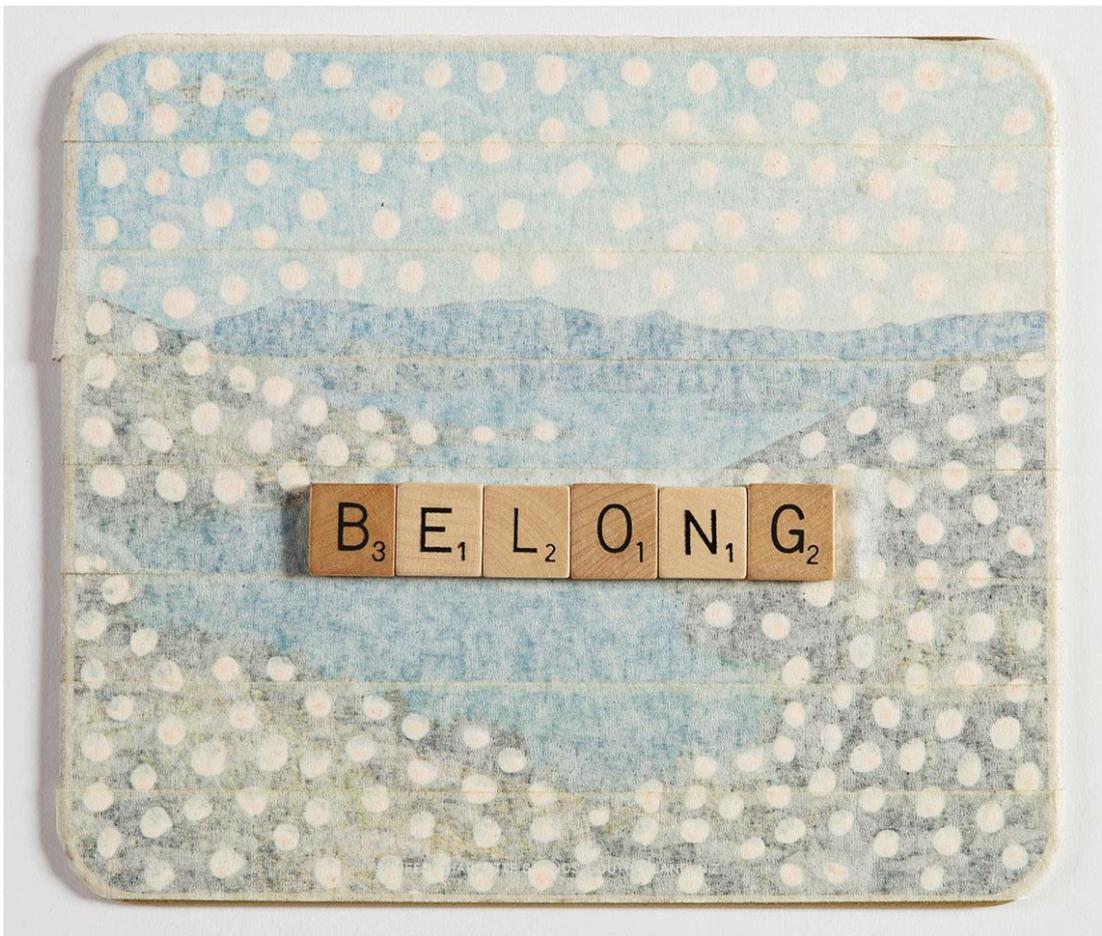


Figure 45 Leonie Mansbridge *Tiki Tour Series Place Mat(s)* 2017 22x18 Place Mat, acrylic paint masking tape, scrabble letters, Fremantle Studio.

Dots, spots or code is often added to the resurfacing of the mats creating the story of my life of in-betweeness.

Not Knowing Cannot Continue, Justice necessitates All.

These strategies of the visual process are designed to explore and reveal the experience of living an *in-between* existence within the third space that Homi Bhabha acknowledges as a space that can coexist within two or many cultures, a replacing to a remembered place (Bhabha 1994). Granny and I both coexisted in hidden spaces camouflaging who we were. We both lived in this hidden third space. Granny lived the white life at home with her English husband (white sheets and apple trees), although outside, she became herself, speaking Māori to her brother and other family members.



Figure 46 & 47 Leonie Mansbridge workshop cutting and sanding profiles for Parihaka Series Curtin University 2009

Dad shared that for a treat, Granny took both him and his brother Norman into Te kuiti the closest town to Aria; here they would meet up with Granny's sister Enoni Mason. I never got to meet her, but dad would tell the stories. Each time she saw him, she would *hongī*<sup>61</sup> him (A traditional Māori greeting, pressing noses together). Dad reckons whenever he saw her coming, he would try to hide, as he used to get embarrassed. Enoni wore a moko kauae (A female chin tattoo) whereas Granny masked who she was from the world, Enoni would wear her cultural marker in much the same way as Rewi with Kokowai on his face, marking in the world where they belonged.



Figure 48 Leonie Mansbridge *Tiki Tour Place Mat(p)s Series* 2017 22x18 Place Mat, Scrabble letters acrylic paint, Fremantle Studio.

<sup>61</sup> Hongi; is a traditional Māori and sacred greeting, by pressing one's nose and forehead (at the same time) to another person. The 'ha' (or breath of life) is exchanged, making the visitors at one with the hosts. The light touching making contact with a fellow human (embracing) with the breath is quintessence with mankind. (Te Ara Encyclopedia Of New Zealand).

Through the creative practice, place is conceptualised and re-imagined to allow a site where memories can survive. Here we may be reminded of Aristotle's suggestion of *place as a container*, to be in place is to be contained by a container of experiences. Accepting our experiences offer different iterations of imagining and recollections within our containment. The memories are a link between the historical and geographical sites by engaging with place through a reflective melancholy. The emblematic connection has enabled the processes and methods employed in the placemat series, which activate a felt sense of remembering within my container of place. As I cut and layer, I employ subtractive and additive processes as strategies to expose how place and space are malleable, adaptable and actual.

Further, the image provides a visual link to traditional and contemporary Māoritonga<sup>62</sup> of *Whakapapa*<sup>63</sup>, the genealogical descent of all living things. Whakapapa means, to lay one thing upon another. A prized form of knowledge in Māori culture is to know where you come from. Layering also acknowledges the significance of contemporary and historical time. It is the registration of a specific moment and a specific condition of that time.

The stories are hidden with-in or coded as clues designed to negate that which cannot be seen. The work seeks to re-present stories that survey how ideas and histories are disseminated through unofficial and official narratives that are easily accessed and maintained as well as those that have been mislaid, almost forgotten over time.

The act of making, of reconfiguring these stories into something new is intended to provide insight with an understanding of being caught between a sense of place and place-less-ness. Living and non-living.

Growing up, we always visited relatives, and this usually involved country travel. As mentioned above, we knew this travel as *Tiki Touring*. Our points of interest were not the more usual tourist attractions, historical sites, monuments or typical scenic views.

Our scenic views were via the backcountry roads that tourist buses would not and could not use.

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<sup>62</sup> Māoritanga; Māori Culture, traditions, and way of life.

<sup>63</sup> Whakapapa; Papa, is broad, flat 'Whakapapa' is to place in layers, so your whakapapa is the framework that links living and non-living in a genealogical, table of lineage and descent



Figure 49 Leonie Mansbridge *Tiki Tour Place Mat(p)s series 2107 17x14* Placemat, plastic Tiki and scrabble letters, Fremantle Studio.



Figure 50 Leonie Mansbridge 2016 Granny's Street, Waitewhena Road, Paraheka. Aria King Country Aotearoa/ New Zealand.

These were rough metal roads, mainly used by farmers and we could drive for hours, see no one, just livestock and old barns, while listening to stories. The many stories told by dad about growing up in the wop wops<sup>64</sup>.

It was a hard life, but one that triggered happy memories. I especially remember the large boulders that are intrinsic to the King Country.

The King Country named for the Māori King, who lived there in exile, the area was mainly off-limits to Europeans. It is located in the North Island from the low lands towards Waikato, inland to Whanganui and the Taranaki regions (Te Ara. The Encyclopedia of New Zealand).

Dad would tell the story of how, as a young boy, he would climb up onto an enormous boulder and holler out "I'm the king of the castle, and you are the dirty brown rascals!"

Dad used the word brown, not black, repeatedly, and we became accustomed to this label as a statement of fact. Dad was a Māori/ Pākehā, and he just saw it as it was. Māori/Pākehā were brown, a mixture of black and white, neither one nor the other.

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<sup>64</sup> New Zealand term: used to describe the middle of nowhere. Similar to the American term for the "boonies". Used to describe a place not usually inhabited and out of one's normal travel, [wopwops](#). A [Tiki tour](#) (Aotearoa/New Zealand slang) is a sight-seeing journey with no particular destination in mind.

Dad used to tell us that when the kids that came from around (where he lived) played games like *King of the castle*, they would use the big stone boulders, this game consisted of a form of chasey. Whoever was *in* had to run to the largest boulder as a site, stand on top and call out "I'm the king of the castle, and you are the dirty brown rascal", without getting caught? I asked him once why they said brown. He pondered this for a moment and replied, "Because we were brown, nothing more". Every corner we turned, and there are many in the rugged contours of King Country, we had another story.

This history defines coming to terms with hardship. Seeing, it *as it is* and *making do* inform the research methodology. Making do is central to our upbringing, and intuitively informs the practice. Coming from a large extended working-class family and making ends meet was a daily reality. Life was simple. Found objects are utilised, scrabble pieces, placemats, while painting underpins the practice, the approach to painting is also one of making do, as I use house paints, spray paints and anything leftover from other jobs. Works are modestly fabricated by hand, and there is no high tech production or outsourcing.

Life Was Simple Then.

Making do involves working with whatever happens to be on hand in or near the studio at the time the work is produced, I am a collector, which necessitates lots of found materials from travels that hold interest and resonate with ideas about future works. Central to the practice, the materials used are still responding as a reading of the language of materials, as mentioned in Chapter One.

This working methodology also encompasses photocopying as a spontaneous and unpretentious method for producing low cost, low tech, mass-produced images. It is an iterative process; an approach employed in the practice as it efficiently produces a series of works.

These series are not always sequential or repetitious, but there is always a relationship and always three or more, never two, never oppositional and never binary.

*One is never enough. One is solo.*

*Two is binary; two is oppositional, two, is this or that, a limited choice.*

*Three is the beginning of multiples, plural, this that and the other.*



Figure 51 Leonie Mansbridge *Tiki Tour Place Mat(p)s* series 2017 17x14 Placemat, acrylic paint, plastic tiki and Rhinestone beads, Fremantle Studio.

The immediacy of the working methods reveals the flaws and irregularities; these qualities are inherent in the practice. They expose both the methodology and the person. Making flaws or smudging the paint is not deliberate; it just seems to happen, evidence of action, an attribute of the identity blots, smears, and smudges are symbolic fingerprints. Paint is used to make marks, though I am not a painter, photocopies are used as a print method though I am not a printer.

Maybe there is an exception to one not being enough? Granny wanted to do things herself as she created the systems to get by in a world that was increasingly structured by people who were not illiterate, people not forced to make do as a condition of survival.

*NIKAU PALM*<sup>65</sup>

*Nikau Palm*  
*Standing tall, high on a hill*  
*Granny's calling*  
*I'm here, can you see me?*  
*I see you*  
*I've come to you Granny. Can you see me?*  
*You are not alone now*  
*Can you see me?*  
*Nikau palm*  
*Standing tall, high on a hill*  
*Nikau Palm*  
*So tall with your crown upon your head*  
*A fringed collar around your neck*  
*The wood pigeons come calling*  
*I'm here my Granny*  
*See me now.*

*Leonie Mansbridge 2015*

I am now located in Granny's place, and this space is fundamental to who I am. I reflect on what it means to sit in the margins as defined by Linda Tuhiwai Smith. Smith suggests that Māori are familiar with the marginalisation brought about by being outside of the centre of the dominant culture. She also acknowledges that marginalisation is not uniform within marginalised groups, suggesting instead, that there is a multidimensional facet to marginalisation (Smith 2006,5).

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<sup>65</sup> Nikau Palm is Aotearoa/New Zealand's only native palm species, these palms are everywhere along the Mokau River where my granny grew up.(doc.govt.nz)



Figure 52 Granny Ansell photo taken outside her home Aria 1929/1930

This is a condition I am acutely aware of, having *felt* excluded from both sides of my cultural history. How does this condition feel? It is like being an impostor, a deceiver and a joke. Whilst I am saddened that I cannot be seen for what I am, there is the further disappointment of feeling and reacting negatively. It never gets easy.

However, Smith also reveals how cultural theorists, bell hooks<sup>66</sup> and Stuart Hall<sup>67</sup> have recognised that “meaningful, rich, diverse, interesting lives are lived in the margins” (Smith 2006,6). This space of the margins is not void of significant people. Often they are filled with people that choose the margins to create alternative cultures and identities (Smith 2006,6).



Figure 53 *Now and Then*

Leonie Ngahuia Mansbridge 1961

Leonie Ngahuia Mansbridge 2017

This margin is the place where I now live as a half-caste, and I concur with hooks and Hall by acknowledging that this life has been enriched and made more meaningful since I have chosen to call myself half-caste.

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<sup>66</sup> bell hooks aka Gloria Jean Watkins, is a cultural critic, feminist theorist, and writer. Distinguished Professor of English at City College and the Graduate Centre of the City University of New York. She has chosen the lower case pen name bell hooks, based on the names of her mother and grandmother, to honour them and to emphasize the importance of the substance of her writing as opposed to who she is.

<sup>67</sup> Stuart Hall 1932-2014: Jamaican born cultural theorist, political activist and sociologist. Hall respected the works of Frantz Fanon and had a large influence on racism with Asian and Black immigration in Britain during the 1960's.

Learning At Your Own Pace.

Like Granny, I challenge myself by finding strategies to survive. From my early school years, I was an outsider. As an adult, I realised I was dyslexic, a phenomenon that was undetected during school years when people like me were marginalised and put into the special classes. Extraordinarily, this childhood experience connects to Granny's lifetime of not being able to read or write.

In late teens, I approached learning to suit my needs, teaching myself a system of visualising words. I could not spell, changing the letters around so they would look right. This is something I have perfected over the years, just as Granny used systems to mask what she felt were her societal inadequacies then framed by the dominant culture.

Another story dad told was when Granny would take him and his brother into Te Kuiti<sup>68</sup> to the movies for a treat. As she did not comprehend pounds, shilling and pence, she would use a one-pound note whenever she bought anything. She always knew what a pound would cover so she would not have to deal with counting change. Dad said Granny would always put the loose change into a small flour bag and take it home not knowing what to do with it, but dad's uncles always knew what to do with the change. Granny masked her incapacities with a forged self-assurance that fitted her into the white world; very few ever knew that she was illiterate.

*Granny and Apple Trees*

*Granny and apple trees  
Snowdrops in the ground  
White starched sheets  
Bleached images drift over me  
I don't need to see her face  
Taste the apples or feel the stiff white sheets  
She's riding her horse with her long black skirt  
Waiting on a hill, waiting for me.*

*Leonie Mansbridge 2014*

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<sup>68</sup> Te Kuiti A small town north of the King Country in the North Island Aotearoa/New Zealand, It promotes itself as the shearing capital of the world, It's the place my dad was born, and home of our marae, Oparure.

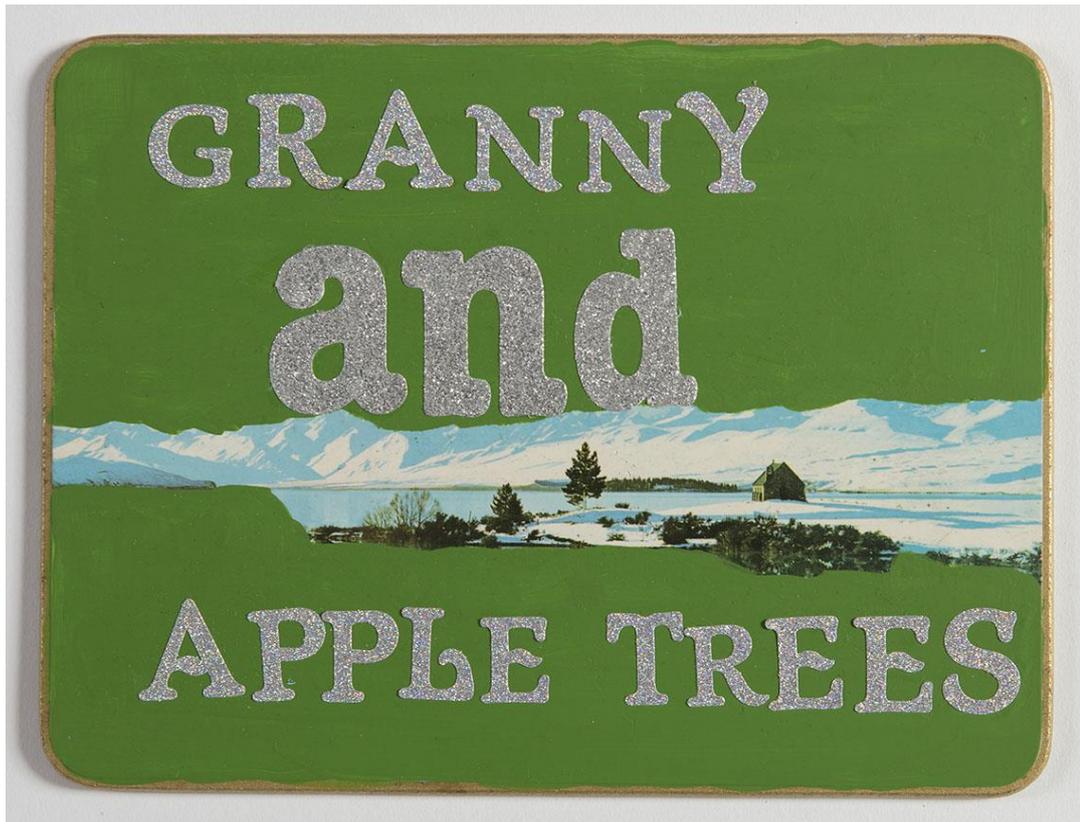


Figure 54 Leonie Mansbridge, *Tiki Tour Place Mat(p)s series* 2017 23 x18 Place mat, glitter letters and acrylic paint, Fremantle Studio.

Māori are *Tangata Whenua* (people of the land). Judith Binney<sup>69</sup>, Vincent O'Malley<sup>70</sup> and Alan Ward, who co-wrote a chapter *The Land and the People, 1860-1890* in *Tangata Whenua: a History* explained, "Māori had never owned land as a commodity. Instead, different groups could hold different rights and interests in the same area; these rights involved residences, fishing, hunting and berry picking. Claiming these rights were through tribal membership, marriage and individual belonging.

The resources were shared with other tribes because sharing and respect for the land were of the utmost importance" (Anderson 2015,256).

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<sup>69</sup> Judith Binney 1940-2011: Historian, Emeritas Professor of History at Auckland University.

<sup>70</sup> Dr Vincent O'Malley is a Pākeha New Zealander of Irish and Scottish Highland descent. A professional historian O'Malley Works on behalf of iwi, hapū, and various Treaty claim agencies, including the Waitangi Tribunal and the Crown Forestry Rental Trust.

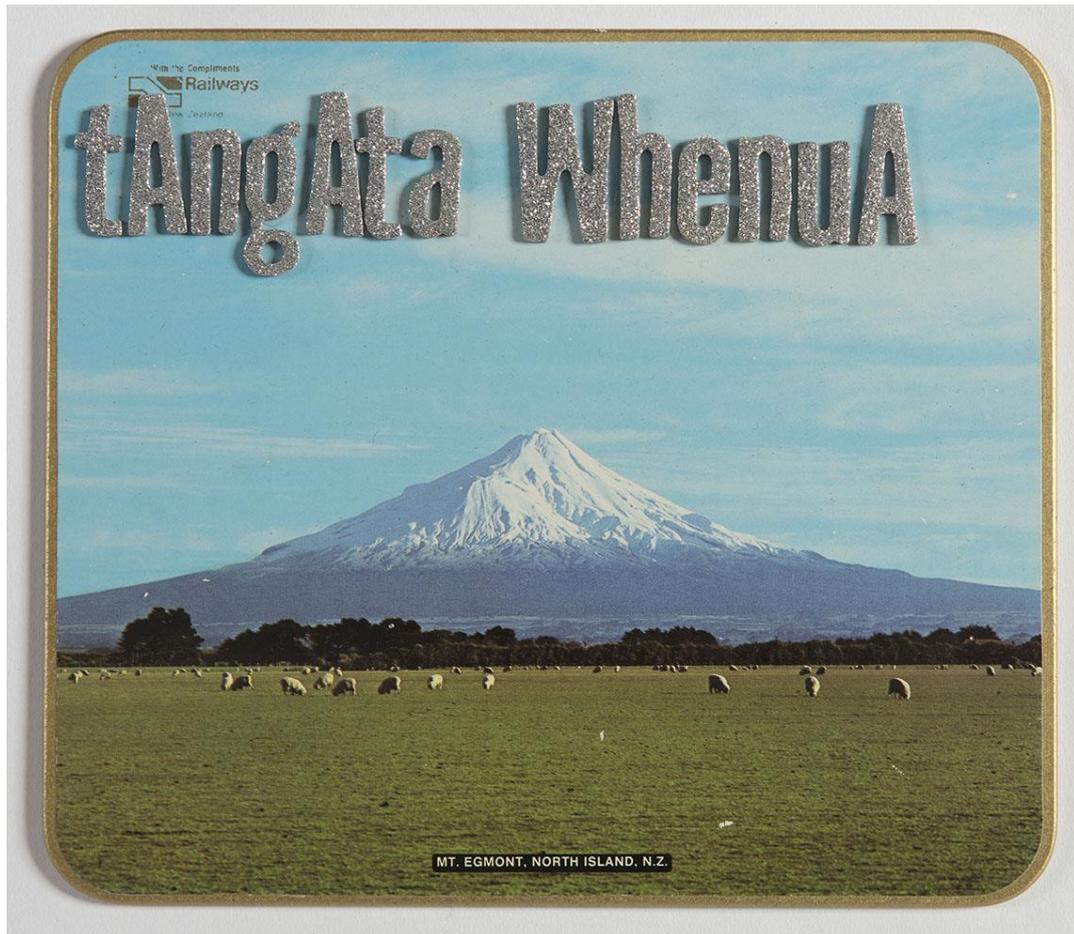


Figure 55 Leonie Mansbridge *Tiki Tour Place Mat(p)s Series* 2017 23x18 Placemat and Glitter Letters, Fremantle Studio.

On the other hand, Pākehā ownership was through a system of individual purchase where fences were erected and boundaries marked. This shift in ownership, we can understand through scholar Giselle Byrnes<sup>71</sup> book *Boundary Marker*. Here, she indicates that it was the customary part of an explorer's entitlement to name places, thereby allowing the language of the coloniser (European) to redraft the Aotearoa/New Zealand landscape. By marking their names on the land and then indoctrinating their achievement through text and maps, the colonisers adopted an approach that was fundamental to the building of a *new* cultural space. This new cataloguing of re-naming denied existing Māori landscapes and arrogantly contradicted previous history (Byrnes 2015,21).

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<sup>71</sup> Professor Giselle Byrnes, Assistant Vice-Chancellor Research, Academic & Enterprise Massey University. Byrnes is highly regarded as an historian of colonial encounters.

Byrnes proposes that naming and renaming was “An act of writing over the land” (Byrnes 1998,22), a declaration of acquisition that is permanently attached to discourse (Byrnes 1998,22). By marking with European names, Māori names were masked, and the colonising establishment commanded their presence by a connection to place names. British name places such as Cambridge and Dunedin were a form of transferring Britain to the colonies. Alongside the apparent transference of these places, distinguished British historical persons like Nelson and Wellington were used, thereby venerating a new British colony (Byrnes 1998,23). Although many Māori names were kept, Byrnes reveals that there is a higher occurrence of European names in important topographical areas, whereas Māori names are noticeable in smaller settlements (Byrnes 1998,25).

The Theodolite and the Emergence of Labels.

“Thus, the surveyor and his theodolite became the symbol of loss and land schism. Through their marking and naming over prevailing Māori nomenclature, the Europeans authorised the invisibility of the Māori. The meaningful act of naming and mapping acknowledges a *new cultural space* for the colonisers, which serves to strengthen colonial power while simultaneously displacing Māori identity” (Byrnes 2015,36).

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, the land underpins Māori culture representing an awareness of belonging and Māori spiritual belonging to the land encompasses their identity. On a practical level, it is also a source for survival. In contrast, the Pākehā relationship to land comes from a divergent understanding. The unrestrained damage that has occurred over the years through the European transformation and domestication of the environment has helped to bring about a concern for the land with a focus on economic success.

In his book, *Exploring Māori Values*, John Patterson<sup>72</sup>, a Pākehā, who advocates for reassembling unacquainted terrain, requests a considered understanding of Māori values. Here he explains that there is a common conception relating to Pākehā’s misunderstanding of Māori Values, a significant one being that Māori and Pākehā are very similar.

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<sup>72</sup> John Patterson. Academic Philosopher, Pākehā New Zealander with a profound interest of values and beliefs of the Tangata Whenua (People of the Land).

He states that fundamentally Māori understanding of the world and their sense of place are very different from the Pākehā way (Patterson 2009,15). Māori relationship with the land does not focus exclusively on economics. Instead, it is more similar to a spiritual relationship with kin and ancestors (*ancestral land*).

Land, like everything else, has a *Mauri*<sup>73</sup> or life force, engendering respect for their *tūrangawaewae*<sup>74</sup>(Place to stand) (Patterson 2009,90). The concept of *mauri* is a Māori spiritual concept of the need to respect the natural world. The translation of meaning into English can sometimes be only a partial explanation, as these terms do not always translate well. Nevertheless, the Māori dictionary definition of *Mauri* is Life principle, a material symbol of a life principle – the essential quality and vitality of a being or entity. *Mauri* refers to physical objects, an individual, ecosystem is written in a language understood by both Māori and Pākehā.

Patterson guides the reader through the Māori philosophy of work values by examining renowned weaver, Erenora Puketapu-Hetet<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>73</sup> Mauri:Life principle, life force

<sup>74</sup> Mauri:Life principle, life force

<sup>74</sup> Tūrangawaewae, A principal Māori concept. Literally meaning tūranga (standing place) waewae (feet) a 'place to stand' Tūrangawaewae are place that are empowering and connected.

<sup>75</sup> Erenora Puketapu- Hetet 1941-2006. Rangimārie Hetet was born 1892 at Oparure Marae, near Te Kuiti in 1911 at Orarure Rangimārie married Tuheka Taonui Hetet, they left in 1924, so this would have been a few years after my dad lived there. But I'm sure they would have known granny's sister Enoni, (a connection I am still trying to trace). Rangimārie was a founding member of the Māori Women Welfare League, I am also a founding member of the first overseas branch in Perth Western Australia, Gnullar Mia, Which is the Australia Aboriginal word for 'our home'

I have found a connection with Pou Colburn. The Aotearoa/New Zealand Māori Rugby team of 1909 in a photograph of the team were the Chiefs Hone Taoai Hetet and Hekemaru Kaiawha also alongside well-known guides/interpreters Maggie and Bella Papakura. (Coffey 2008,42). Trevor Bentley in his book '*Pākehā/Māori*' also makes mention of Lewis Hetet the Frenchman who came to live with the Māori in the King Country he married Rangi Tuatahi, the daughter of the Maniapoto chief Taonui. They lived near the Mokau River in the 1844, there is no genealogical connection but we were all walking in the same footsteps.

The traditional weaving material is the Aotearoa/New Zealand flax or *harakeke*<sup>76</sup>. To Pākehā this is a humble plant grown throughout Aotearoa/New Zealand, but to Māori, it is a descendant of the god *Tāne-Mahuta*<sup>77</sup> (God of the forest and birds). *Tane* breathed life into the first women and from her came the creation of the Māori race. Consequently, this leads to the need for Māori to be connected to *harakeke* and all other plant life. Respect for available materials like the *harakeke* is to be used towards a meaningful outcome. Preservation and conservation are fundamental to their philosophies, so the centre growth, which is called the *rito*<sup>78</sup>, is never cut. Any remainders of the *harakeke* that have not been used are returned to the flax plant, to help with re-growth. The concept of conservation of the land is one of balance, of regarding the earth with care and respect so it will flourish (Patterson 2009,20).



Figure 56 Leonie Mansbridge *Tiki Tour Place Mat(p)s Series* 2017 23x18  
Place Mat Glitter letters and acrylic paint (with a deliberate spelling mistake,  
a homage to Granny), Fremantle Studio.

<sup>76</sup> Harakeke: Aotearoa/New Zealand Flax, *Phormium tenax*

<sup>77</sup> Tāne-Mahuta: In Māori legend Tāne-Mahuta was the son of Ranginui (Sky father) and Papatuanuka (Earth Mother) he parted Rangi and Papa, created light and life.

<sup>78</sup> Rito: The central shoot of the flax plant (rito) representing the baby.

Granny and her apple trees are my storied objects, a place and space where I remember. Nothing of her orchard is left now. Grass and trees grow, and they contain everything: my history, my experience, and my understanding.

*My land and my belonging of which I am.*

I follow these storied objects collected from Granny, travelling our cultural journey to continue on my Tiki Tour expedition of finding my space and belonging.

*Granny, you chose me to be the teller of our stories. I now know how much you instilled in me despite being unaware of your gift until now. I tell your story, which is my story, to make a shift away from the negativity attributed to the colonial discourse. I feel that you carried the guilt of being who you were, just like Dad, who decided to fully assimilate us into the white world as an informed choice made in the context of the time. Now it is time to let go of the baggage Granny. I will re-story my story and open up to the choices I made and how I lived the White life of pretending.*

*Don't misunderstand me Granny I had an exceptional childhood, but there was another dimension that I was missing out on, the sadness of my kuia (grandmother) not holding me in her arms and telling me stories, the sadness of not having the te reo (language) to speak with my mokopuna (grandchildren) and the sadness of not being the real me.*

*I hear the karanga (calling); it gets clearer every day.*

This chapter has presented the concepts of belonging to place and space as both physical and tangible, and how body memory can activate a lived body experience, an experience that can trigger memories from long ago.

Through the artwork discussed in this chapter, I continually question belonging, conceptually and theoretically, using the placemats as signifiers of the land. This belonging not only connects me to Granny; it also re-connects to a culture within a place through personal encounters. Finding ways to reveal these sensations the humble placemat is used as a reinforcement of that space. The placemats delineate a space at the table, in much the same way as my culture defines who I am and where I belong.

A White Māori Girl: Chapter Three

*"I'm the whitest Māori you've ever seen  
Sick of people who have to ask  
Am I eighth, a quarter I couldn't be half"*  
Identity Crisis, Jacq Carter (Ihimaera 1998, 266)



Figure 57 *Leonie Ngahuia Mansbridge* 2016 Fremantle Family photo.

Whiteness deprived me of culture.

This exegesis has evolved by way of personal autoethnological research, and in so doing it has hopefully contributed critical insights to post-colonial studies from a personal perspective.

Issues to do with whiteness are revealed and how these issues impacted my life. The how and why of my unassuming use of masking tape is described as an art process that has the capacity to reflect attitudes toward skin colour.

I find language very difficult; maybe I will always find language very difficult and Chapter Three exposes this vulnerability.

*This is going to be the hardest chapter that I have to write, to open up to myself. My life has always been sitting on the margins trying not to be noticed, not subjecting myself to confrontation, being nice so everyone would like me. But I can do it.*

I have to answer from a self-referential position: how my Māori/Pākehā descent, a descent that cannot be clearly labelled or marked as *other*, is acted out or performed in the everyday.

I tried to respond through poetry, for example, the works of Charmine Papertalk-Green's *Identity* and Jacq Carter's *Colour*. Having been questioned by my supervisors why I was using so many poems, my response is that these poems not only articulate exquisitely what I feel, capturing completely my identity and my markers. The poems also communicate the consequences I now face in my daily life. These poems capture the reality of living in an in-between place. They acknowledge that there are many *others* who live in this place of in-betweenness.

*Because a certain form of writing has never come easily for me, I retreat and seek sanctuary in my studio. Here I make the visual language of art, using the transformative gestures of artists, the ability to create in a transformative space leaving the audience to transpose into another place using their own linguistic voice.*



Figure 58 *Rangatiratanga Cloak*, 2017 Me, with Jimmy by my side at home, Fremantle.

Ferne Millen Photographer.

Toni Morrison, in an interview with Jana Wendt in 1998, shares the moment when she realised she was black. She refers to this moment as triggering an overwhelming, exacting and powerful awareness that the colour of her skin made her different (Deans, 2004). I felt that moment of difference when I was about eight. I just knew but, unlike Morrison, I could hide my blackness. Morrison says that everyone, black and white has a rupture point when they become aware of where they fit (Deans, 2004). She explains that this moment of awareness of difference is profound.



Figure 59 Detail of original family photo, Horotiu Aotearoa/New Zealand 1960 Nanna and Pop's home. Photographer unknown

*I knew then, the awareness of colour'.*

We are not talking about a difference in seen colour but a difference that requires a disconnection or a disassociation from *the other*. When you appear white, becoming aware of personal racial difference can be very powerful.

I know, because I was aware of the power and the colour of being white, while my darker skinned cousins felt this moment of cultural difference to be hurtful in a way that white people could never comprehend.

Whiteness Studies arrived in academia in the 1990s. The space between whiteness and colonisation is minimal and the interface deserving of more scholarly attention, but as my whiteness is challenged out of the lived Māori/Pākehā experience it becomes pertinent to acknowledge the theory and its place in this enquiry. A quote from *The Souls of White Folk* by W.E.B Du Bois " *A White Man is always right and a Black Man has no rights which a white man is bound to respect*" (Du Bois 1996,505) encapsulates whiteness, and its historical and contemporary privileges.

I am only too aware of how this works as I lived it. Lived until recently from the vantage point of looking white. *Pākehā Identity and Whiteness* recounts "whiteness as being invisible to white people" (Grey 2013,83). Grey is suggesting that white people tend to see non-white by race or ethnicity alone. I can certainly understand the advantages of this for belonging to the white race I lived the unearned space of privilege just by my skin colour.

I have never felt the 'gaze' that was an everyday phenomenon of the *Other*, I am culpable myself of that 'gaze'; dismissing the look as an awareness of my surroundings, but always fully aware of my social standing in public with the impact of my skin making me accepted.

We are still shackled by colonisation.

Morrison explains how many western education systems are historically constructed on or around racism (Deans, 2003). In Aotearoa/New Zealand, I learnt how Captain Cook discovered Aotearoa/New Zealand in 1769 and he found the *savage* Māori. But Aotearoa/New Zealand had already been discovered sometime in the 13th century by Polynesian navigators (teara.govt.nz); I didn't learn that at school.

*I never liked school. Maybe I should have been grateful of the opportunity because I know, Granny, you never had the chance of schooling, and Dad you wanted to stay at school but had to leave at twelve to work on the farm. I did not appreciate what was on offer Granny, but there were lots of things I didn't understand. Like who I am and where I belong.*

In the interview, Morrison also describes how we are all wounded by histories of the slave trade, colonisation and black/white binaries. Being a product of colonisation I have also been wounded through assimilation, by moving into the white world, leaving behind my Māori heritage.

"The Black/White divide can be affected by inhumane racism, which is not inherent but many theologians, scientists and our education system teach it through unscientific, mythological and metaphorical means" (Deans,2003).

The western world promoted these ideologies of difference by persuading a large percentage of the population to adopt the view that racism should be kept alive because it is a useful strategy, useful for politicians, utilitarianism purposes like soldiers in wartime and for workers in low paid jobs. The Black/White division is activated whenever it fulfils an agenda for means of land confiscation and enslaving people. The white and poor, with nothing, can still look down at blackness as a lower status (Deans,2003).

The wounding of history exposes a diverse range of impacts on my in-betweenness, emphasising that being in this place of in-betweenness we all encounter similar yet personally varied experiences. There is a commonality of understandings we resonate with, such as those described by Māori Poet Jacq Carter. She grew up, Pākehā, in a Pākehā home, not knowing she was Māori, however, unlike Carter, I knew, but was concealing my Māoriness from the white world. In my case, my father believed he could offer us more by blending into the white community. Dad's life was similarly tainted by colonisation; his Māori language was banned from being spoken and once he left New Zealand to go to war he saw the advantages whiteness offered, not knowing then, that ultimately we would be disadvantaged by not truly knowing our identity.

Carter writes in *Growing up Māori*, "None of us is what our *tūpuna* (ancestors) were: when 'growing up Pākehā' is growing up Māori" she remembers entering *te ao Māori ā-hinengaro* (Māori world awareness) as a seventh form student at Auckland Epsom Girls Grammar. This development at the age of seventeen brought self-questioning; "Can I suddenly, consider myself Māori? Who is a Māori?" (Ihimaera 1998,257). Markers, such as skin colour and appearances, do not identify Carter or myself. We recognise now that we carry with us our *tūpuna*. But as a young person I was not recognising this and now understand that I had denied my *tūpuna*, my acknowledgement of their existence. The colonisers presented skin and appearance markers as a way to catalogue both colonised and coloniser in the then racialised society. But we are still both, the colonised and the coloniser, stranded in *in-betweenness* and certainly not accepted or acknowledged by either side of the binary.

Not having the skin colour, this non-acceptance can be seen as *another* form of de-emphasising and making the visible invisible. By this I mean, we know that black/white race relationships happen, but let's not talk about it. If you are white you live white, if you are brown then you are *other*.

Māori do not use the concept of racial purity or phenotypes to define who they are; instead, they use whakapapa, genealogical identity markers by *iwi*, (tribes) *maunga* (mountains) and *awa* (waterways). These markers let people know your location, your lands and tribal connections (Ihimaera 1998, 255-257).

In Carter's poem *Colour*, identity is specific: "I'm not a white woman wishing I was brown" (Ihimaera 1998,264)



Figure 60 Leonie Mansbridge 2014 *masked series*, 84x60cm photocopy and acrylic paint  
(L-R) Kayleen and Linda Ruri, myself, and Mary Hutchinson.

*We know we are brown, but maybe you don't see it?*

The white-man is locked in his whiteness.

I did not make a choice whether I was brown or white; I was born white. Skin colour and appearance are recognised as identity markers and in our western society validate authenticity. I look Pākehā/white and am treated as white. But I live with the personal costs, that I have lost part of me for most of my life. Unhappiness overwhelms me when Māori see me as Pākeha/white.

Journalist and Bundjalung man Daniel Browning wrote an article *The Politics of Skin, Not Black Enough* in which he argued that: "We- if we bear the obvious physical marks of skin colour-are the exotic *other*, utterly visible. If we don't bear those signs on our bodies, in the hue of our skin, we are less than genuine; we are the fake Aborigines" (Browning 2010,23).

There seems to be an understanding that skin colour is the determining factor for authenticity for first nation people. If you are a mixed race you have no place in this contemporary culture. Suggesting that colour or lack of dark pigment in the skin implies you are genetically confused and you are not truly Aboriginal, Māori or any *other* nonwhite or first nation person that you identify with.

Academic Maureen Perkins, editor of *Visibly Different: Face, Place and Race in Australia*, suggests that from our earliest understanding of the world we respond to our environment and what we see, reacting instinctively to people appearances (Perkins 2007, 9). But over time shouldn't we question our judgements more, and learn that appearances can be misleading? As Perkins writes "Culture cannot be inferred directly from colour" (Perkins 2007, 10).

*My Identity is complicated by my fair skin, even when I announce myself by tribal affiliation, some don't see it, but I know that I belong; at times, occasionally I see that look, a slight nuance, a quick fleeting moment, the seeing me as the privileged white girl wanting to be Māori. It's not till I see myself in the mirror; I stop; look, do I look white? But I don't feel it. Then I am hurt, not only for myself, but for my Granny and tūpuna.*

*It wasn't until my twenties that I became aware of the taunts of racial discrimination with skin colour, but I kept to myself and learnt to distance myself from any conflicts that evolved making a stand against the insults. I could escape it and didn't have to live it in my daily life, but it hurt my other family members because they could not dodge the taunts, or alter the colour of their skin.*

*I felt fortunate and, in a way was glad that I did not have brown skin, but I still did not stand-up and protect anyone at the time.*

I am a descendant of my *tūpuna*. Once again a Carter poem is eloquent. "Who descends from men and women who were brown? Unlike *others* married white and made that the colour they handed down" (Ihimaera 1998,264).

The social meaning of making, and the materiality of the object.

As a corollary to this poem, I move to the artwork of Indigenous Australian artist, Destiny Deacon. Deacon's work encapsulates a subjective response to her knowledge, by drawing us into her private space. She highlights ways of visualising historical and contemporary Indigenous life, informed by her personal experiences and the mass media.

Deacon's oeuvre features family members and friends, low technology, low budget techniques such as Polaroid photography and kitsch, found objects consisting of dolls and Aboriginal souvenirs. Most are used as props in her photographic and video work. Deacon says, "I think black dolls represent us as people, I don't think white Australian, or whatever you want to call it, see us as people" quoted in (Perkins 1994,19). Because she felt that the black dolls represented us as Indigenous people, she collected these dolls from flea markets, to rescue them, but she goes on to say, "that anyone can take a photo of a doll. You've got to make them say something, represent us with some issue" (Perkins 1994,64). Deacon adopted the term *Blak* in 1991 as a representational reclaiming of the meaning and the spelling of Black. Deacon has refigured and redefined the English colonial language, for example, *Blak*, as a strategy to refer to herself and her art, ironically inverting language that was originally a derogatory label to become an assertion of cultural pride (Perkins 1994,20). This re-languaging also correlates with my identification as *half-cast*, woven on my *Blanket Cloaks Series*, with the deliberate dropping of the e to re-caste the language from caste to cast.



Figure 61 Destiny Deacon, *Over the fence*, 2000 80x100 Art Gallery NSW.

The Image 'Over the Fence' at first can confront the audience with the playful act of dolls in conversation. Dolls are often seen as a re-presentation of human nurture and childhood comfort, and imagination, but here the nurture is interrupted, the division of a white fence has created disengagement between them. This division or divide has long been established in Australia through colonisation, ignorance and/or denial of the Indigenous people.

Deacon's work reveals, through the power of humour, serious issues disguised as an innocent act of play. It defines something of the struggles and understandings of racism in contemporary Australia.

Another of Deacon's work's *Dreaming in Urban Areas* examines the uncovering of identity by representation and articulation. The image of Deacon's friend Lisa Bellear looks like she might be taking part in a ceremonial performance, but is basically wearing a Blackmore's facemask, Blackmores being a brand name for natural vitamin face cream. The viewer is drawn to the photo of the facemask, cracked and exposing fault lines, disrupting the view of the face by covering the self as the image and challenging assumptions made about colour.



Figure 62 Destiny Deacon 1993 *Dreaming in Urban Areas* 33 x 27cm four colour Polaroid Laser copies 4 parts; part 1 of 4. Art Gallery of NSW



Figure 63 Leonie Mansbridge *Masked*, 2014 photocopy and acrylic paint. Detail of larger work

In a comparable way, my work *Masked* 2014, asks the same questions. My younger-self, looking into the camera with a blank uncertain expression, now masked over with white acrylic paint, not concealing the face but using sweeping strokes, showing not *fault lines* but layers of lines associated to the stratification of an archaeological dig. I similarly see the horizontal lines of my *whakapapa*, the layering of my ancestors, one on top of the *other*, and I see the whitewashing of colonisation trying to destroy my *tana* Māori (Māori identity). Similarly to Deacon, I lay open my family history to reveal the prolonged effect of colonial history.

Australian Artist Brenda L Croft, 2015 National Indigenous Art Award Fellowship winner said, "My work is about giving a voice to the voiceless, making the invisible visible- listening, seeing, sharing" (NITV 18<sup>th</sup> Jan 2016). Croft, much like Deacon, transforms material as part of her process. This engagement of material consideration is also an important part of my practice and so becomes paramount to the conceptual development of my imagery. Croft shows how colonisation defined and contained. Considering *Strange Fruit* 1994, Croft draws on identity and the way that the Indigenous peoples have been sectioned and divided into where you fit, how you look and act.

*Strange Fruit* relates to the classification and notions of who is actually aboriginal and what that person looks like in contemporary Australian culture. Croft uses photographic series of video and sound juxtaposed with introduced species of fruit and flowers, left to rot for the duration of the show. Starting off as a fresh and sweet smelling sensory familiar ending as a repugnant experience (Art Gallery NSW). Croft has obviously drawn on the connection with the Billie Holiday song from the 1930s, *Strange Fruit*, which is about the lynching of black men by whites in the US South. *Strange Fruit* was the first protest song to clearly express a political message on the stage of entertainment (Lynskey 2011).



Figure 64 Billie Holiday Portrait 1939 Photographer Michael Ochs

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/gallery/2015/apr/07/billie-holidays-centenary-a-life-in-pictures>

*Southern Trees bear a strange fruit  
Blood on the leaves and blood at the roots  
Black bodies swingin' in the southern breeze  
Strange fruit hangin' from poplar trees.*

[PopHistoryDig.com](http://PopHistoryDig.com) March 7<sup>th</sup> 2011



Figure 66 Brenda L Croft *'Untitled' (Billie/Hetti#1)*, 1994 from the Series *Strange Fruit* Cibachrome Photograph 168.7x117.8 cm Collection Art Gallery NSW.

This act of discomfort offers a transference experience for the viewer. Most viewers view art in a white clean smelling gallery, but here Croft has decoded the space through the colour of the gallery walls painted maroon and brown; slowly rotting fruit that activates the sense of smell, and sound that articulates with colour – deep black, light black, blue black, yellow black. The photographic imagery is in conflict with the size of the space but also adding difficulty to recognise the image, due to the small-scale prints, thereby drawing the viewer's attention to the image, amongst the cacophony of *things* surrounding them. *Strange Fruit* was shown at 9<sup>th</sup> Biennale of Sydney. Croft's artist statement for the show states: "I am fair, I am aware that I am not what people are looking for when they want something black, something real, something authentic, something truly Aboriginal, but I am here" (Biennale of Sydney 1998, 192).

There is a persistent thrust at play here, with first nation artists who are repetitively prompting the questions of how appearances can be disingenuous. They ask to approach identity and authenticity through a different lens, for we have been influenced far too long by the historical Victorian discourse of the *other*. Seminal theorist Young questions ethnocentric assumptions on the ways *other* has been portrayed. European superiority identifies civilisation with race, "to be civilised meant to be a citizen of the world (preferably walled) as opposed to the savage" (wild man) (Young 2006,31). James Boswell<sup>79</sup> named "civilisation" as the culture of the city in 1772. Young also goes on to cite ethnologist James Prichard's<sup>80</sup> theory on racial difference where he sees "white skin becoming both a marker of civilisation and a product of it" (Young 2006,35). This critique of civilisation and culture has become a measure of cultural difference with the outcomes constructing the *other*.

Half-castes were often denounced in order to discourage the mixing of race. With notions of the impure, the not quite whole; perhaps this denouncement was predicated to marking us as invisible, covering over of our existence. "The concept of 'half-caste' is an offence to Indigenous cultures, which has no interest in the measurement of identity, according to blood quantum" (Perkins 2007,13).

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<sup>79</sup> James Boswell 1740-1795 Scottish Biographer and Diarist.

<sup>80</sup> James Cowles Prichard 1786-1848 Physician and Ethnologist.

Who is the genuine article? Is anyone authentic?

Ian Anderson suggests the construction of the *authentic* was the means to dissolve the race, suggesting that with being “dis-coloured” (Anderson 1994,10) was the end of the line for Aborigines.

The authentic Aborigine was how the invaders conceived the inhabitants of the *other* side of the frontier-as the reciprocal *other* to civilised Europe. Any biological or cultural contamination by the outside world fatally destabilised the existence of authenticity. Consequently, the authentic Aborigine was destined to dissolve when confronted by a supposedly superior European culture” (Anderson 1994,10).

We are still constantly battling these attitudes around Indigenous identity and are not prepared to accept a marginal non-position. Koori people often say: “Identity is a feeling within not just the colour of your skin” (Anderson 1994,13).

Ways of seeing are learnt, why is it when I identify as Māori it is questioned? Then if I identified as Scottish and Australian it is never questioned? But on the *other* hand, I also interrogate my own legitimacy as a Māori. Is this attributed to the many theories of Enlightenment, proliferated over the years? Colour has been a leading factor, and as a white skinned Māori I still at times feel unqualified to announce who I am.

Identity is a changing paradigm; it seems to reposition throughout our lives. Melinda argues that as a Māori/Pākehā, ethnic identity is more onerous because of the need to negotiate contextual spaces of Māori, Pākehā and Māori/Pākehā (Webber, 2008,81). Webber is suggesting that we need to find our place, but it takes an immeasurable effort to announce where you fit, then occasionally space will not open up to you. I sit with many *others* in a world of non-binaries, space where we are categorised with names like *half-breed* and *half-casted*, labelled with the negativity of being not quite pure, we are evidence that colonisation failed. We are not going to be assimilated into a white world and we did not breed out! Identity and, in particular, notions of *authenticity* or who is *real* have become powerful weapons for continued racism. Being a white skinned Māori I do not fit the mould of what I am meant to look like. Consequently, I am often questioned it still seems like an attack on myself, for I sit in a space that challenges the black/white binary.

As suggested in Chapter One, the West created the use of binaries as a strategy for dominating through *othering*. Fanon attempts to evade and destabilise this strategy through the denial of a white world. "The black man is not. No more than the white man" suggesting that to disrupt the black/white binaries we both have to move away from the voices that influences these dichotomies (Fanon 2008,206).

There is no us/them, identity/difference, man/*other*, but all these binaries are used to identify a point of reference, to gauge and confirm the West's systems and rules, like categorisations.

Cultural theorist Rutherford turns our thoughts to the post-colonial and post-modernist concepts that view the uncertainty that has marginalised us as a space that offers new decentred possibilities (Rutherford 1990,24). Fanon suggests that black people and *other* marginalised groups should move away from this rhetoric, and not let the destiny of history be their undoing (Fanon 2008,205).

I agree in part with the position that Fanon takes on history determining categorisation, but there is *another* prerequisite to understanding our past, where it is important to know that we are valued and that our existence was derived from the theories accredited to European powers in the nineteenth century. These theories confirmed the structure, rules and formats of social interaction with the colonisation of Indigenous people. The understanding of this past reinforces the systems that were in place to sustain the racial rhetoric. Such understandings also influence societies to become more open to the possibilities of change in the future. Fanon suggests that for decolonisation to occur at a societal level, men must free themselves from colonisation at an individual level. In doing so, people can learn to become new men in society. In *other* words, an individual's participation in decolonisation helps them become newly decolonised men and women (Fanon 2008,206).

"I am not a prisoner of History L'Histoire I should not seek there for the meaning of my destiny. I should constantly remind myself that the real leap *le véritable saut* consists of introducing invention into existence. In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself" (Fanon 2008,204).

I'm wanting to be?

By recreating myself I look at new ways of contributing and inventing new spaces by manipulation and this enquiry is played out through my studio-based practice. The relevance of masking becomes central to my artwork and I have started making marks on the surface of photos and photocopies to highlight a way to negate the invisible space that I occupy, a life of *in-betweenness*, a space of being one and the *other*, yet neither, a non-visible identity.

My images can be read as a social statement, as an artwork, or both; they may be read as a social declaration of the one who is responsible for this masking. With the covering of features and most of the visible skin pigment, this is no longer just a photograph it becomes more about the marks and erasures.



Figure 66 Leonie Mansbridge, *Masked* 2014 photocopies and spray paint, 80x64cm Horotiu Christmas day 1960 at our Nanna and Pops home, my mum's family, (L-R) Kayleen and Linda Ruri, myself, and Mary Hutchinson

My art practice in this thesis works towards this decolonisation. The silver spray paint that I have used is a twenty-first-century material now frequently used by graffiti artists to tag or leave a statement.

In a comparable way I am making a commentary on contemporary social issues. Why does skin colour *other* you? When this work is held up to light it offers a ghosting effect through the covering, all the features the face, are visible, the skin colour is not.

Notions of invisibility.

This masking work is inspired by the stories of Rewi Colburn. An article found in *The Taranaki Herald*, May 13th 1871, describes a Government visit to Mokau by Civil Commissioner Parris and Mr T. Kelly, M.H.R. They were looking to establish friendly relationships with the Māori. The article describes in much detail the surroundings and the meeting that took place at Mokau. It tells also of a white man living among the Māori, named Coburn, describing how "his cheeks were daubed with kokowai and that he took part in all the ceremonies with the greatest of coolness, in all respects acted as a Māori" (Taranaki Herald 1871).

As for Rewi, he altered his face with kokowai not only as an enhancement but also as an elaboration, to draw attention to the visiting government officials telling them who he was and to the Māori position he had taken.

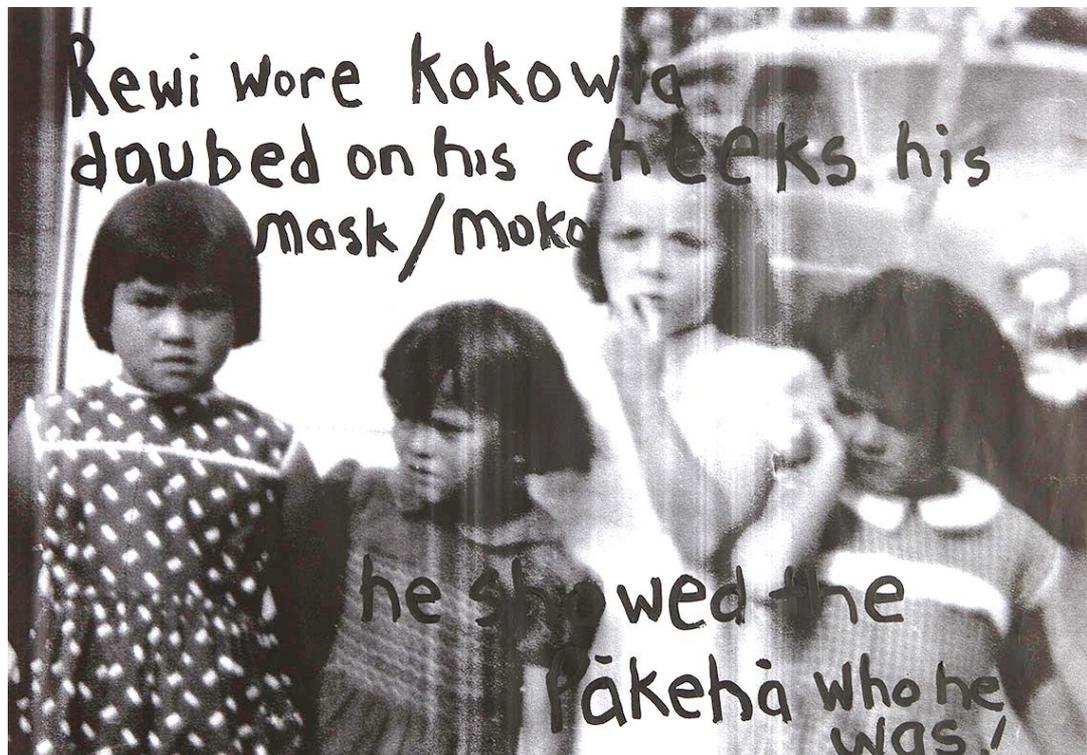


Figure 67 Leonie Mansbridge, *Masked*, photocopies, acrylic paint, 2014 80x64cm Horotiu Aotearoa/ New Zealand

Rewi uses his kokowai as an insignia, in a similar way to my marks on the photocopies of cousins and myself. The masking over with paint, pen, spray paint, pencils, masking fluid, or any *other* materials that I employ, highlights and distinguishes my insignia. These gestures of revealing and concealing make a commentary on how to live my daily life in a corridor between cultures.

As I note in the introduction to this exegesis Butler suggests that the performance of gender is compelled by norms that none of us chooses. These enactments of identity that constitute us as individuals are also the cultural norms that condition us.

Butler also suggests that sociological thoughts comprehend the perception of the person to the relationships of the agency. Through classification of existence giving priority to the roles and functions of social understanding, she questions where you sit in terms of personal identity if you fail to conform to the norms by which persons are defined (Butler 2007,22-23).



Figure 68 Leonie Mansbridge, *To Mark/Mask*, 2017 Selfie with a kaue Moko

When I grew up the expectations for girls were: playing with dolls, cooking, sewing and needlework, all preparation for the home, dresses, frills and bows in the hair. Home roles were similarly played out, the wife at home caring for the family while the man was out working hard to support everyone. The binaries of feminine and masculine were suppressing our gendered independence. For Butler "The effect of gender is performativity produced and compelled by regulatory practices of gender coherence" (Butler 2007,34).

To clarify this interpretation of performativity I have performed, through a process of iteration, repetitions witnessed by *others* and reproduced. We learnt by repeated practices of how girls and boys behave. My schooling was geared to reinforce these ideologies, girls doing cooking and sewing, boys' only woodwork and metalwork. Preparing us for our intended journey in life. Butler suggests that when we understand the pertinent culture that constructs our gender we gather an insight into the laws that guide and establish. We see the link not just to biology, but to a culture that determines our destiny (Butler 2007,11).

In much the same way as gender is constructed, my cultural identity was performed, but this performance was masked. I spent my whole life masking, but through a progressive unmasking, I have gained strength, the essential mechanism of my survival. As I peel back the layers I am aware of who I am and where I belong. Following Butler's theory of constant iteration, the repeated use of the same image that I mask and unmask uses this act of iteration to generate the historical constancy of my identity. Through the repeated performances of cultural norms of colonisation, living the life of the white girl, the importance of this image for me becomes a signifier for the time when I become conscious of race.

The photographic work *Masked*, therefore, becomes an indicator in which the responses of *other* and of marginalisation are no longer responses to parental and societal mythologies, but the start of my own reality. Highlighting the positive and negative space through the use of masking tape and paint brings the space back into binaries.



Figure 70 Leonie Mansbridge, *Masked* 2014 80x64cm photocopy acrylic paint.

But what emerges from this? *Another* space, a third space, the transformative process of creative practice, the artwork becomes an-*other* space.



Figure 70 Leonie Mansbridge, *Masking* 2014 80x64cm photocopy acrylic paint.

In her book *Identity*, Steph Lawler recognises that most of us will wear masks at specific times in our lives, to survive daily life. She suggests that the masks will be used for self-preservation, but behind the mask lives the real person (Lawler 2014,116). I actually use my mask in the form of a semblance<sup>81</sup> Lawler suggests that the real self can only be achieved when “semblance matches substance” being transformed into who you really are (Lawler 2014,117). When I was young I was playing out the inauthentic me. My appearance and mask enabled me to survive, to perform my life as a white girl. In this way I was negating who I was, denying the real me. Now, later in my life, my mask exposes the substance of me, and my cultural identity.



Figure 71 Leonie Mansbridge 2014 Family Photo, Horotiu, at my aunt's place. Cousin Kayleen (teal shirt second left) and Lynda (second i right teal shirt) are in the photo I used for *Masked Series*.

The photo of the younger us, Figure 72, reflects the time I come to know about difference within race.

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<sup>81</sup> Semblance is employed to acknowledge the façade created on my exterior to survive colonisation, the intangible mask.

Making visible a whole geography of placement.

I propose that my artwork needs to be understood as an informed art practice. Conceptualised research and knowledge emerge from different kinds of insights: the reading of the materials, the masking of tape, and the covering over. In a comparable way, I transform my skin colour into an inauthentic identity marker, thus raising questions. Therefore these works may function as both artworks and as a socially informed document, for both can be read within the context of a sociological comment.



Figure 72 Leonie Mansbridge *Masked* 2017 80x64cm digital print of original photocopy, masking tape.

*Masked Series* 2017 is a collection of repeating images reproduced by digital printing or photocopy. They combine different materials that both mask and amplify the image. This enables me to create a sense of intricacy in the various ways of the images while maintaining my personal self as the main emphasis of the work. *Masked* (Fig 72) utilises tape to mask out the background, leaving features exposed to the viewer. I use masking tape in this material way to respond to the background: obscuring and emphasising at the same time, things that are visible can also be invisible. Masking tape is a familiar item used to cover and protect a surface prior to painting, it is found in hardware shops, newsagents and local supermarkets. As a *thing* that can be adapted to many uses, it often goes unnoticed.

With this work, I am concealing the generally unnoticed or the second-noticed part of an image, the background. Eyes are drawn to the four young girls, appearing to come forward into the foreground.

The question, why the masking of the background? Does the masking tape bring the ground forward to meet the surface? Or is the background so concealed that the viewer focuses on attempting to read what is being covered? Identities: or do we look at our expressions?

*Kayleen (first on the right) you always had that look and hands clasped behind your back, that's how you got the nickname of Granny. Granny Hutchinson always stood with her hands behind her back, usually growling at us kids for doing something wrong. Why are the rest of us looking concerned? Maybe we just wanted to get out of here and play out on the farm, or through we might be missing out on the food. But it could have been something deeper like. Do we wonder where we all fit? Or should we be here? Do we belong? I know I was a deep thinker, what about you Ninny and Mary? I can't ask Mary now as she is no longer with us and I know Ninny will just laugh and say we wanted food and to get out and play.*

Lawler also suggests that identities can be understood through narratives. These narratives cannot operate independently as we locate ourselves within the gathering of our stories providing our narrative. Our social world is always storied and we rely on resources of cultural narratives to create ourselves. (Lawler 2004,33-35). In the way Butler suggests about performativity, the narratives we use to make sense and make our life stories have been provided for us by historical ways of thinking, this becomes the resource for establishing our identity. My education and cultural narratives produced my identity of a 'White Girl' I constructed a place to fit, not wanting to be inferior and standout. I created my story as someone else's story, now I am reworking my story to make it my own.

My point of view that accounts the events of the time.

I am a storyteller, and it is through these stories that I make sense of the world. Autoethnography is my method, using storytelling and personal experience in my art practice to understand my cultural experience and to engage with my world.

Bakhtin suggests that “everyday life world” events need to carry the same weight as significant, grand events. He refers to the “unfinalisable”, the open-endedness to history through the action of the human subject, which he called the “event of begin” (Gardiner 1998,5).

Here Bakhtin suggests that our experiences are not just stories. My stories challenge cultural discourse, by positioning everyday life and experiences as a relevant formative qualitative research method.

Lawler observes that the association between identity and autobiography indicates a pre-given identity. The narratives we build in this environment are stories of how we come to be who we are (Lawler 2014,23-27). Autoethnography allows a method by which I connect myself to the social.

These stories are immersed in memories that challenge my cultural framework. My life is patterned on specific memories and, although these memories can be seen as a reinterpretation of events in my life, they still hold the cultural values that I learnt and understood when growing. Lawler suggests identity is constructed by how we understand the conventions of certain ways of living, class and locale (Lawler 2014,33).

*As children, we did what we were told. I grew up in an era of listening to elders, speak when you are spoken too, go outside and play. As a child I did not have a voice, I would not speak back to a teacher, as they knew everything, just as the newspapers were telling the world truth. I did not have an opinion; we listened and were told. So, in hindsight, I didn't construct my identity, it was made for me.*

For me identity is likened to the procedure of stitching together, under and over, adding and taking away, never an absolute fit or a finished product. We can see how identities are never unified or singular. Instead, they are increasingly established across many discourses, practices and positions.

Identity is born by questioning the reservoir of history, language and culture. It is in the process of becoming, rather than being: not who we are, rather what we might become. How we have been and are portrayed shapes how we see ourselves today. Here we can see that identities are created from within, not outside of, discourse (Hall 1996,3-4). Stuart Hall in an interview with Tim Adams from the Guardian talks about his growing up and how his identity was shaped by the dominant western culture, he was not allowed to bring black school friends home from school, even though he himself was black, Hall's sister was not allowed to marry a black medical student. She never had *another* relationship. Hall's sister's life is the reason he has never been able to write about “the individual separate from society”

Hall then goes on to say “the individual is always living some larger narrative, whether he or she likes it or not”. The family is black, but the power of discourse has conditioned to the extent that Hall calls it “the colonial romance” was alive and well in his upbringing (Adams, 2007).

The Hall family upbringing is in a way similar to my background, we lived the larger narrative of the white world; you just had to belong and fit in with society, do what was expected of you. Hall changed his identity many times covering over his blackness and then uncovering his blackness, his involvement with civil rights made him accept that he was a black intellectual. A position that was innovative at the time, “so he becomes one” (Adams, 2007). My uncovering of my identity has made me undertake the identity I should have always been, and like Hall, I have become one...A Māori Wahine

I was given this Māori proverb, a few years ago<sup>82</sup>.

<i>Whakarongo ake au</i>	<i>I Listen</i>
<i>Ki te tangi a te mau nei tui</i>	<i>to the cry of the tui</i>
<i>Tui tui</i>	<i>Bind together, stitch together</i>
<i>Tui tuia</i>	<i>Weave together</i>
<i>Tuia i runga</i>	<i>Those things from above</i>
<i>Tuia i raro</i>	<i>Those things from below</i>
<i>Tuia i roto</i>	<i>Those things within us</i>
<i>Tuia i waho</i>	<i>Those things around us</i>
<i>Tihe mauri ora</i>	<i>Behold, the sacred breath of life</i>

*I listen to the cry of the Tui*<sup>83</sup>  
*I've listened.*

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<sup>82</sup> This Māori Proverb was given to me by a family member, I am unable to find a reference for this proverb.

<sup>83</sup> Tui is a native Bird of Aotearoa/New Zealand, from the family of honeyeaters. The birds are often heard singing their melodies [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz).

I believe I am a perceptive person with an instinctual understanding developed through listening to my Granny. She is guiding me to stitch and bind all of the threads that have been hanging loose for years in order for them to come together to make a whole.

*Behold, the sacred breath of life. She is calling me to claim the right to speak and tell my story.*

As said in the introduction, I now repeat:

*Once upon a time there was a little girl. I was the little girl about the age of seven or eight I knew I don't know how I knew, but I just did. I knew that I was a member of 'white club', free from the brown colour of my cousins. I fitted in and looked and lived the part. I wanted to be liked, as I was never really a standout, always just slipping in to the group, sort of like if I'm quiet they might not notice me, and once they do, they will see that I'm no threat. I'm white.*

*Now in high school thinking and acting differently, I tended to gravitate to the outsiders and felt more comfortable with the rougher, out-casted group who were mainly Māori. We were the troublemakers, the hard edge of Kelston Girls High School, but I never let on about my Māori connection. I had no need, as I had started to construct myself: always a bit outside, but safe enough to fit into the middle. I still had my other life in the country with my uncles, aunts and cousins; this extended family life was normal and fun and I really felt a sense of belonging and fitting in. There was no pretence, I didn't notice colour as I was immersed within with my culture without even noticing. Here, I learnt respect, humility and the importance of family. Everyone was important to the family, from the very old people down to the babies. Māori had no separation; the old people and the children were all taken care of by the extended family. Life was good, we played, we ate, we sang.*

Identity fluctuates all the time because we are consistently loyal to our cultures, which can bring conflict through contradictions. As a child, I never considered the idea of difference or classifications such as labelling of ethnic minorities.

I just knew who I was and that I was just 'me', with a family comprised of Māori, Pākehā and Rarotonga, nothing unusual.

In the school ground growing up I did hear discrimination, but I did not interpret it as nasty or derogatory. I recall as kids it was fun, we called the Māori kids 'hooris' and the island kids 'coconuts'.

We were uninformed and obviously had picked up this terminology from our homes, playgrounds or *other* outside sources. We were not aware of the detrimental effect that racial words, like hoori and half-caste, can have. To us, back then, they were just words. No one ever called me half-caste at school as I was a follower and never revealed myself.

*A few years after the arrival of the TV aerial, maybe when I was about nine or ten, intuitively and without being told outright, I began to understand the ramifications of these racial taunts and to realise that they affected how we saw ourselves. I didn't consider myself insignificant as a child but I would best describe myself as a follower, not a controller or someone who would speak out. My loyalty laid with myself, a sweet white girl who just followed the crowd, never acknowledging my identity as a half-caste and never attempting to stop the racial taunts. I am embarrassed to put these thoughts down on paper and I now feel discomfort with the way social commentary infiltrates, seeping into the sponge that forms these assumptions.*

*At that time I knew I was white and wasn't brown, I don't think there was anything that I could pinpoint as a watershed moment when I was aware of race and racist attitudes. Maybe it was a collection of developments.*

*I had a very colonial education. 'Who discovered Aotearoa/New Zealand? Captain Cook'. We learned about the savages found here, and the praise to be given to the missionaries that had come to educate and civilise them. We didn't learn about the Māori. We were taught the English language and English history.*

*Remembering this past is pivotal to my journey of finding out.*

Who am I?

I am certainly the product of colonisation, with two cultures, two histories, Māori, Pākehā, colonised and coloniser. But I will no longer be determined or situated by outside forces of colonial power, where binaries were and are used to enslave and subjugate the *other* black/white/good/evil.

So who am I? Is half-caste a category? Is Māori/Pākehā a binary?

The ambivalence towards materiality.

Here I reference the practice of contemporary New York artist Glenn Ligon who explores Identity, language and meaning

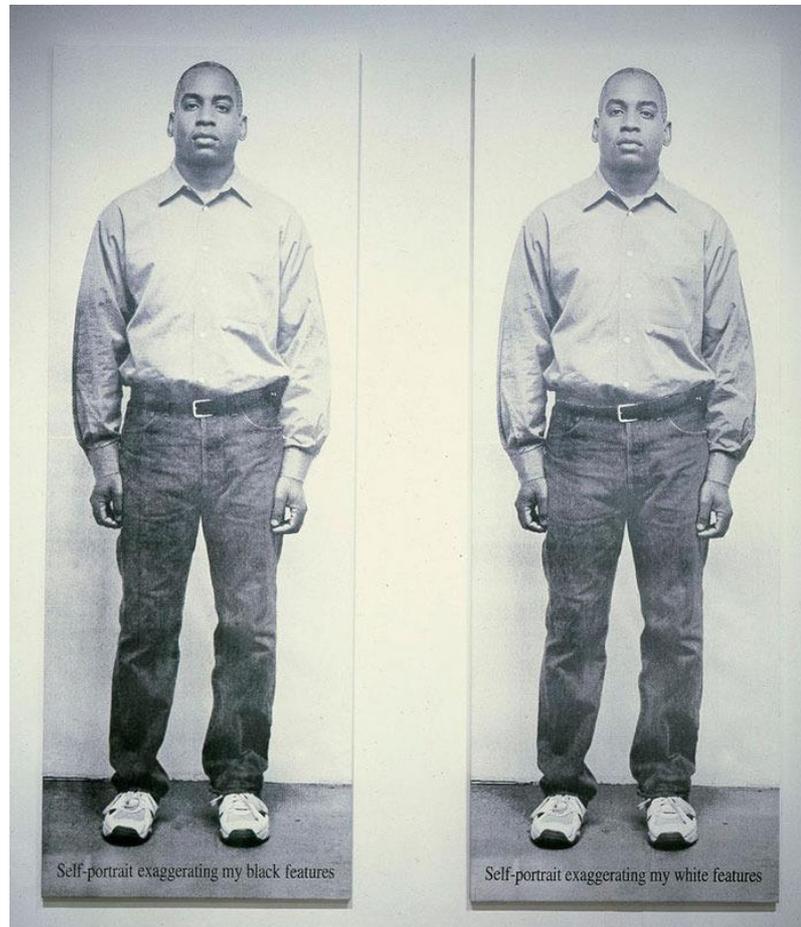


Figure 73 Glenn Ligon, 1998 *Self-Portrait Exaggerating my Black Features/ Self-Portrait Exaggerating My White Features*, USA Silkscreen on Canvas.

<http://www.museomagazine.com/GLENN-LIGON> 2010

In his work *Self-Portrait exaggerating my black features*, *Self-portrait exaggerating my white features*, Ligon has used the same photographic self-portrait, so the only difference is that it has been printed twice with different titles. Due to the print process, there are slight variances. Do we take the titles at face value? Or, look at this work and see the same images, or do the black and white binaries of the title surround us, making us imagine that there are differences? Is Ligon questioning how meaning can be interpreted, by the juxtaposed image/language?

Rutherford turns our thoughts to the post-colonial and post-modernist concepts that view the uncertainty that has marginalised the half-caste as a space that offers new decentered possibilities. For example, the politically marginalised, such as LGBTIQ activists, feminists and black people are able to create spaces of resistance outside of the centre (Rutherford 1990,23) in much the same way as Ligon's self-portraits do.

These spaces can be defined by coming together, being louder and prouder, through the arts, such as literature, art, music, poetry, fashion and film generating creative expression as a platform where the marginalised can be seen to offer a sense of belonging.

Fanon responds to the systems that have been created by the West, suggesting that we need to understand how the rhetoric of racial theory came about. Understanding these systems can enable societies to become more open to the possibilities for future change, thereby promoting a concept of decolonisation (Fanon 2008,206).

Fanon, much like Rutherford, is suggesting that the *other* releases history and recreates new identities that in turn initiate new freedoms that discard the past and look towards a new future (Fanon 2008,107). By learning the ways of the West in order to survive, but not forgetting who we are and where we came from, we can, like Fanon, expose injustice by writing about experience. Uncovering how *other* has been implied through anecdotal storytelling, and research, "the white man wants the world: he wants it for himself" (Fanon 2008,107). Fanon further goes on to posit, "Black self in language and discourse which blackness itself is at best a figure of absence, or worse a total reversion" (Fanon 2008, xv).

Where is in-between? Is in-between safe?

Through my art practice, I am freeing myself from the clasps of colonisation, rejecting the untruths I have lived with for most of my life, by claiming ownership of who I am, not whom western society wanted to make me.

As in-betweeners, we have become aware of the way theory and empirical hypotheses have defined us over the years, even philosophers that offer support like Bhabha's discourse on the in-between space do not quite share our world. Bhabha uses the word *liminal* to describe the occupying of both sides of a boundary or threshold (Bhabha 2008, 5). For me, *threshold* infers standing at the entrance; to take a step over is to occupy *another* space.

It can also relate to a sensory threshold or being in a phase or intermediate state (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). I am (in) between two cultures but I do not perceive this to be a transitional space.

I also examine *interstices* and consider how this word refers to an intervening space between things, a gap or break (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

I don't slot in or intervene in a space. This is a space that I was born into, a space that is relevant to Aotearoa/New Zealand's history. Māori/Pākehā, half-castes, in-betweeners like me experience a category that is not Māori or Pākehā but both, and as such we are the advantageous outcome of colonisation. Reiterating the words of Paul Meredith, being half-caste is about being "situated in a space where two cultures edge each *other*" where the half could act as a "cultural lubricant" between the two worlds (Meredith 1998). Perhaps Aotearoa/New Zealand shows evidence of a slow changing of societal attitudes towards half-castes that offers us great opportunity to address our position and to rid ourselves of the negative social attitudes directed at us from both sides (Meredith 1998). The polarisation of cultures can exclude significant cultural ideology, so Māori/Pākehā; half-castes can generate an original ability to see perceptions and assumptions through the eyes of both the coloniser and colonised.

Even today I face this struggle with Māori blood in me, as this is a defining factor if I am Māori. So who am I? I am Māori.

Similar to Carter, who indicates that no matter how much Pākehā blood runs within her, there is something else like a *karanga* (calling) inside me (Ihimaera 1998,260). I have my Granny, who is calling me on this journey, and, like Carter, it is our *Mauri* (life force and life principle) that supports our ability to stand up and be identified as Māori and half-caste.

The complexity of ways of overturning the effects of colonisation can be approached on many levels. One stratagem I employ begins with freeing myself from the hidden burden of social and political implications that have impeded my childhood. On a personal level, I am accepting who I am: Māori. More specifically, I am empowering my position through this writing. The essential core of this approach is the inquiry I have pursued throughout, a knowing of my family history and where my place is within that context.

First, I introduced Rewi and his story of how he was *othered* by colonisation, then how Granny survived and lived her life. I question my position by reaffirming and disrupting the historical issues I face with being *othered*, revealing a new understanding and ways of seeing myself as an *in-between*er.

Rewi entered a third space by crossing the boundary/threshold of the white world to assimilate into a different culture, thereby placing me in this now privileged position. Whilst the choice Rewi made initially put me in a similar *in-between* position of uncertainty, the time lapse between his life and mine, and the subsequent shifting of social/political views, means that I perceive this in-betweenness, this uncertain space to be one of opportunity and adventure. Perhaps Rewi too perceived his move into the Māori world to be one of opportunity and adventure that raised questions around and beyond his own identity.

In his critique of the film *Lawrence of Arabia*<sup>84</sup>, academic writer Jonathan Rutherford describes how the act of distancing himself from his own culture forced Lawrence into a position where he had to confront and question the social attitudes of the society that he came from, and consequently his own identity (Rutherford 1998,9). Here I refer to analogy already drawn in the exegesis between Lawrence and Rewi, who also distanced himself from the culture that he came from. Unlike Lawrence, Rewi outcast position meant that he did not have the choice to move back and forth between his culture of origin and the culture he chose to embrace.

However, I am able to move between, since my skin can act in both cultures. Nevertheless, I sit optimistically in a similar in-between space due to Rewi's choices and, three centuries later, I take this research journey to establish where I fit within the context of contemporary racial discourses. I have constructed my identity throughout my life to fit in, and with age comes the confidence to enthusiastically reassert who I am.

I am a Māori.

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<sup>84</sup> Thomas Edward Lawrence, 1888-1935 British Archaeologist, military officer, diplomat, and writer.



Figure 74 Leonie Mansbridge *Masked* 2017 Fremantle Studio, Work in progress, layering masking tape on the image.

Labelling makes it clear as mud

Identifying as Māori is a very considered choice. Paul Meredith has always been very clear about who he is and, as quoted in the introduction to this thesis “I am simply a half-caste, I am both Māori and Pākehā” (Meredith 2004,2). Meredith wears this label with dignity, thereby attempting to subvert the negative historical associations attached to it.

On the *other* hand, Australian theorist Ian Anderson asserts, “I am no half-caste, I am a Mutton-bird Koori” (Anderson 1993, 11). He also comments on how Koori people often say: “Identity is a feeling within and not just the colour of your skin” (Anderson 1993,13). Anderson does not experience his body as a fragmented entity of black and white but as one entity: “My body is an Aboriginal body, and could not be *otherwise*” (Anderson 1993, 13). Like Meredith, Anderson is taking his identity as a symbolic marker for a connection to memories, experiences and emotional histories. Anderson’s background has him living through The White Australia Policy, the Immigration restriction act of 1901 controlling non- European migration. Section 127 of the act excludes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders from the census while section 51 (part 26) gave power over Aboriginal people to the states.

It was not until 1967 a National Referendum recognised Aboriginal people as citizens in their own land. The control of Aboriginal lives gave the state power to separate children from their families; these children become known as *the stolen generation*, (nma.gov.au). Meredith's and Anderson's positions on identity are both valid arguments. Like Meredith, I grew up with the everyday use of the word *half-caste*, but now that I am aware of the undertone to words and how language is subjugated with underlying racial reinforcement often said without thinking, I pause to consider the consequence and how my actions endorse colonial power, by naming.

In a 2001 article in the Aotearoa/Herald, reporter Simon Collins writes about a *Hui* (meeting) at Wellington's *Tapu Te Ranga* Marae, attended by about fifty people of mixed Māori/Pākehā. Among them was Paul Meredith who declared loud and proud that "I am a half-caste". Tess Moeke Maxwell from Tauranga, chairing the meeting, proposed that the agenda was to reclaim a word that has been used to label us. Wellington lawyer Moana Jackson, who also spoke at the meeting, stated that the very thought of being half-caste was invented to provide a base on which we could be dispossessed of our lands.

"The question is: Do we have a Māori way of defining who we are, or do we buy into the Pākehā colonial way of defining who we are" (Collins, 2001). Moana Jackson recognises that we are descended from Māori, *mokopuna* (descendant) "You can't be half a *mokopuna*, you can't be 1/58th of a *mokopuna*," he says. The defining thing that makes you able to stand in this place is that you are a whole and complete *mokopuna* (Collins,2001). So why use half? This takes us back into the issues of binaries. Anderson chooses to assume an Aboriginal identity, while Meredith appears to embrace his mixed race identity. In both cases, Anderson and Meredith are exercising their ability to choose how they perceive and present themselves in dialogues around race and identity. Writer Toni Morrison says, "Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was *another*" (Deans,2004).

From the very start of this research, I was so committed to awareness of the belief that being half-caste represented me as a Māori/Pākehā and as such resisted the racial taunts behind the word. I always identified with the communal spirit and environmental values of Māori. There remains an overpowering comfort about the coming together of family and friends for any event, something innate and special when the call comes out, everybody does their bit cooking, cleaning and entertaining. This is the custom, a custom that appears to have existed from a time before, yet is inherent to my upbringing and to childhood associations.

When I was a child, environmental values were always talked about, through storytelling we learnt about landmarks, our mountains and rivers, Dad was always telling us about the land. Granny and Dad would pick blackberries, and Granny would always say a *karakia* (prayer) for the harvest, thanking the land for the food. The need to respect the land is filtered through like osmosis until the environment and Māori came together in a holistic way.

Heeni Collins concept called *Ngā Tangata Awarua* incorporates the notion of dual heritage and the concept of transition, but she also takes into account that this can be a position of discomfort and alienation (Collins 1999,88). The discomfort and alienation of my personal experience come not from not quite fitting in, but knowing that I do belong. Mythologies have been created by a colonial belief system that has infiltrated my life for years, creating doubt and un-sureness, working against in-betweeners who do not fit the conventional image of Māori. These ideologies impede my self-worth and undermine the self-determining in how I represent myself. Although I recognise how potent colonisation has been in of my life, I had never contemplated calling myself Māori, as it seemed contemptible.

How can a white looking Māori call herself Māori? Young challenged us to question history that has a single point of view from a Eurocentric position where he claims history functions within the perimeters the European perspectives (Young 2004,3). Young also suggests "the way skin colour and birthplace determines the kind of life, privileged or oppressed is how you will experience in the world"(Young 2004,7). These narratives emerge from enlightenment, encompassing the assembly of authenticity by means of blood quantum that define qualification of race. Merged within history, they all defined my place in the world until now. How do you question these rhetorical discourses? Here I am in the later years of my life, finishing a PhD and my perceptions are only now changing. I now see how my confusion was deliberately established by the intentions of colonial discourse; if you cannot claim authenticity it reduces your rightfulness to your culture, your language and your lands. These mythologies have been constructed to deny us the right to be Māori, but we are survivors in the fight against colonial racism for the continuation of our existence as Māori.

Foucault suggests that struggle, through social movements has the capability of shifting attitudes, and specifically how the West can view the *other* (Gallagher 1984,172-173).

For example, LGBTIQ groups are now establishing a real place in society, we see Gay Mardi Gras, celebrities and sports stars all saluting their sexual orientation.

In a space of thirty years, they have progressed from having a pathological abnormality, imprisoned and beaten, to an almost equal place in contemporary society. This attainment, particularly in Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia gives insight and hope to *other* struggles of resistance. In my role of an artist, I illustrate resistance by transforming emphasising the negative space to a positive within a positive position.



Figure 75 Leonie Mansbridge Recipes series 2004, 40x40cm Acrylic paint on canvas

With this body of work, I highlight the negative space by exposure. The sides would normally be unnoticed at first, but by re-stretching the canvas onto a larger frame revealing the evidence of the process, I can combine the positive painted surface with the negative dripping sides is a way to indicate resistance. The sides of the canvas can challenge their position, simply by extending and reforming by *another* approach, much like my way of counteracting colonisation by physical and intellectual resistance.

My *whakapapa* (genealogy) maps the relationships with my Māori identity and gives me the credentials to be who I am. I can map my *whakapapa* to my mountain, river, canoe, tribe and sub-tribe.

There is a notable old Māori saying "We are who we are, from what comes before us"

My *Whakapapa* (genealogies)

Waipatoto me Waipatoto tua rua nga Whareniui      Meeting house

Ko Oparure te Marae      My Marae is Oparure

Ko Motakiora te Maunga      My Mountain is Motakiora

Ko Mangapu te Awa      My River is Mangapu

Ko Taniui te Waka      My Canoe is Taniui

Ko Ngāti Manaipoto te iwi      My Tribe is Ngāti Manaipoto

Ko Ngāti Kinohaku te Hapu      My sub-tribe is Ngāti Kinohaku

Hoturoa te Tangata      Hoturoa ancestor: of the Tainui people



Figure 76 *Oparure Marae, Te kuiti* Oparure Road Te Kuiti Te Ika-a-Māui North Island Aotearoa/  
New Zealand Dad and me standing outside our Marae Oparure, Te Kuiti, Aotearoa/New Zealand 2013.

Through this means, I have identified myself not only with my tribe but also with my land and Marae (tribal meeting house). hooks uses the word *Yearning* to offer hope for new spaces, a site for renewed freedom, by confronting colonial archetypes of black identity, which sees blackness as solitary, reinforcing the concepts of the primitive we perceive these notions as a way of strengthening white hegemony. hooks also works to integrate her "Sense of place, not just who I am in the present but where I am coming from, the multiple voices within me" (hooks 1999,203). hooks also reinforces that "Opposition is not enough. In that vacant space after one has resisted there is still the necessity to become, to make oneself anew" (hooks 1991,15). Although hooks comes from the position of a Black American, I find myself in a similar position of struggle for the sense of place, metaphorically of denial in a non-space created by the coloniser. hooks grapples with the silences within her personal space. The silences associated with the emotional turmoil concerning place, identity, and desire. She recounts the broken voice within which/where resides the pain and brokenness- a speech of suffering confronting the silence and inarticulateness. Her voice comes from her space of theorising (hooks 1999, 203). My own space remains largely in the realms of non-verbalisation with language, my own personal confrontation is still difficult especially with the use of academic speech, emotions, and felt space of loss. I remember the silence, when I was young, unable to speak, let alone understand my feeling, but my voice is coming back, emerging through the words in textual and visual language, to talk about my real sense of space. I have found my anchor; it's been with me all along, camouflaged with blankets of master narratives. I have found a voice strong enough to remove each layer. Each time I remove one it makes me stronger and sounder.

I often reflect on the substantial gift my great, great grandfather bestowed on me, that day in 1865. Colonisation nearly got me, but my granny gave me the *karanga* (calling) and contributed the strength to fight back and show myself to the world. To use my voice and my artistic experiences to announce that people of mixed heritage have a place to belong and a voice to be acknowledged. I proclaim my cultural heritage at every conference I attend and at every exhibition where I present artworks.



Figure 77 Leonie Mansbridge 'Masked' 2017 180x120 Fremantle Studio, Peeling layers of masking tape to reveal more masking.



Figure 78 Leonie Mansbridge *Evidence of the layers removed*, 2017, Fremantle Studio.

Conclusion

People saw me as white  
Now my mask has been removed.



Figure 79 Leonie Ngahuia Mansbridge 2018 Photographer Bo Wong

The nature of possibilities: if we all have them?

During this final stage of my exegesis, I continue to perform my Māori/ Pākehā identity through the masking and unmasking process.

I unmask what lies behind my whiteness, acknowledging the Māori me. Recognising, that I will always oscillate between two worlds, as I tear off the tape what becomes clearer is that I am now seeing the world through a Māori lens. Through the unmasking process, I continue to uncover my families and my own identity, an identity that has for too long been blanketed through the pressures of colonisation. Now I am going forth and occupying the space that I belong in. Theorists Butler 2000, Bakhtin 1981, Fanon 2008, alongside writers de Botton 2014, Morrison 1992 and Smith 1999, have exposed the double voicing and manipulation that can be hidden within language. Their writings have provided the impetus to further uncover how the fixity of colonial discourse supported the *othering* that defined Rewi's life (and five generations of my family) after he took the blanket. This exegesis has served as a safe platform to unmask where I come from, who I am and where I belong.

Strip by strip, layer by layer the tape is removed as I reflect upon the ongoing racial attitudes that continue to marginalise and frame identities. We all have a right to self-identify. Therefore, I recognise that in-between cultural identities indisputably manifest themselves in varying ways, and understand that some people will not unpeel their masks to subscribe to their connection with *another* culture. Through creative art practice, I have the capacity to re-story, highlight, uncloak and unmask colonial history. The found objects used can be read as a metaphor for what already exists, an occupied space. An intervention into what already exists is a methodology, which ascribes to question and shift meaning by re-occupying. The new body of artwork produced at the conclusion of this exegesis, *De-Colonised Tahi*, *De-Colonised Rua* and *De-Colonised Toru*, continues to capture a visual irony that aptly distils my creative practice and theoretical investigations over the three chapters. Here the colonial guilt frames, the tapestry and embroidery reference a time of power, wealth and control in colonial history. The land was taken and *'the other'* were silenced.

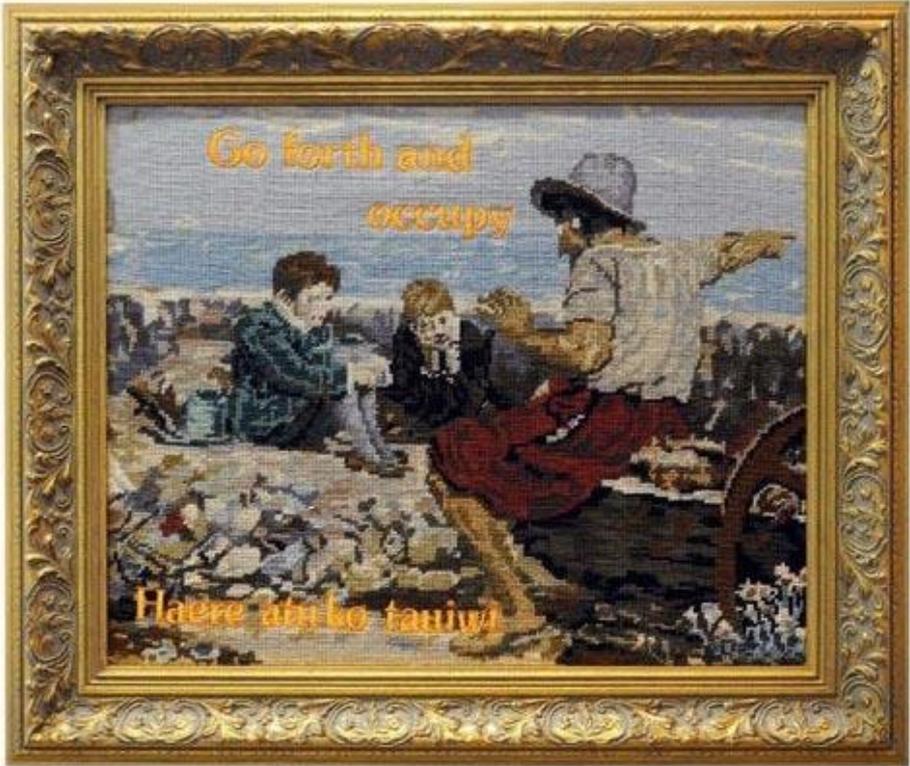


Figure 80 Leonie Ngahuia Mansbridge *De-Colonised Tahiti* 2018 Found Tapestry, cotton thread, gilt frame 120 x 660.



Figure 81 Leonie Ngahuia Mansbridge *De-Colonised Rua* 2018 Found Tapestry, cotton thread, gilt frame 680 x 590.

This position is acknowledged with the English text, "Go forth and occupy" "They came, they saw they conquered" and "They said that the natives can be tamed". I retort with Māori, exhibiting a voice of resistance. These works infer a relationship with the blanket cloaks, where, through the use of text; I re-storied and re-stored Rewi and my family's reputation. In the *Tiki tour Place, Mat(p)s series*, found objects and text were used to highlight what has been masked and in so doing I was able to unmask Granny's indignity of hiding who she was and where she fitted. In the *Masked series*, words were not needed. The use of masking tape was sufficient to expose and respond to the colonial oppression my family lived through.



Figure 82 Leonie Ngahuia Mansbridge *De-Colonised Toru* 2018 Found Tapestry, cotton thread, Gilt frame 670 x 570.



Figure 83 *Rangi and Dad (Ray)* Rotorua North Island Aotearoa/ New Zealand 1950

I travel through my cultural corridor daily, a space where I will always live, but through my research, I have been able to unmask how 'we', the in betweeners, have been hidden without our Turangawaewae, our place to stand. As the coloniser we are a part of the cause and as the colonised a part of the problem.

In the preface and the first paragraph of *Mana Tangatarua, Mixed Heritages, Ethnic Identity And Biculturalism In Aotearoa/ New Zealand 2018*, Paul Spoonley concedes, "I do not think I (or others) have spent enough time and paid enough attention to mixed ethnicity or race issue (Rocha, Webber 2018,xiii). Spoonley advocates a timely cue that in-between spaces are evolving and should not to be seen as something sitting on the margins, these spaces are critical to the negotiations of our lived experiences in our societies, having a considerable insight on contemporary identity, political and community. The Māori knowledge acquired through this exegesis has given me a substantial insight into the *tikanga* (customs, values).

Exposure to pivotal stories of living a life of in-betweenness penned by Henni Collins, (1999) Melinda Webber, (2008), Jacq Carter (1998) and more, have afforded me the strength to continue when doubts surfaced and I deliberated about the importance or significance of it all. Would anyone care?

Underpinning and qualifying my intention are the stories, the benchmarks of Rewi, Granny and Dad, their resistance, resilience and survival that has been a substantial component of their lives, descending and taking their strength from their tūpuna (ancestors). Rewi, Granny and my Dad live on through this research. They are a part of Aotearoa/New Zealand's history. Exposing their stories opens up possibilities of being represented and finding a place. We need to resist the ambiguous position we are placed in and not be silenced. We care, my family cares, this exegesis has significance in more ways than I could have imagined. The importance of finding my place to stand has not only impacted me, but has had ripple effects on my immediate family and beyond. Sharing my knowledge through international conferences and art exhibitions I have experienced the power of relearning and also the reality of unlearning much of what I learnt in the western world.

I come from an ordinary working class family; my story can be seen as a common phenomenon in Aotearoa/New Zealand, except that our ordinary family can also be seen as an extraordinary one. I am working to halt the enduring and controlling effect of colonisation that infiltrated my family for one hundred and fifty years.

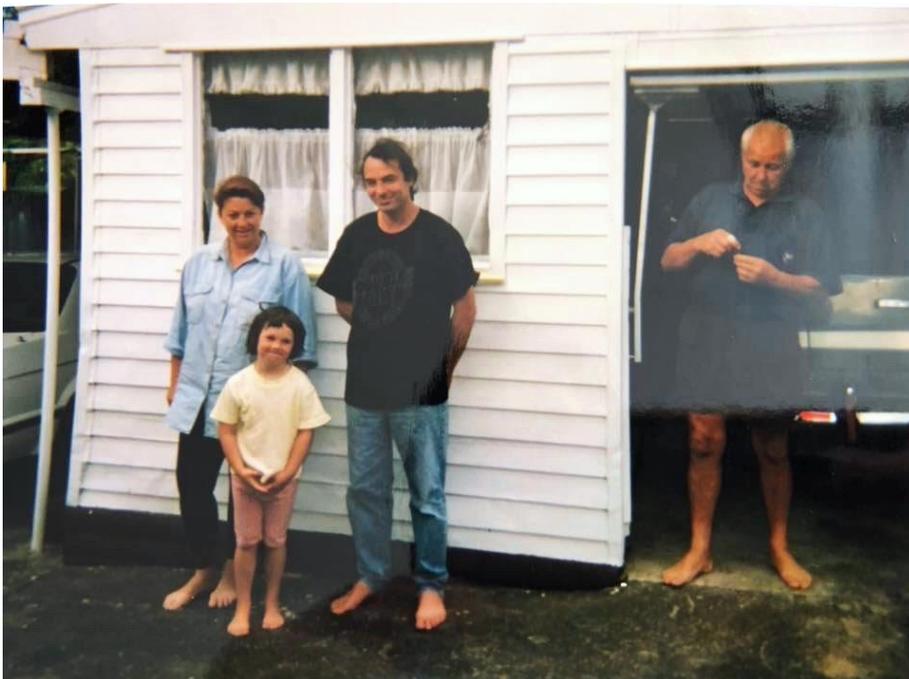


Figure 84 Leonie Mansbridge 'My ordinary un-ordinary family', 1990, New Lynn Auckland.

At the start of my research I was determined to re-centre shared language, especially the term half-caste. I recognise the word is loaded with derogatory implications, but it does describe precisely who I am a Māori/ Pākehā. In my own way, I wanted to claim half-caste for myself. Now I question that aim, for I am colonising myself again by way of classification. I have attended Indigenous conferences while I have been researching this thesis, claiming the word half-caste. Every time I have been questioned about the use of the term, but interestingly enough, never by anyone coming from an obvious western culture.

Auckland University 2014, Biennial International Indigenous Research conference Aotearoa/New Zealand: *"You are brave using half-caste" "Why do you use half-caste?"*

Waikato University 2015, He Manawa Whenua Indigenous Research Conference Aotearoa/New Zealand:

*I was asked why I was using half-caste "Why not just say you are Māori as we can see that you are Pākehā?"*

National Māori Doctoral Conference 2016, Victoria University Wellington Aotearoa/New Zealand:

*Why are you using half-caste? You are just colonising yourself by using these words of categorisation".*

In each case I responded with my position regarding the use of the word; I am re-centring the word, it defines who I am, not positioning one before the *other*. My argument was accepted, as it did not lead to any further discussion but each time I came away with a slight niggle, and with questions. Can I recreate the word half-caste out of these past connotations? Am I offending too many people?

As detailed in the Introduction Young's ideology of half-caste refers to the eventual *breeding out* of the Indigenous race (Young 1995, 7). Now, instead of breeding out, we are here to bestow the power for the survival of our Indigenous race and to acknowledge our heritage. Colonisation has been living with me all my life, influencing my upbringing.

*When I endeavoured to be like the kids down the street in our white neighbourhood, thinking I was better than my Māori cousins, while all along I was the same as them. Now I am humbled with shame that those ideas had determined my childhood existence. To be Māori is an honour and an opportunity. I am Māori! And I have the opportunity to tell my story to be proud of who I am and where I have come from.*

My objective was to re-story my family narratives from a position of a lived experience. I have learnt more about my culture and whom I am than expected. More importantly, what has manifested at the end is a determination to question, and through questioning expose the frameworks used to place me in my world. I hope to share this research with *other* in betweeners in Aotearoa/New Zealand, in Australia and beyond.

*Through the process of masking and re-masking, my identity is no longer hidden.  
I am finally re-located.*



Figure 85 Leonie Ngahuia Mansbridge 2017 Toronto Canada WIPCE Conference.

The concluding of my research project has lead me to a paradox, for the ending is also a beginning. The more I investigate the more it encourages questioning, for this is a journey with extended itineraries to follow.

Firstly, my investigations on Rewi, and how the West perceived him. Additionally how his life changed the political and cultural understandings of our family, by moving sides. Whilst this has been a family specific project, there has been significant interest in New Zealand from descendants of others who followed Rewi-like pathways to explore their own family histories from a similar perspective to my research.

By unpacking the concept of *other* with Fanon, Bhabha, Young and many similar theorists we can see how these discourses have exposed racist agendas that motivated colonial power and systems. In representing Rewi's experience through art practice gave meaning and authenticity to his stories. Using the blanket, despite the dubious emblematic relationship we have with it, sits in an ambiguous place. Rewi's blanket cloaks hold both positive and negative feeling where the reparative position of comfort and warmth is no compensation for the damages caused by colonisation. The taking of land, spreading of disease, and a covering over of horrific crimes are perhaps beyond compensation or apology.

Chapter two sets in place the spiritual connection I have with my Granny and the land. Critical insights that surround this chapter come from geographers and cultural theorists, punctuated with the work of contemporary artists who use landscape and memory as their subject matter. The *Place Mat(p)s* series utilise and reflect diverse ways that we understand place by representing land that is deliberately non-western and reflects my way to de-colonising politics. These works are an attempt to empower my Granny to declare her lived identity, connecting to her Tūpuna (ancestors) and Tangata Whenua (land). Understanding that culture affects perception I experiment with the unexpected colour relationship of image, objects and glitter to draw attention to experiences that the west will never know.

Chapter three revolves around me as the subject weaving a lived experience and to represent that experience through my art practice. I encapsulate the stories of Rewi, and Granny, belonging to the land, with the experience of how I visualise my attempt to live within a contemporary contested space. Granny and placemats utilise and reflect ways of representing deliberately non-western landscape as a visual strategy to de-colonise politics. These works are a considered declaration of her identity and again, reinforce the strong connection across time to her Tūpuna (ancestors) and Tangata Whenua (land).

*Masked* (Fig 77) a large scale work that offers the familiar image of a group photo of children, but the image is aimed to counteract this basic reading with masking tape that is positioned in the negative spaces of the image. In describing the relationship between the positive and negative, the tape appears to be suspended in an indeterminate space; a kind of in betweenness within the photo and image as a whole.

The application of the studio based skills of the artist to the matter of my family's complex social histories, intimate stories and racial conflicts has been demanding, at sometimes traumatic, but always rewarding. As a research strategy, it has produced an authentic report on one man's reaction to being part of an oppressive colonising invasion force. Perhaps, more importantly, it has allowed me to find a secure Maori identity in the contemporary white worlds of New Zealand and Australia. It is my hope that other researchers may be moved to apply this approach to their own histories and to produce new stories for these troubled times.

## Appendix 1 : Conference attendance

Ngā Pae O te Māramatanga 8<sup>th</sup> Biennial International Indigenous Research Conference Auckland University New Zealand 13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> November 2018. Paper: *To Re-Story the Unordinary Through Visual Art*

AAANZ; Art Association of Australia and New Zealand

University of Western Australia 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

Paper: *Colonisation You Nearly Got Me*.

WIPCE; World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education.

Six Nations Polytechnic Toronto Canada. 24<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

Panel presentation: *Initiatives and New Approaches to Education*.

MCCA Research Symposium; Directions and Destinations

Curtin University 1<sup>st</sup> September 2017. Paper: *Tiki Touring: Follow the Directions of a Visual Journey of Identity*.

InASA/International Australian Studies Association

Reimagining Australia, Encounter, Recognition, Responsibility.

Notre Dame University Fremantle 7th-9th December 2016. Paper: *Place Ma(t)ps*.

National MAI Doctoral Conference 2016

Hosted by MAI ki Pōneke on behalf of Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga and Te Kupenga o MAI 23rd November –25th November

Te Herenga Waka Marae, Victoria University of Wellington. Paper: *Living in a Cultural Corridor*.

He Manawa Whenua Indigenous Research Conference

Waikato University, Claudelands Hamilton 29<sup>th</sup> June-1<sup>st</sup> July 2015.

Paper: *Half-Caste, Criss-Crossing a Cultural Corridor*.

Māori weaving classes held at 210 South Terrace  
Fremantle April/ May 2015

Impact 9 International Printmaking Conference.  
China Academy of the Art Hangzhou China Sept 22-26 September 2015.  
Invited Exhibitor, *Impact Nine Art Exhibition*.

*Toi Oho 20 years of Māori Visual Art Massey University* Palmerston North  
New Zealand 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> December 2015

National Māori Doctoral Conference  
*Maketu Marae Kawhia*  
New Zealand 21<sup>st</sup>- 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2014

Nga Pae O Te Maramatanga 6<sup>TH</sup> Biennial International Indigenous  
Development Research Conference  
Auckland University 20th March 2014. *Poster Presentation on Research*.

Research trip to Wellington Alexander Turnbull Library,  
*Parihaka and Moku 2013*

## Appendix 2: Permission Statements and copyright approvals

Throughout this thesis exist images of my immediate and extended family. In some cases, the images are of us as children and later as adults. All living relatives have given their written, often also enthusiastic verbal consent to reproduce their images as they have appeared in family photos. In the case of deceased relatives (such as my dad) the closest living relative has given written permission. My mother has provided written and verbal permission to reproduce images of dad and my grandmother. Permissions have been provided for the purposes of my art practice and ongoing research understanding the thesis will be available through Curtin University open access digital collection.

Ethics approval was gained from Curtin University Ethics committee for the research project at the same time as the Doctoral research project was approved by Graduate Studies.

The personal correspondence from all relatives providing their approval for these images to appear in the thesis is available upon request.

In regard to images of deceased Māori persons that appear in the thesis, there are no specific cultural attributions reading the use of imagery of deceased individuals.

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Ferne Millen Photography for family portraits

Bo Wong Photography for documentation of the author's artworks.

Artist Tracey Williams

Written copyright permission to reproduce the historical materials referenced in the thesis have been obtained from Alexander Turnbull Library National Library of New Zealand and acknowledgments included with images as requested.

All correspondence regarding copyright permissions and evidence of written approvals are held on file with the thesis author and available upon written request.

## Glossary:

Aotearoa	New Zealand
Atua	God, deity
Awa	River
Hapu	Kinship group, sub tribe
Harakete	Aotearoa/New Zealand Flax
Hui	To gather, a gathering wherein certain rituals apply
Iwi	Tribe, people
Karanga	To call, call out
Kāwanatanga	Government, dominion, rule, authority
Keha	Flea
Kingitanga	Kingdom, sovereignty
Kokowai	Red ochre
Kauhangahui	Māori Parliament
Korero	To tell, say, speak, talk
Kowhaiwhai	Painted scroll ornamentation, commonly used on meetinghouse rafters
Ngāti Māniapoto	Tribal group of the King country area
Ngā tangata awarua	two rivers, corridors, or passage
Mānuka	Tea-tree, common native scrub bush
Māori	Indigenous people of Aotearoa/ New Zealand
Māoritonga	Māori culture, traditions and way of life
Marae	Māori community setting, gathering place, ancestral home
Maunga	Mountain, mount, peak
Mauri	Life force, essence, ethos
Moko Kauae	A chin tattoo traditional reserved for Māori women with mana (high status, power)
Mokopuna	Grandchildren
Nikau Palm	Native palm of Aotearoa/ New Zealand
Pā	Fortified village
Pākehā	Literally non-Māori New Zealander of European ethnicity
Pākehākeha	Pale skinned fairies with human attributes

Papatūānuka	The land, <i>mother</i> earth who gave birth to all things
Patu	Māori weapon- short club made of stone or wood
Pititi	Peach
Poaka	Pig
Rangtiratanga	The right of Māori people to rule themselves: self-determination, kingdom, and sovereignty
Rewi	Dave, Davie
Rito	Centre shoot, new harakete (flax) shoot
Tangata Whenua	To be natural, at home, local people indigenous people born of the whenua- land where the people's ancestors have lived
Tainui	Term for the territory of the tribes descended from the crew of the Tainui waka (canoe)
Taurekareka	To be enslaved- captive of war
Tāne mathuta	Atua (God) of the forest and birds
Te Arataura	Executive board of the Kauhgangahui (Māori Parliament) the legislative council of the Waikato Tainui
Tena Koe	Māori greeting addressed to one person
Te reo	Māori language
Tukutuku	Ornamental woven latticework panels used for decorations, particularly on the walls of a Māori meeting house
Tūpuna	Ancestor
Tūrangawaewae	A sense of identity, a place to stand
Wairua	Spirit
Waka	Canoe
Whānau	Family unit
Whare	House, residence, dwelling
Whareniui	Meeting house, ancestral home
Whenua	Land, ground
Whakapapa	Genealogy, cultural, identity, lineage

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