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P ā k e h ā (*Body In Between*) I d e n t i t y

*An offering to decolonial discourse, through embodied performance in the
landscape.*

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Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the land I have been working from here in Te Whanganui-a-Tara and the hill Pukeahu. Pukeahu and the whenua surrounding it was once a kainga and may have been a pā site, burial ground and a spiritual place that no people occupied. The whenua of Pukeahu was excavated between 1848 and 1883 and now sits 25 meters lower than it once was. Pukeahu was the site of a prison and gaol where prisoners from Parihaka were held. I would like to acknowledge Papatūānuku, mana whenua of Pukeahu, Te Ātiawa, and pay a tribute to those from Parihaka who live on in the spirit realm.

Maddi, Ana, Nayte, Tūi, Jayden, Terri, Nik, Tahlia, Taranaki, Elton, Tane, Lani, Holly-May, Robert, Rosina.

I have watched parts of them fill up with a sense of self, their mana grow, as they learn their whakapapa and their place as Tangata Whenua. My friends truly are my greatest teachers and they continue their whakapapa through the stories we share. My whānau has stood with me, held space for me and has seen the value of my mahi sometimes before I realised it's worth. For me this exhibits the community that is essential to have when making work that challenges dominant ways of thinking and work that involves embodied learning and sharing of identity. This community includes Sylvan, Vivian and Sigrid, and of course my sister Charlie. My whānau who have held space to have the difficult kōrero and share our understandings of identity together.

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Abstract

My thesis project moves through discussions of my Pākehā identity and relationship to whiteness and the whenua in the context of Aotearoa. Both my thesis writing and performance are presented as an autobiographical practice. This work is a personal exploration of being Pākehā with a critical acknowledgement of the relationship and separation from Māori and mātauranga. My mahi explores revisiting my lived experiences as a way to self-reflect and better situate my body in the political, cultural, and social context of being Pākehā. This embodied method in my interrelated performance, video, and literary practices has allowed me to better understand multiplicities and nuances of identity. This project is of my body and therapeutic for my body, therefore I have used a storytelling literary style, as this reflects the personal context of my work.

My performance work shares my identity as a white body, Pākehā body, Tangata Tiriti, and a woman, in contrast and in conversation with the landscape, exploring narratives of 'location' 'disconnection' 'unsettling' 'fitting in' and 'belonging'. I use the subjectivity of my body in both my performance and literary practice, as a way to lay a foundation to host investigation into the seemingly invisible systemic network that is whiteness. This exegesis feels to me to be a living performative document of its own, learning as I am doing and moving through research.

This year the work I have made, and the kōrero I have had with my whānau, has been the most important in relation to situating my Pākehā identity, to then help other Pākehā understand their own through my disseminated work. I remember the beginning of this process; I was so uptight and worried about appropriating from Māori in my initial

experiments involving ecofeminism and paganism that I didn't acknowledge indigeneity in the landscape. This work kept leading to my unavoidable relationship to te ao Māori in the context of Aotearoa and the whenua on which I was making my performance work.

The Maunga demanded to be named and the pūrākau took me in its current.

In the process of my journey to locate myself in the land, the understanding of being Pākehā became more than a small acknowledgement but central to having a performative practice that works in the landscape of Aotearoa and politics of New Zealand. Researching my Pākehā identity isn't just a place I will visit, but a place where I can belong.

I believe sharing these stories, performance works and learnings of my life before now 'from my well' are intrinsic to how I have navigated a Pākehā experience, and to understanding how I can contribute to undoing systems older and more powerful than the blind ignorance of a large part of Pākehā culture.

Alongside this, actively listening to the experiences of Māori has been fundamental for enriching my understanding of the realities of Aotearoa, my reality included. As Alison Jones articulates: "If Pākehā people exist in terms of our relationship with Māori, then we have to be able to think with a Māori-informed point of view." (Jones.190) I have the honour of sharing with my friends their kōrero about their own journeys of decolonisation. This is why an autobiographical way of writing is important as it continues the language of storytelling, listening and sharing of stories with my whānau.

In my experience, stories can travel further and become more accessible in the way they expose concepts like white supremacy or privilege. Storytelling through lived experience intertwines the theory with an embodied reality. I am not claiming that my lived reality is the only reality or a right or wrong one, but I hope that it can be a starting point for more dialogue, critique, and broader shared realities.

Storytelling is an indigenous way of sharing knowledge through generations and the way that knowledge has survived and resisted colonial erasure. Kōrero pūrākau and indigenous auto-ethnography connects people to history and places them in reality.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes that:

For many indigenous writers stories are ways of passing down the beliefs and values of a culture in the hope that the new generations will treasure them and pass the story down further. The story and the storyteller both serve to connect the past with the future, one generation with the other, the land with the people and the people with the story.
(Smith,144-145)

As a Pākehā, I have seen my connection between past and future, generational knowledge, and stories to be dishonest, harmful, or intentionally absent from Pākehā culture. Alison Jones explains that “Pākehā insistence on ‘forgetting the past’ becomes possible only if we believe the past is lost behind us, out of sight and gone.” (Jones.170) This sense of absence has shaped a large part of my journey through my art practice, research, and identity. Thankfully in our whare Jayden and Tūi keep reminding me of the whakatauki ‘ka mua ka muri’, ‘walking backwards into the future’. This humbles me enough to see that I am not as alone as I may feel, there is history and stories waiting to be made visible as I move forward with my art practice and understanding my identity,

it will just take time. I have started this journey, both looking back from my past, and into the present to where I am now, in my body.

Ka mua ka muri



*Fig 1. A body in between the absence (Photographic series). Personal photograph by the author. 2021.
Rangipo, Ngati Tūwharetoa whenua.*

Introduction

I am a Pākehā woman made of many environments. I move through and am influenced to change and respond, as the various expressions of time, people, and space become perceptible to me. Through an intuitive practice cultivated by listening to, and situating myself in the cultural, political, physical and non-physical environment of Aotearoa as the whenua and New Zealand as the settler-colonial state; I have allowed myself through embodied performance practice in the landscape, to be a conduit space for therapeutic learning, subjective and theoretical research of my Pākehā identity, woman's identity, and relationship to te ao Māori.

The work following is in itself a living, performative document. It is a space where I have shared some realities of my lived experience, and spent a generous amount of time reflecting, researching, and art making to find a sense of placement in understanding what my Pākehā identity may be. This journey of making space for self-perception has required a level of submission of control and continued learning of freedom from binary logic. The character of my literary voice illustrates and enacts a fluidity between an academic, poetic, and autobiographical style. Autobiographical writing has allowed me to speak with my voice informed by my local, embodied experience. My literary style is an extension of my performance practice in the way both share sites to learn from my subjectivity as it is happening.

[The] decolonising methodology of using personal narrative alongside a critical reflexive lens deeply echoes feminist practice and methodology. Its calls for understanding one's own role as a

scholar in the research process in ways that do not reinscribe the interests of the privileged through unpacking intersections of identities and interrogating one's own investment. Thus, both “awareness of the self in creating knowledge (qtd. Kovach.2)

I understand my movement through this project to be like floating in a river, at times the water is calm and I have time to anticipate and imagine what could be ahead, but I have been caught in the rapids, trying to see through the white water, learning the only way out is in time, and through. When I make it to deep pools of clear water, there I can see through to my body and realise myself again. I have always been moving in this awa, moving through the whenua. I have arrived at a place where my kete of critical reflection and theory informs how I understand my relationship to my Pākehā identity and how I exist in relation to te ao Māori; for now, it has enough in it to be at a place where I feel ready to share.

This kete will forever have room to be filled.

In my whare, with the whānau, we can see and are a movement of embodied decolonisation happening in New Zealand. This mahi is my response to this movement, learning my place, realising my Pākehā identity, to then better understand how to be Tangata Tiriti in relation to Tangata Whenua. I am doing this to best tautoko my Māori whānau in their reclamation of self and tino rangatiratanga. I then hope to encourage other Pākehā to self-reflect and locate their position in the political and historical context of their Pākehā identities, in support of decolonial movements for Aotearoa. I have primarily chosen to draw from the discourse and kōrero surrounding identity and decolonial methodology rather than surveying the many influential and inspiring artists

from Aotearoa working and contributing to this space. Their mahi does not go unnoticed, rather it has contributed to the discourse that I have focused on unpacking in a context related to whiteness and Pākehā identity in this text.

In this MFA I have honoured my pace and listened to my urges to delve into content and ideas that I needed to explore further to find more ground to speak from. In this process I have, and I hope you as the reader, can also learn to identify inherent colonial voices that seek linear answers, and the voices that have difficulty processing nuances that hold conflicting elements in the same space. Though these spaces may feel uncomfortable or outlandish, they are spaces of intersectionality and learning. I invite you to take my hand as I take you through this body of work.

Finding a place to fit in | making a place to fit in

As children, my sister and I would walk through the bush, or along the beach in Aotearoa searching for a good spot. “The good spots” usually featured domestic-seeming forms, such as a cave making our shelter or driftwood washed up against the dunes to create a wall. An environment arranging itself by chance into forms that we related to our memories and various understandings of home. When transforming a good spot into what we hoped would become ‘our space’, our homemaking efforts would extend to objects: a flat rock that would make a great chopping board, a shell telephone, moss cushions, and bark plates. We would spend hours, if not days, working on our space; which would inevitably be left behind for the rain and tides to redecorate back into the surrounding environment.

Cleaning up after the children

I still enjoy indulging a sense of the maternal and the associated safety that emerges from homemaking and hut building. The pride that came from building something of our own from the ground up was gratifying and made us stronger. Charlie (*my sister*) and I grew up in many houses that our clever mum made into homes filled with music, colour, and pheromones. For a short time, during our earlier years, our father lived with us too. In that period, our family struggled with alcoholism, domestic violence and mental health issues, and in the end, the house couldn’t hold us together. There were times when the house wasn’t safe for Charlie and me; therefore, I would take us away, deep into the yard or down the street where we would create a sanctuary of our own. After hours of losing our location in everyone else’s timeframes and the so-called “real world”, Tāwhirimātea would blow a cool wind through our jumpers and the sinking

light would gesture towards home. We would rush about our new hut, tying the last shell to a mobile, sweeping up the leaves on the dirt floor, worrying that it would be too late to show mum what we had made. More often than not, these spaces we made as a gift for her in order to make her proud and bring her peace.

“We have a new home for us!” “We can stay here!”

Later in our childhood, Mum, Charlie, our dog Suede, two cats, and I moved house annually. A distinguished achievement on mum's behalf as it is not the easiest feat as a single mother, with two young children, on the benefit, with our beautiful large “mongrel”. Some of these homes we hated as they didn't feel at all like us; or, surprisingly, they were fancy and looked like our school friends' homes. Either way, we would have to create our home in these spaces. I distinctly remember things mum would do to the homes and still does.

She hangs a string of little bells by the front door.

Transplants at least twenty pots of her vegetable plants and flowers.

A terrifying ceramic clown she bought when she was eighteen lives on top of the tall, square cabinet.

She places a large pair of men's working boots at the front door (for the same reason she told some men that our dog bites).

My sister and I know where all of these things go and how to treat them. We must wrap the “bloody expensive cabinet” in a duvet when moving and, “if anything happens to the glass lamp with roses mum will cry”. Because of this, my associations with and connection to objects became intimate. Whenever I broke a plate or mug, I would cry and cry, unsure as to why it broke my heart. My understanding now is that these objects and their representations had larger significance to me. We carried them with us;

whereas our homes have been temporary. There is still a tenderness for me when admitting how desperately I would love to have had something that was solid and truly home. As Mariana Ortega states, “Not having a ‘home’ whether home is seen as a fully defined state which evokes an established, homogenous community, or a state in the process of being made, is something bound to lead to anxiety, nostalgia, and longing.” (Ortega.12) I imagined home as a ‘civilised’ and warm architectural structure. Always a place on top of or developed from land, never simply land. A place filled with a nuclear family, food, money, and traditions. This idea of home wasn't a reality for me, ‘home’ was and still is a feeling or energy—something like love.

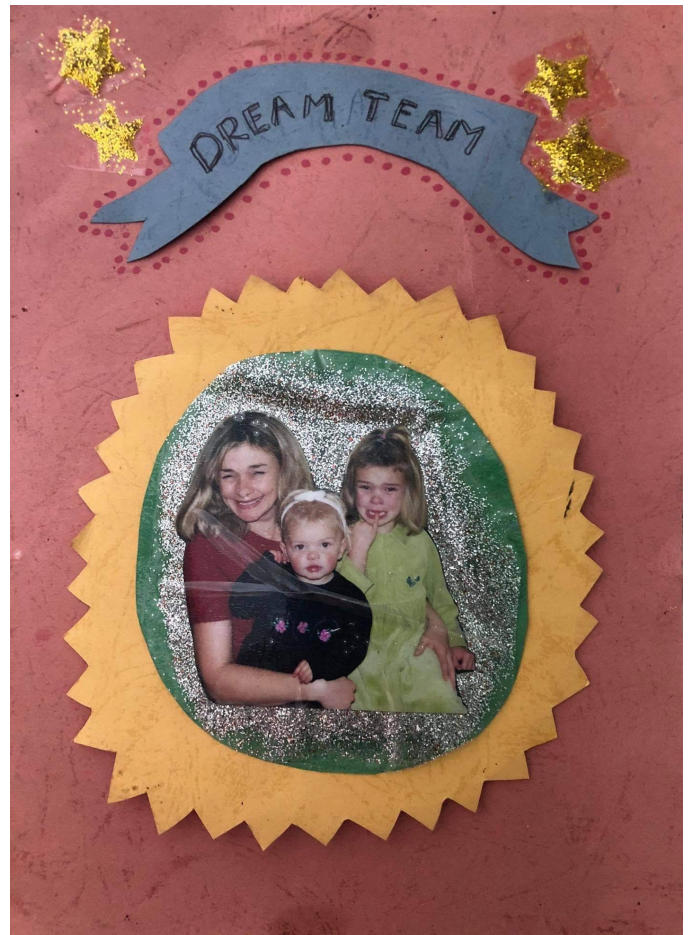


Fig 2,3. *Childhood Images*, personal photograph by the author, accessed 2021.



Fig 4,5. *Childhood Images*, personal photograph by the author, accessed 2021.



Fig 6,7. *Childhood Images*, personal photograph by the author, accessed 2021.

My Nana and Poppa's house in Manawatū was the closest manifestation of my idealised home. A house built right next to the Manawatū river, though I never learnt any pūrākau of the great tōtara tree on the slopes of the Puketoi mountain range who was possessed by a spirit, Ōkatia. The tōtara who drove through the mountain barrier of Ruahine and Taranaki, creating a gorge in the process, then followed a path to the sea. (The Story of the Manawatu River)

Instead, we had other traditions. The family would come round for Christmas and birthdays, we would practice our best manners at the dinner table, sing carols written for the Northern Hemisphere, or 'he's' a jolly good fellow at anyone's birthday. Although I cherished the time spent with family, I couldn't help but feel a distance from the 'family

scene' and the traditions. This felt fit for someone else's family or a family from the past and a different place that I had no knowledge of. This fed a growing feeling of alienation from my family culture and our location in Aotearoa. In Margaret Ann Mitcalfe's thesis, she writes on settler theory stating that:

Pākehā undergo a process of separating from their original home culture, its homeliness, and its authority, they also keep separate from the violent history of their homemaking in the new country. This separation avoids recognising the violence on which Pākehā being and belonging to Aotearoa is based, hence, Pākehā identity being constituted as an alienated one, rejecting history, cut off from the homeland (Mitcalfe,11)

As a young kid, I didn't see the 'cut off' between our European homeland to where I was now. There was no identification or sense of a place before New Zealand. The traditions and stories that drew a line across the ocean connecting my grandparents to and from a sense of place, were not shared with me. Therefore, I floated in between two unknown locations, to the point where I dissociated from them, I felt more comfortable staying in the waters of not identifying.

A Pākehā. My early learnings of being white

I was largely ignorant of my cultural difference from Māori primarily due to the lack of my learning any Pākehā history at school. I did however notice a difference and discomfort between myself and the way my family lived in contrast to middle/upper-class Pākehā families. Therefore, being non-indigenous wasn't the only place from which my early experience of being unsettled and quest for belonging emerged. This longing for place inhabited the shallow waters of lower-income living, through which we waded. Transparent but heavy, and always on the move.

Through my own observations growing up, money was a struggle both for many Māori and our own household. Alongside the culture and community that grows in the patterns of poverty, including public housing, WINZ trips, food bank pickups, hokohoko, and similar postal codes, my lived relationship to Māori formed out of some shared politics, proximity, and familiarity. However, my family's experience in the lower/working class remains culturally and historically very different from a Māori experience, as our white privilege lent us access to more opportunity. Although coping with being poor is a dehumanising struggle for anyone, from my experiences impoverished white people are generally treated with more respect, and given more access to assistance from a government systemically made by and for white people. I know this to be true as my whiteness has allowed me to move seamlessly enough into more exclusive spaces, including university. My intention of sharing this personal history is to bring attention to the many nuances of identity, and how moving between different societal categories has shaped my perception of privilege. American contemporary feminist critic Lucy Lippard writes “Most of us live such fragmented lives and have so many mini-communities that

no one knows us as a whole. The incomplete self longs for the fragments to be brought together. This can't be done without a context, a place” (Lippard. 25)

It is never as simple as black or white; the grey areas unbound to dominant categorisation are like sand bars between land. A space with a distance from the mainland where you can see your separation from the people that live there.

Ngāhuia Murphy, mana wahine, scholar, and author of a book that rarely leaves my bedside table, *Te Awa Atua*, wrote this list of “racist and sexist dualisms that underpin western systems of knowledge.” (Murphy.31) systems that become more invisible or easy to live by, with the more privilege and conformity to Western capitalism you have.

Murphy’s list is as follows:

Male / female

Superior / inferior

Culture / nature

Self / other

logic / illogic

Mind / body

Reason / hysteria

Civilised / savage

Christian / heathen

Heaven / earth

Spiritual / physical (Murphy. 31)

These dualisms purported as neutral and natural categories are far from it. Rather they maintain politics of power and control, dominance and subordination. They reduce and isolate us into problematic generalizations of fixed social categories (Murphy.32).

This was the unknowing and inherent way I developed an understanding of the (white) world and its static regulations of being/surviving in the colonised hierarchy imposed upon the whenua.

Dualistic binaries introduced by colonialism to Aotearoa are used relentlessly to stereotype Māori and marginalised identities as ‘other’ away from ‘ideal’ counterpoint or ‘normal’ ‘white’ ‘man’ (Pfeifer. 529). This happens to such an extent that the complexities and variation of minorities’ identities become invisible in dominant society.

Due to the silencing of Māori experiences and stifling of representation of Māori, by Māori and for Māori, these stereotypes are produced, and reproduced, in colonial discourse as a dominantly perceived reality. As Homi K Bhabha describes: “produce[-ing] the colonized as a social reality which is at once an ‘other’ and yet entirely knowable and visible” (Bhabha. 70-71) In relation to the nuances existing within sectors of class, being Māori and being poor are not homogenous, and being poor is not Māori culture. Living in poverty and struggling to survive is not living in a Māori way. Māori have been disenfranchised by continued colonisation. Toon van Meijl writes that:

Cultural and economic injustices are intertwined since both extend from colonial relations of inequality, but it is still necessary to distinguish class and culture for analytical purposes () Māori constituted an indigenous minority in a predominantly white settler

colony, while at the same time the majority of the Māori population belongs to lower socioeconomic classes. (Meijl. 82)

Because of this racial homogenisation, as I was growing up it made sense to be poor if you were Māori, not so much if you were Pākehā. At times friends asked me ‘why are you poor?’ I would respond something like ‘I don't know, why are you poor?’ their response being ‘but you're a Pākehā’. Pākehā didn't mean anything to me then. If anything in those early years I thought my friends were bullying me, discriminating against me, or alienating me from our group of friends.

I thought then that my peers were being ‘racist’ because they called me white girl, Pālagi, Pākehā. All names that genuinely identify me. “*R3V3r\$e r@c1\$m*” which is a fundamentally baseless and impossible concept, that neglects to acknowledge power imbalances and historical oppression, was what I thought was happening while being ignorantly unaware of the socially constructed, divisive, oppressive concept of “race”. To be completely transparent, I only learnt that reverse racism didn't exist once I came to university and for the first time, I could really see the power imbalance and the blinding majority of white people.

As a young person, I didn't recognise why I had the privilege of being the ‘first in line’ or why my dreams of becoming Prime Minister were encouraged as more realistic than the aspirations of Māori. I knew I had some sort of capital, but I didn't know it was the entity that is my Pākehā identity and the ongoing privilege I gained from white supremacy. Toon van Meijl continues to acknowledge how the New Zealand schooling system doesn't teach Māori children to be proud of their cultural traditions, which causes low self-esteem, the Western framework of schooling creates an environment that can be alienating or even hostile for Māori, which leads to their attention levels being lower.

The systemic white supremacy and violent assimilation of schooling was undetectable to me, all while it gradually separated me from Māori friends, cultivating a sense of individualism and elitism in my personality while disparaging and making some Māori feel inferior.

I really just thought I was special. Not smart, as I knew many of my Māori classmates achieved higher results academically than I had. I also knew it wasn't because I was well behaved. In the end, I naively put it down to my *charming personality*.

I was one of a few Pākehā in a predominantly Māori primary/intermediate school where I flourished learning about te ao Māori from our kind and stern matua, with classmates who would give me shit if I referred to them as friends rather than whānau. I then moved to the 'cabbage' class at high school where I first connected with people who have become lifelong friends, where we had experiences that we never tire of retelling. High school brought awareness to the divisions of class and ethnicity through the streaming system. Being from Rangiora, I was put in the class of mostly Māori students, from there we watched as the more Pākehā streamed classes would be granted opportunities, given brand new learning resources and would be taught different content.

This further separated me from identifying with other Pākehā

This was also the first time I felt that learning about te ao Māori was a setback, I resented not knowing about dates of European wars or who Princess Diana was.

Everything I learned about te ao Māori and Aotearoa felt like knowledge only the lower educated students had; I felt like I had been busy watching grass grow, while smart kids were watching Hannah Montana on their Sky TV and learning real-world stuff.

Therefore, I lied to mum and said it was compulsory for me to have a scientific calculator like the higher stream kids had on their stationery list.

And the imposter syndrome begins

I felt very embarrassed by how unintelligent school made me feel, which was part of why I misbehaved, even then my privilege facilitated my movement through schooling. I was still encouraged and expected to apply for university. Even though university seemed like a kingdom of geniuses living in the big city. I had no expectation of getting accepted, as no one in my family had ever completed a degree, and I didn't actually know what people did at university. But I did know my parents had both dreamt of me going. I saw how relieved and proud mum looked to know I was moving toward a bigger world and a *better life*.

While I was busy getting my head around 'university' the Māori students in our 'cabbage class' were not encouraged to apply in the same way, or if they were, they were not given the extra support needed to meet NCEA requirements. This is a stark example of how systemic privileging of my whiteness permitted my access to opportunity. I learned the term privileging from a text by Joseph P Minarik, 'Privilege as Privileging', where he describes "Privilege as an active process, that of privileging, the phenomenon can be viewed as not given but continually enacted, a process performed between people, and thus seen as being continually socially constructed". (Minarik.55)

Those with privileges have the agency to choose how we share and use privilege. I have had the privilege of being accepted, taught by, and involved in Māori communities, and the privilege of being able to critically reflect on my learnings at university and be listened to. This has given me a vantage point to analyse both *where I*

have come from, and *how* my lived experience has been shaped. “Drinking from my own well and my own experience as an individual and as a people.” (qtd Murphy). My experience of self-realisation sits at the centre of what informs my art practice and furthermore, how my creative practice can contribute to decolonial methodology.

In my work I use my privilege to create space for Pākehā to learn and unlearn their inherent binds to colonialism and I hope via doing so creating less labour for Māori; who while powerfully resisting colonialism are also wrongly expected to educate Pākehā, on being Māori, which can result in further disregarding of the significance of whiteness and the threat of Pākehā further appropriating te ao Māori into their making of identity.

It is not the job of Māori to educate Pākehā, although there are times when Māori are placed into hostile situations where they are forced to. Claire Gray, Nabila Jaber, and Jim Anglem explain that “consideration needs to shift to the advantages shared by members of the dominant majority rather than simply focusing on the difference between majority and minority groups.” (Gray. et al 99) It is thus Pākehā who need to do some mahi surrounding our own culture, breaking down the foundations which uphold hegemonic whiteness, history and identity, and then consider how this relates to te ao Māori.

removing the Pākehā
identity from the
'white person' identity
contributes to the denial of
the white supremacy

Pākehā can also be read
as a 'post-colonial' or
'bicultural' understanding
of a white identity

this does not exempt
us from the white majority
from which we continue
to reap the privileges of

Fig 8,9,10. *The white of Pākehā*, video stills by the author. 2021 <https://vimeo.com/540414754>

“There is nowhere else in the world that one can be Pākehā” (Ani Mikaere. 79)

The word Pākehā has evolved into much more than its original meaning being non-Māori, English, foreign, European, exotic. Pākehā now carries with it in our current colonial context the damaged relationship between Māori and non-Māori in Aotearoa.

As Alison Jones puts it: “Pākehā is a complicated and politicised term in modern usage. It is a tuna-term, a slippery eel of a word; it wriggles easily away from one’s grasp”

(Jones.8) For me this tuna is taonga. Being named Pākehā gives me a direct relationship to the location and culture I am made up of in Aotearoa. Though without understanding Pākehātanga, and neglecting to consider our relationship to te ao Māori, and colonial history, Pākehā identity can become an existential space absent of ground to stand on.

Avril bell, researcher of settler identities describes that, “Settlers are at once migrants, colonizers and colonials and their identities are constructed in relation to two primary

others, the peoples of the metropolitan homelands of their ancestors and the indigenous peoples of their national homelands.” (Bell.147)

I have experienced those Pākehā existential feelings of having ‘no identity’ and not knowing where I am from. For many Pākehā this ignorance is comfortable to exist within because of how white privilege provides us a neutral and untouchable position, where racial hierarchy will continue to support our livelihoods. Alastair Bonnett describes whiteness as “a category which is not subject to the constant process of challenge and change experienced by non-white groups. This process enables white people to occupy a privileged location”, he continues, “they are allowed the luxury of being passive observers.” (Bonnett.98). For this reason, Pākehā have no obligation or embodied motivation to ‘indulge’ in learning, participating or even taking accountability for how our identity operates in relationship with Māori, mātauranga and the history of Aotearoa. “Privilege means we can get by without knowing our history” writes, Jen Margaret. (Margaret.2) It’s as if Pākehā float above the whenua, aware of (even envious at times if you're into *spirituality*) Māori below, with their feet connected to the ground and the stories of their whenua, while Pākehā ignore our own distance.

Learning, relearning our names

In being Pākehā we have a responsibility to ourselves and Te Tiriti o Waitangi to learn what our colonial history raised us to forget; and in doing so, becoming the better counterparts that Te Tiriti intended. Diana Amundsen writes on “Pākehā identity as a political act. If it is such, the Pākehā cannot ignore a moral obligation and purpose to engage with Māori for the purpose of decolonisation and reconciliation.”

(Amundsen.146) In my work *I, visit Pariwhero* I address the importance of understanding and reclaiming the names, for myself as Pākehā, and the reo name for Red Rocks ‘Pariwhero’. In this work I see an exchange of manaaki between my appreciation of being given the name Pākehā and my action in bringing visibility to the indigenous name Pariwhero.





Fig 11,12,13. *I, visit Pariwhero*. Video stills by the author, 2021. <https://vimeo.com/540405375>
site: Pariwhero, Ngāti Toa Rangatira whenua



Fig 14. *I, visit (return to) Pariwhero. Complimentary video* Video stills by the author, 2021
site: Pariwhero, Ngāti Toa Rangatira whenua

In this video performance, I draw a long line of white salt on the whenua, illustrating an arrival from the sea, drawn up to my presence at the end of the line. This work was acknowledging the ‘loss’ of knowing my own genealogy, the disconnect from my story of arrival and straight into the dominant white line painting ‘I’ on the whenua. Standing at the end of the white line, I felt the ignorance, and isolating feeling of ‘forgotten history’ being washed away by the sea. When I looked at the whenua I felt overwhelmed by its presence but I knew it well. I knew its name, its people, and my own name. I understood myself in relation to the land.

I later developed *I, visit (return to) Pariwhero* for my final examination work as a way to share the sense of presence this whenua has, and to acknowledge how the marks left in the landscape by Pākehā are historic mappings of our impact and presence on this whenua.

Many Pākehā have been apathetic toward educating themselves as to what a Pākehā identity is, and furthermore the political agency and life this identity has. Identifying as Pākehā is engaging with te reo Māori and Māori. When I personally realised this, the sense of place and identity within me felt relieved. I felt I understood my connection and proximity to Māori as more normal, and could see how the distance made by Pākehā between our cultures is really sustained by those Pākehā who uphold colonial entitlement, white supremacy and oppress Māori with their own ignorance of doing so. Recognising and learning the history of being Pākehā, NOT as the founding peoples of 'New Zealand', that is a colonial lie! But as Pākehā, the Te Tiriti partners of Tangata Whenua. Avril Bell writes on Te Tiriti o Te Waitangi, stating that "This partnership has been broken repeatedly during the process of colonization, but the rhetoric goes, if Pākehā recognise and do their best to repair these wrongs, the treaty guarantees their right to belong-Pākehā are Tangata Tiriti, 'the people of the treaty'. (Bell.257)

Becoming familiar with the whiteness of my Pākehā identity





Fig 15,16,17. *Melting Monoliths*, performance documentation by the author. 2020
<https://vimeo.com/544365156/219070716c> site: Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Te Ātiawa, Taranaki whānui Ki te
Upoko o te Ika whenua.

Melting monoliths, which I performed in 2020, I can see now as a hasty attempt to learn about how I felt about my Pākehā body in relation to ‘whiteness’ through embodiment and performance. In the hard, cold, and solid matter of frozen dairy milk, I aimed to use a material object which represented a structure separating and differentiating myself from the whenua. The milk blocks themselves have an identity tied to the industrial development of New Zealand and the toxic abuse of Papatūānuku perpetrated by the dairy industry. A substance from a body, naturally warm and fluid is depicted here as a motionless brick.

In the making of this work, I was mindful of wanting to be more connected to the whenua and te ao Māori (not whiteness) I physically laboured through the ice using the heat of my body, attempting to break it down and be connected physically to the ground. When my body reached the whenua, my skin was numb and the ground was pummeled and wet. Though I had made it through the ice, our skins were cold, and like the warmth of my blood, I could feel the heat in the dirt of Papatūānuku, beneath the mess I had made on the surface.

There was still so clearly a separation between us

I had been so focused on reaching the whenua that I didn't give as much thought to the whiteness. In the duration of this work, my body was intimately connected to the whiteness sharing skin, leaving marks, working against each other together, resisting while combining. This performance was representing whiteness as a construct outside of my body, but lacked representation of the invisibility and embodied disposition of my whiteness. Daniel C Blight, a theorist of whiteness writes that “In order to move into a white self-critical space beyond antiracism, whiteness must do more than make liberal gestures in the form of pro-diversity or pro-equality work. We must transform our

comfortable denial and our unwitting ignorance into something that is, in essence, new.” (Blight.19) I considered the Māori audience, who I thought may feel anywhere between uncomfortable and offended by imagery that directly represents whiteness built up on top of their land, shown by a white person. I also thought that some people may be offended at the subjectification of their whenua and my body. I cringed at the thought of people reading into the pain of melting ice on my skin as seeking a sort of sympathy, toward my dismantling of whiteness. This troubled me because I do not want my art practice and relationship to colonisation to be synthesised with the struggle of Māori working to decolonise.

This brought me to the concerns I had for the white people viewing this, there was no way I could make sure that they weren't adopting colonisation as something that has affected Māori and Pākehā similarly. I worried that somehow in the character of Pākehā they would appropriate the effects of colonisation as an excuse for their lack of cultural awareness. I was imagining white people leaving this viewing and saying things like

‘it wasn't me being racist, it was my whiteness, which is separate from me and MY inherited trauma of colonisation’

I understand now that my nervousness was due to my ignorance and a crude amount of knowledge of whiteness. I had always been worried about how much awareness of indigenous knowledge I lacked, and *Melting Monoliths* made me feel like a complete dick when I realised I consciously knew more and put in the mahi to learn more about te ao Māori than I did about my own white identity. For a while I kept showing up to Māori spaces with nothing of myself, being asked ‘where are you from?’ and responding ‘Aw nah, I'm Pākehā...’ It was easier, a quick fix, to neglect my difference and

responsibility of Pākehā-ness and still feel connected to this place through Māori. I began to see how I was distancing myself from being accountable to my white identity and isolating myself through the privileged choice to disown my difference from Māori and relationship to New Zealand and European identity.

Connected and detached

“When a Pākehā decides to explore and accept the impact of colonisation upon Māori, there is an unsettling upheaval of their self-perception as a logical result.”

(Amundsen.141) From here I knew that researching whiteness needed to be a focus of my work, that learning where I am from and how I fit into these spaces as Pākehā, was critical to understanding and being accountable to *how* I belong.

This made me uncomfortable, as I thought it would distance me from Māori. In reality, my learning about whiteness and Pākehātanga has only strengthened my relationships with my whānau, and myself.

For myself, the voices of Māori theorists like Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and Ngāhuia Murphy mentioned above, and many others over the years have formalised and validated my need to contribute to decolonisation. They have put words to the feelings of anger, disappointment, and resistance toward white people, I had observed, and participated in, with the communities I live in. Through research and the endless tautāwhi of my whānau, we have learnt together about the effects, history, and the structural oppressions of colonisation that hadn't been given a name where I grew up. Whānau and Māori theorists have helped me locate myself in history, on this whenua and my Pākehā identity much more than Western teachings of history.

The Pākehā education system has failed Pākehā and Māori in the way it has neglected the reality of Pākehā location and association to Aotearoa New Zealand's history. Furthermore, has built institutions that uphold Western systems of knowledge as superior standards to meet. In my experience, learning about mātauranga Māori, provided much more informative, accurate, and localised ground from which I have begun to investigate how I fit into this reality, the truth of our past.

I've come to see monoliths and institutional frameworks committed to solidifying white history of New Zealand as glorified diversions from the stories of the land beneath. As Lippard articulates

A monument is a structure built on top of memory relating it only super structurally, or even beyond memory - creating a compulsory recall. Usually a sorry substitute for any actual remains, it can serve several contradictory purposes - resurrecting history, laying it to rest, and attracting tourists. (Lippard.107)

I think that those Pākehā who are validated by the permanence and effort to maintain structures like the statue of racist Governor Grey in Tāmaki Makaurau for example, which reflects white, usually male patriarchal establishment on Aotearoa, to some degree honour its existence as it connects their own identity and beliefs to a site. These statues distract us from the non-colonial non-white history, which is held in the whakapapa of the land beneath, Papatūānuku.

The process of sharing my relationship to Western education systems, through academic discourse and a white performance body has required patience, trust, deep breaths, close

attention to detail, and shapeshifting. In the way that this body of work has had to resist being contorted into the institutional mold or made easier for white people to witness.

The Western institutional mold reduces many experiences especially those of wāhine Māori as expressed by my best e hoa, artist Ana McAllister in her essay ‘The Angry Brown Woman: My Issue with Art Schools (McAllister), to uniform reflections of white elitism. I made *Melting Monoliths* while Ana was moving through this institutional oppression, because I wanted to talk about critiquing, escaping and challenging white structures. I saw how bringing visibility to whiteness was going to be challenging for the viewer and for myself. I also saw how much excess mahi Ana had been doing for years trying to bring visibility to her wahine Māori experience, resisting this very whiteness. Not fitting this mold made Ana and me feel inadequate through the silencing and reframing of our different experiences. It is no secret to me now that the majority of my female experience, relationship to te ao Māori, or critiques of Pākehātanga and whiteness have required an excess of justification and unpaid teaching. For myself, and for the wider healing and learning for Pākehā, I was unable to ignore my need to define and share what I was learning about identifying as Pākehā. Based on the research of mostly social sciences papers from Aotearoa and a seminal text for me, Alison Jones’s *This Pākehā Life: An Unsettled Memoir*. This process of sharing looked like, self-reflective writing, and the making of *The white of Pākehā* discussed above. As well as many kōrero at my whare (just to check in and make sure these academic understandings of Pākehātanga were accurate in relation to our Māori and Pākehā lived experiences).

Self-reflective writing

My whiteness and Pākehā identity were spaces in my body that I had not dug deep enough into, to feel the discomfort and need to explore more. This is partially due to my privilege and the assumption of neutrality and fixity of the white identity. Once I located this discomfort, some sort of hedonistic masochism “Intimate terrorism or Psychic unrest,” (qtd. Anzaludúa.35) pushed me, hard, into locating this unease somewhere in my blank white space.

Once I began picking at the surface of this whiteness, I grew a frustration and anxiety around how many generations of skin had grown over this internal ache, an entrenched family secret. I pulled back the skin eagerly assuming what is beneath is the answer to ‘where I am from’ ‘what is my identity’ and there, deep as my bone, is a porcelain figurine of a Captain Cook and a \$2 shop hei tiki.

Colonisation.

I was so underwhelmed by this because 'I know, I know, I am a descendant of the white colonisation of Aotearoa and I know it all started for me with Cook', but here I am with no association other than my skin and its privilege to where my ancestors are from, standing here on Māori land.

What is in between this.

I sat back in the pile of skin and realised these layers. I held a piece up to the light, then stretched it out and looked closely. Written on this skin was years of ancestral denial, and silence; there were adoptions of foreign attitudes and systems, and ignorant characteristics that had all grown into a superficial manufacturing of 'kiwi identity', an identity that thrifts and appropriates from other and Māori cultures in an attempt to validate an identity here. I disassociate and reassociate with this kiwiana scrapbook of myself, porcelain cook smirking at me and plastic hei tiki glaring at me.

A) Abundance, Acclimation, **Adaptation**, **Adjust**, Aeration, Agriculture, All-organic, Amount, Annual, Anther, Ants, Aphid, Appearance, Arbor, Aroma, Arrangement, Atmosphere, **Attachment**, Attractive

B) Backyard, **Balance**, Bamboo, Barrier, Beautiful, Beauty, Bee balm, Bees, Beetles, **Beneficial**, Biennial, Biodegradable, Biological, Birds, Bloom, Blooming, Blossom, Bog, Bone meal, Boost, Botanical, Botanist, Bountiful, Bouquet, Bower, Breeder, Bulbs, Bumper crop, Bush, Butterflies

C) Cart, **Change**, **Choices**, Chore, Circulation, Classification, Clay, Clematis, **Climate**, Clippings, Cluster, Collection, Colorful, **Community**, Compost, Conditions, Confine, **Conservation**, Consistency, Container, Convenient, Crop, **Cultivate**, **Culture**, Cuttings, Cycles

D) Dainty, **Damage**, Deadhead, Deciduous, Decomposition, Decoration, Decorative, Dedication, Dehydrated manure, Delicate, Depth, Destruction, **Develop**, Dibble, **Difference**, **Digging**, Dirt, Disinfect, Disperse, Distinctive, **Diversity**, **Division**, **Domain**, Dormancy, Dormant, Drainage, Dried flowers

E) Early, **Earth**, **Ecology**, Edge, Edible, Effective, Elements, Embed, Enclosure, Encroach, Energy, Ensure, **Environment**, **Eradicate**, Erosion, Espalier, Evaporation, Evolve, **Exotic**, Expanse, Experiment, Exposure, Extraordinary

F) Fan, Farming, Feathered friends, Feeder, Feeding, Fencing, Fertilization, Fertilizer, Filtering, Fish emulsion, Floral, Floral designer, Florist, Flourish, Flowering, Flowers, Foliage, **Food**, **Foreign**, Fragile, Fragrant, Frond, Frost, Fumigation, Fungus

G) Garden, Gardener, Gazebo, Generate, Genus, Germination, Gloves, Gopher, Graft, Grassy, Green thumb, Greenhouse, **Ground**, Grove, **Grow**, **Growth**

H) **Habitat**, Hardy, Harvest, Healthy, Hedge, Heirloom, Heliotrope, Honey bee, **Homegrown**, Hornet, Horticulture, Hose, Host, Houseplant, Hue, Humidity, Humus, **Hybrid**, Hydroponics

I) **Implement**, Impressive, **Improvement**, Indoors, Inorganic, Insects, **Interaction**, **Interconnection**, Inundate, Involve, Irrigation

J) Jardiniere, Jeopardy, Judge, Judgment, Juicy, Juxtapose

K) Keepsake, Kelp, Key, Kingdom, Kit, Kneeling

L) Ladybugs, **Land**, **Landscape**, Late, Lawn, Leaf, Legume, Lichen, Loam, **Location**, Lopper

M) Magnet, Mass, Materials, Maturation, Maturity, Meadow, **Migration**, Miniature, Miracle-gro, Mites, Mix, Mixture, Moisture, Moss, Mulch

N) **Native**, **Nature**, Needles, Niche, Nitrate, Nitrogen, Noticeable, Nursery, **Nurture**, Nutrient

O) Oasis, Open, Options, Orchard, Orderly, Organic, **Original**, Ornamental, Outdoors, Over-breed, Over-harvest, Overgrown

P) Palette, Parasite, Park, Parterre, Patch, Pattern, Peat moss, Perception, Perennial, Perfume, Perlite, **Pervasive**, Pesticide, **Pests**, Petals, Phloem, Phosphate, Photosynthesis, Pitch fork, **Place**, **Planted**, Plantings, Plentiful, Pollen, Pollination, Popularity, **Population**, Pots, **Potting**, Potting mix, Prairie, Precipitation, **Predator**, **Preserve**, Pretty, Prevention, Produce, Profusion, **Proliferate**, Prolong, **Prominence**, **Propagate**, **Protect**, Prune

Q) Quality, Quantity, Quarantine

R) Rain, Rainfall, Raise, Raised beds, Rake, Ramble, Range, Rare, Rectify, **Relationship**, Remote, **Replenish**, Reservoir, **Resistance**, **Resource**, Rhizome, Rhythm, Rock garden, Rock gardening, Roof garden, **Roots**, Rot, Roto-tiller

S) Sample, Sand, Saturation, Seasonal, Seaweed, Sediment, Seed, Seeding, Seedlings, **Seeds**, Selection, Self-watering, Sensor, **Settle**, Shade, Shears, Shovel, Simplicity, Slow-release, Snip, Sod, Soil, Space, Spade, Specie, Species, Sprig, Sprinkler, Sprout, Stake, Stimulate, Stoma, Subsoil, Succulent, Suitable, Sunlight, Sunshine, Supply, Surface, **Surroundings**, **Survival**, **Sustainable**, Symbiosis

T) Taproot, Temperatures, **Threat**, **Thrive**, Till, **Tolerant**, Tools, Topiary, **Toxic**, Tractor, Transmit, **Transplant**, Trees, Trellis, Trimming, Trowel, Trunk, Tuber

U) Unexpected, Unique, Universal, Unruly, **Unsettled**, Unusual, Upright, **Uproot**, Upside down

V) Value, **Variation**, **Variety**, Various, Vascular, Vegetation, Verdant, Vermiculture, Versatile, Viable, Vibrant, Vigilance, Vine, Vineyard

W) Warmth, Wasps, Water, Watering can, Weather, Weeds, Wellies, Wetlands, Widespread, Wilt, Wither, Woodlands, Worms

X) Xeriscape, Xylem, Xyst

Y) Yard, Yellow jackets

Z) Zone, Zucchini, Zygophyte

Fig 18,19. *Test work, Reflective writing and Glossary of New Zealand gardening book, vocabulary of Pākehā identity.* Personal images by the author. 2021

Separation location reconnection



Fig 20. *untitled*. Personal photography by author 2021.



Fig. 21,22. *Making an impression (Performance documentation)*. Personal photography by author 2020.
Site: Pito-one, Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Te Ātiawa, Taranaki whānui Ki te Upoko o te Ika whenua

This Pākehā notion of not belonging to a place, or not from the indigenous land, I assert could partly be recognised in terms of Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of ‘nomadic thought’. A subjective body that moves without roots planted in a native land, a body disconnected to the history of where they are or where they're from. I have researched nomadic thought through historian Anne Shults who quotes Deleuze and Guattari: “It is true that the nomads have no history,” Deleuze and Guattari thus asserted, “they only have a geography” (Schult.2019) and Julie Wuthnow who examines nomadic theory closely in relation to politics of location and postcolonial theory.

My untitled work above, is a concrete cast of a hole that I dug at Pito-one beach, the site of the first New Zealand company settlement. This industrialised empty shell on top of the sand, became a heavy burden embodying a separation between my body and the land. It was made from the shape of the whenua and my body, ‘born here’, but once it was detached it transformed into a representation of a manufactured nomadic mobile shelter. As I moved into different locations, the object became estranged and out of place, it no longer held a connection to history, to me or the site.

I still don't know where to put this thing

I see this lack of history and abundance of geography as an effect of the settler imperialism and conditioning that contributes to Pākehā entitlement of occupying a place here. This entitlement is fertilised by the ignorance Pākehā often have toward whiteness—whiteness being the “neutral” and naturalised identity in Aotearoa as a result of colonisation. Clare Frances Gray writes on the privileges that are dominantly invisible to Pākehā in Aotearoa, “This privilege consists of living in a country where to be white is to be ‘normal’. In the process of colonisation, the language, culture, legal and

education systems, decision making processes and delivery of medical services were all established to cater to this norm.” (Gray.20)

Being white comes with the privilege of being ignorant to your own identity as it is not subjected to the criticism and othering which minorities experience. As Bell Hooks (1989) argues, racism is less about the subjugation of people of colour and more about white supremacy. Hooks' words helped me clearly define that I needed to look at whiteness first and foremost. Rather than being the type of white person who looks literally everywhere else other than at themselves. In my practice I explore subjecting my own white identity to analysis and critique. I do this to broaden my own and others' understanding of what is predominantly invisible to the holder of a politicised and systemically privileged Pākehā identity.

I imposed Deleuze and Guattari's nomadic mode of thinking onto Pākehā identity and how this relates closely to poststructuralist and postmodernist feminist concepts of escaping binaries; those binaries for myself as Pākehā being - from our foreign homelands or not, being indigenous or not, a European or Pākehā, a Kiwi or Tangata Tiriti. This theory helped me consider and validate to an extent, the multiplicities of ways that Pākehā identify in Aotearoa. We can and often do identify with all these terms, and hold the privilege of switching and choosing how and when these terms are appropriate or benefit us.

Choosing a shade of white

Associating Pākehā identity with nomadic identities also runs the risk of perpetuating the continued erasure of indigenous land's whakapapa and politics; and the Pākehā history in Aotearoa. As the privileged dominant settler nationality, as white people, and

as the beneficiaries of colonisation, we are privileged in defining our nomadic identity for ourselves and ignoring the realities of others.

While the indigene's body comes into being and is shaped by native bioregions. the settler as exotica spreads like a weed but becomes disembodied not only because he is not in his native bioregion, but also because the Europeanisation of the Neo-Europes makes the European the universal subject.... The Caucasian is disembodied, mobile absent of the marks that physically immobilise the native (qtd. Wuthnow.187)

In my practice, I work to always acknowledge the indigenous land, history and mythology before imposing my own conceptualization of Pākehā identity within it. As Wuthnow writes, “accountability to location requires vigilance rather than presumption”. (Wuthnow.189) The history and nature of the whenua only creates stronger narratives and contrasts further developing my articulations of Pākehā identity; as Pākehā and Tangata Tiriti I see this as a small responsibility in supporting Tangata Whenua and creating a fuller, more inclusive narrative in my work. I have done this in small ways in my mahi, for example, using Te Reo names of places, and using the kupu of the whenua. The main way is diving into the deep pool of my Pākehā identity, and bringing the things I find to the surface, to then share them and my process, recognising the space.

A self-reflective body of water

This has taken some responsibility away from Māori to act as contrasting identities reflecting my position here. I now know how to hold my own and speak from my space, this supports Tangata Whenua by acknowledging our separation, and respecting that the

relationship of our difference needs to be maintained. Acknowledging our separation contributes to resisting the appropriation of te ao Māori into some generalised notion of 'New Zealand culture'. This also encourages the 'nomadic' Pākehā to locate themselves in their own bodies, whakapapa, difference, and accountability to a place here in Aotearoa New Zealand.





Fig 23,24. *How did I get here*. Personal photographs by author. 2021 Site: Oruaiti Pōneke. Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Taranaki Whānui ki te Upoko o te ika whenua.

How did I get here

How did I get here is potentially the most candid articulation of the general emotional upheaval involved in learning, teaching, art-making, and living in the context of investigating my Pākehā identity. This image was taken at Oruaiti reserve, Seatoun heights. In the background of this image is Te Moana-o-Raukawa (Cook Strait), the seemingly in-between body of water. From where I was standing, and looking back up toward more land, I could see the Te Whetu Kairangi Pā site. “The pā was named Te Whetu Kairangi because its inhabitants saw no other tribes, and dwelt with a view only of the stars at night” (Rangitatau). The parallel between ‘seeing no other inhabitants’ related well in a paradoxical way to the Pākehā position the work deals with.

While standing there with my sign, in the wind, hair all over my face; I first felt as if I were doing something disrespectful, obstructing the pā’s view of the sky and the sea. I looked at the pou planted deep in the whenua and the eyes of the whakairo on the pā looking beyond me. I struggled to ground my feet while being blown about by the strong winds, as I asked myself, a deeply personal question of identity - ‘*how did I get here?*’ - I imagined the whakairo to be laughing at me, at my naivety and desperateness for something they have and have known from the beginning.

How did I get here is a performance work, developed through many messy diaries and disseminated as a photographic series. I use photography and video as a means to allow intimacy and candidness between myself and the environment; furthermore, to depict isolation and alienation in this space ironically and statistically dominantly populated by Pākehā in the context of New Zealand.

What is **this** body doing here? A cultural body, woman's body, the white body, Pākehā body, the socially articulated body; I wanted these photographic representations of myself to be subjected to the scrutiny of the viewer, as a way to frame a kōrero about displacement and dislocation. Researcher of photography and cultural production Paul Frosh states that “the photograph makes us inescapably other, complicit in our own estrangement from ourselves.” (Frosh.55) To ‘other’ my white body or even make the white body a subject has been a difficult pursuit, driving the content of my polymorphic practice. It is a white privilege to make the creative choice to subject my own image, though I see that the subjection of my female body is still threatened by a patriarchal context as I discuss later in this text.

In Aotearoa there are many accounts of Māori being subjected and othered via the Western lens, from Goldie’s early painted depictions to Ans Westra’s more contemporary photographic work, Māori have been reduced to the subject without agency to portray their realities.

Native people have had historically to play the role of the subject/object, the observed, rather than the observer. Rarely have we been in a position of self-representation. Native peoples have always been the informant, seldom the interrogator or initiator (McMaster.66)

For Pākehā, our portrayed reality constructed by dominant Western worldviews is considered the ‘normal’ way of being.” Race and ethnicity are (...) associated with ethnic minorities and consequently whiteness remains both invisible and synonymous with the human norm.” (qtd. Gray, Jaber, Anglem.96) To gain perspective of my white identity and the supremacy maintaining its ‘normalcy’, I reflect in my body to then

critically explore the intersectionality and experience of my identity. This subversion and opening up of white identity has been called ‘un-suturing’ by Dr George Yancy, who writes:

Un-suturing is a deeply embodied phenomenon that enables whites to come to terms with the realization that their embodied existence and embodied identities are always already inextricably linked to a larger white racist social integument or skin which envelopes who and what they are. (Yancy.17)

This process has been unsettling and emotional, my most intensive endurance performance yet. It has become very clear that my artist body, literary voice, political voice, performance body, and the woman sitting here writing this are informing each other separately whilst existing here together. As Amelia Jones writes, “The body is at once the most solid, the most elusive, illusory, concrete, metaphorical, ever-present and ever distant thing-- a site, an instrument, an environment, a singularity and a multiplicity.” (qtd. Jones.12)

How did I get here frames a central theme to my performance work, that of being a woman's body situated alone in the environment. Karen Warren explains how “Ecological feminism is the position that there are important connections between how one treats women, people of colour, and the underclass, on one hand, and how one treats the nonhuman natural environment on the other.” (Warren.11)

This understanding connects me to the landscape and makes space for me to acknowledge the interconnectedness of the whenua and its people. Briar Wood, author of the article “Mana Wāhine and Ecocriticism in Some Post-80s Writing by Māori Women”, identifies how indigenous representations of the earth are intrinsically tied to, and embodied in Mana Wāhine theory and mātauranga Māori. (109)



Fig. 25. *How did I get here (farmed land, site 2)* photograph by author 2021. Site: Wairarapa, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Taranaki Whānui ki te Upoko o te Ika whenua.

There is a closeness between the politics of the earth and women’s presumed passivity and accessibility as the foundational body for colonial male dominance to develop ‘civilization’. Julie Berthoud explains in her doctoral research how frameworks of

indigenous thought and feminism intertwine ethics of compassion and care for the environment. There is a relation between patriarchal effects, tied to industrialisation and eco-devastation and to the treatment of women, indigenous people, and marginalised women's experiences of oppression. (3) The realities of being marginalised by male dominance relates me to representations of Papatūānuku through the politics and cultural context of a 'woman's' body. I have seen the relationship between women and the environment represented and performed by many female artists including Sigalit Landau, Laura Aguilar, Marina Abramovic, Barbra Leisgen, and Ana Mendieta. When I work in the landscape, the images of these women's works are in the back of my mind. I relate to a sense of their isolation in the landscape, whilst understanding the powerful connection between the symmetry of their bodies and the land. I deeply value this intuitive and aesthetic relationship as it shows that other women are looking closely, listening and working with the environment. This re-affirms my place in a history of women and the environment.

The words *How did I get here* separates me from the land by identifying an unfamiliarity that contextualises my Pākehā identity and location. My identity is conceptualised through the contrast and resemblance between myself and the environment, te ao Māori, and the nuances of Pākehā identity. As Ann O'Day Phelan describes

Identity is perceptible only through a relation to an other-- which is to say it is a form of both resisting and claiming the other, declaring the boundary where the self diverges from and merges with the other. In that declaration of identity and identification, there is always loss, the loss of not-being the other and yet remaining dependent on that other for self-seeing and self-being. (qtd.

Jones.164)

In my practice and life, I find the relationship between self and others to be in motion, pushing together and meeting or withdrawing back to our distances. I am in the process of learning more from another to then realise this learning is of their body, not mine, but still gives me a bearing on where I am located.

The waters are connected to the lands, a body of its own, and a body shared

Pākehā and the landscape

Caroline McQuarrie's 2015 photographic series *Homewardbounder* has inspired my thinking around filling in an absence. An absence made by Pākehā, and one left by Pākehā. McQuarrie reassociates these mining adits on the West Coast with their Pākehā history, by identifying parts of the history that are missing. For example, the presence of women in the goldmines, and the ones who waited at home while their men reconstructed the whenua. When I look at these images, I want to be the Pākehā woman inserting herself back into the adit and the neglected history. Imagining my body filling the hollow, my presence asserting a sort of responsibility for the story of Western occupation in the landscape.



Fig 26. *Homewardbounder* #02. Caroline McQuarrie 2014. Photograph.
<http://www.carolinemcquarrie.com/index.php/projects/homewardbounder/>



Fig 27. *Homewardbounder* #04. Caroline McQuarrie. 2014. Photograph.
<http://www.carolinemcquarrie.com/index.php/?/projects/homewardbounder/>

I understand McQuarrie's work to be contributing to multiple narratives of restoring truths of Pākehā history in the landscape of Aotearoa. She also acknowledges the colonial impact of Western masculine beliefs around land ownership, pioneer ideology, and domination of the whenua. I admire McQuarrie's work and relate to it in the way it conjures a real sense of absence and a void. The dark tunnel leading into forgotten or reconstructed European history; and the national and local histories that shape Aotearoa New Zealand and the whenua till this day. In McQuarrie's work I see only a small acknowledgement of Māori and their diverse attitudes towards this land, which has allowed me to recognise a responsibility I feel in my work, that is to make space for the visibility of Māori, and reassertion that this is Māori land. As a Pākehā artist, my

practice has had to be conceptualised and carefully researched through embodied learning and listening, as a method of realising the multiple meanings of sites beyond my artistic context and the Western understanding of landscape. Bringing acknowledgement of Māori voices, beliefs, and experiences contributes to decolonial methodology by representing an intersectional and more inclusive narrative. I associate the imagery of the cave like adits, shown in McQuarrie's *Homewardbounder* to my *A body in between the absence*. Photographic series (55) and my early *cave mapping* video work (56), to the void and furthermore back to Hine-Nui-te-Pō, and a womb-like shelter or home. There is also a sense of mortality here associated with the degradation of Papatūānuku.



Fig 28, 29. *A body in between the absence*. Photographic series by author. 2020
Site: Rangipo, Ngāti Tūwharetoa whenua



Fig 30,31. *Cave*. Video stills by author 2019 <https://www.circuit.org.nz/film/cave> Site: Pariwhero. Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Taranaki Whānui ki te Upoko o te ika whenua.

In this reading, I understand the representation of this image to be incorporating themes of ecofeminism through McQuarrie’s acknowledgement of the patriarchal treatment of the environment. The caves represent the possibility of a temporary home, I can see my inner-child grabbing a warm jersey and dragging little Charlie with me to spend hours creating a home in these spaces. These sites of Pākehā presence and absence on the whenua I find alluring as they restore memory, history and an embodied sense of a Pākehā place on the landscape. With all the trauma and sadness, dislocation and relocation that these spaces hold.



Fig 32. *Stream 2*. Bikka Ora Video still. personal collection of artist. Butterfly Creek, 2019.

Moving through the landscape is Bikka Ora, a Pākehā artist working in a multiplicitous space of Aotearoa, New Zealand. Bikka Ora’s work critically looks at ‘nature’ and how

we understand this term, with critical responses to European colonial and imperialist understandings of the landscape.

Ora's work addresses the mauri, or the hau of the landscape while seeing that her Pākehā presence and history in these sites generates a layering of identities, stories, and lived experiences. Through a posthuman context whilst acknowledging an awareness of mātauranga views of the land, she acknowledges the life force of sites, creating her interaction with the earth. Similarly to my own work, Bikka Ora's work has a relationship to understanding mauri and interconnectedness of all things, whilst inhabiting a body that in itself is moved through multiple meanings, life experiences, identities, and cultural contexts, beyond and outside of the body. Ora's work envisions a space where humans, animals, culture and environment are all interconnected, she filters this through a posthuman lens which allows viewers to be free of the rational and literal parameters of the body and move beyond into a more imaginative space of multiplicity.

Performative body in the landscape

The landscape is ever-changing, as rivers slide against rocks, wearing down cliff faces, re-directed waters creating absent spaces. Landscapes eroding, rocks too heavy to be held by soft soil give space for caves, space appears opening another absence. In my performance practice, I am a ‘tenderfoot’, to the foundation, the history, to what has lived long before and will live on long after me.



Fig 33, 34. *A Place for my body to visit.* photograph by author. 2020
Site: Pakuratahi awa, Kaitoke, Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa whenua.



Pakuratahi awa , Kaitoke , a visitor , Pakuratahi awa , Kaitoke , Pakuratahi awa, Kaitoke

2020 Photograph by Nayte Davis, Ngā Puhi me Ngāti Whatua

Im am not the one , not the only one , the first ‘one’ or of the one . I lye next to , within the one .

In relation to and seperate . I am never the only woman , not my own on tō the one .

The multiplicities of a pākehā identity.

I am given the name pākehā by Māori, I am seen and identified , to create in balance I see and identify the whenua. calling it by it’s given name, in a way to support Māori being seen and identified in their Aotearoa. My understanding of myself and identiy as pākehā doesn’t exsist without Māori, My creative work and engagement with the landscape doesn’t exist as a decolonial practice without

Māori land. The whenua.

Call it by its given name.

Te reo

One 1. (noun) beach, sand, mud, earth, soil.

Hineahuone. - The first woman, was formed from clay at Kurawaka by Tāne, a son of Papatūānuku. Her name means earth-formed woman. This is just one of many tribal traditions that tell of the birth of humans from the earth.

‘The one and only’ - exclusivity and singularity.

‘one’ - being sole and also sepreate.

one in relation to others is alone.

tō 3. (determiner) has, have, own, owns (a possessive).

‘only’ - exculisve and isolated.

entirely being only. totally segregated.

defined - used before the name of a famous person to say that there is no one else like that person.

Te aka - © Copyright 2003-2020 - John C Moorfield, Te Aka Online Māori Dictionary
Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. “the one and only,”
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/the%20one%20and%20only>.

Fig 35. Test work: One Pākehā woman at Kaitoke. Image by the author. 2020

When I fit my body into a space, the rock silences the environment outside, I can hear my heartbeat in the silence it allows me. I feel a sense of a shared body. I often sit next to the sea and I try to match my breathing to the withdrawal of the waves back to the sea ‘inhale’ and the push of the waves reliving on to the land ‘exhale’ Tāwhirimātea gently reminds me of the vulnerability of my body, again that cold breeze challenges me, pushing me home for another layer of clothes, but I'm a grown woman now so I stay tough within him, my hairs stand up and grow a layer of tender bumps which feel the cold more sensitively. I see my skin matching the frozen thorns of grass.

I am a creature, mimicking the environment

I can feel a patch of thicker white skin grow on my butt when I stand up from sitting on the frigid ground, the blood fills my white flesh and I turn patched pink. The grass turns to mud. When I grab a branch and pull my body up, I see my muscles, usually covered, push out of my forearm creating ranges of skin.

The sensations, even the cuts, cold, and strain my body goes through when performing in these spaces are welcomed because they physically connect me to the land. Embodied performativity in this way has been an intense catalyst of my research and understanding of the liveliness of the whenua and the representations of our genealogies. I have found empowerment in relating to the land through embracing my body and listening to my inner-child. She sets me free to become my performative creature who needs to climb into the spaces and become part of the intertwined nature of whakapapa and history, bodies and landscape. I may find these places in the rich forest floors of Tāne Mahuta or in the rips and gaps where imperial machines have distorted and stripped Papatūānuku.



Fig 36. *A body in between the absence*. Photographic series by author. 2020
Site: Rangipo, Ngāti Tūwharetoa whenua

It is important for me to acknowledge the living agency of the land, the bodily and human connection in the context of Aotearoa. Acknowledging this in terms of indigenous ontology and epistemology is critical to my performative engagement with the land, as the mana and mauri of sites guides my placement in the land and informs the ways that I create narratives of relationality. As Miranda Smitheram and Frances Joseph write:

The presence of mauri infers a whakapapa to this place. It is alive; therefore, it has histories, existing relationships, and kinship with places and peoples. Whakapapa

extends from and surrounds a thing as interconnecting layers and can be understood as both a genealogy and a geological layering of people, places, and things. (Smitheram and Joseph.3)

Te Kawehau Hoskins and Alison Jones discuss the ‘thing power’ objects possess, through the way they have an openness of relationality. This way of understanding things becomes difficult to participate in through a Western, generally dualistic framework. Therefore, writing on such concepts in an institutional space, demands (and deserves) theoretical framings to assist arguing for an openness of interpretations, informed by an active life force. I interpret the mauri of sites I practice in, in close relationality to my own being. The site has agency in the way another person's experience will be independent to them and their relationality. This metaphorical-fluidity and multilayeredness of understanding things through mātauranga theory is a way in which I formally contextualise my engagement in my performance practice, and furthermore an acknowledgement of the Māori land. (Hoskins and Jones)

It is my responsibility to further acknowledge that I am not performing Māori culture, I am seeing it, making sure it is acknowledged in my understanding of location, separate from my Pākehā cultural embodiment. I have an awareness of how often Pākehā women culturally commodify Māori cultural practices, I specify women with particular reference to Feminist academic Andrea Smith's writing on how white feminists often appropriate indigenous knowledge in their attempts to heal from patriarchal structures and violence. This taking from indigenous women continues a pattern of colonisation of their bodies, histories, land, and the environment, further hindering their pursuit of tino rangatiratanga. (101) I seek to recognize the indigenous knowledge that is at home here, that needs recognition to support decolonial thought when working in this land.

During quiet observation when I am with this environment, the context of my works generally being sites absent of housing and signs of so-called civilisation near by the river or in the bush, I can't help imagining the land before me, before colonisation, before my ancestors. How tall Tāne Mahuta would have been, what the water would have tasted like from this awa. I share these thoughts with the whenua, as I try to keep thoughts of the imperial harm and colonialism that has ploughed the path to my being here a little more subdued. I choose to acknowledge the land as Papatūānuku, she is Māori. I feel the tension in our politicised difference, as Alison Jones describes “histories rubbing uncomfortably against each other.” (Jones.28)

In my performance practice, this discomfort is the fundamental ground from which I can analyse my Pākehā separation and relation to the embodied politics of the whenua.

In ngā tikanga Māori, we also find the idea that political agency is not the sole realm of human individuals. Rather than a hegemonising Chain of Being which hierarchises humanity as an epistemological category above worms, lice, and land, tikanga Māori's organisational principal is whakapapa, which affirms the shared heritage through Papatūānuku and therefore the fundamental sameness of all of these things. (Rāketē 1,2)

In this same vein, when working in the landscape I try to honour tikanga and show manaakitanga in the location. Though I am not Māori, I see my responsibility to keep mātauranga in mind and the earth's autonomy. Papatūānuku and I share common ground, our history as bodies, and the bodies of my ancestors have been here living together within each other.

Someday I will be soil



Fig 37. *Brought to the land by the sea, I wonder how we got here.* Film Photograph by author. 2021. Site: Pōneke. Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Taranaki Whānui ki te Upoko o te ika whenua.

Rākete writes so well when explaining how people live in relationality, connected to Papatūānuku “Sitting on the beach as a young-girl, I picked a squirming insect from my scalp and watched in horror as my own blood leaked out of its crushed body.”

(Rākete.1)

I'm the squirmy insect

For myself, the interconnectedness and symmetry between me and the environment is recognised through acknowledging the presence of mauri and listening to the character of the environment. Sometimes I think the environment listens back, and responds by sending treasures ashore like the foot of this tree I was so lucky to meet.

Conclusion

As we all move in our directions from this writing, I hope I have offered some things for you to pop into your own kete, while considering the ways in which we transform and move through our bodies and landscapes in the diverse knowledge and experiences we all hold.

I want to encourage others to find the confidence to trust and explore themselves and intuitions, listen to the small discomforts and questions we have inside, if you thought you saw something over there in the ngahere, maybe something is making itself visible to you, go in, explore and learn your surroundings.

Make space to listen to voices you may have not heard before

I can see from here, at this end, that the space in between and in motion I have chosen to embody in my practice and research has been the most therapeutic process of becoming more resolved in my Pākehā identity and in my body.

As a Pākehā woman who performs nude in the landscape alone, learning the representations and multiplicities of this body, the land and people has given me confidence I didn't expect. In the process of self-reflection, creating distance between and challenging the binaries of dominant ideologies attached to my identity, I found more of myself and have found spaces with the people who can see the change I have made, and love me for it. I will be moving into my performance practice in a body that I know so much better and a body that knows how to better recognise the nuances of political and cultural identity.

The confidence to share my art practice, identity research, relationship to the environment, and te ao Māori in this subjective and autobiographical way has largely come from the tautāwhi and love from the community my friends and whānau have created. Witnessing my friends resiliently embody their tino rangatiratanga, has taught me the importance and responsibility of learning who I am and how I exist in this world, to then really consider my place here, with them.

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Images included

Fig 1. *A body in between the absence* (Photographic series). Personal photograph by the author. Image by Nayte 2021.

Fig 2,3. *Childhood Images*, personal photograph by the author, accessed 2021.

Fig 4,5. *Childhood Images*, personal photograph by the author, accessed 2021.

Fig 6,7. *Childhood Images*, personal photograph by the author, accessed 2021.

Fig 8,9,10. *The white of Pākehā*, video stills by the author 2021.

<https://vimeo.com/540414754>

Fig 11,12,13. *I, visit Pariwhero*. Video stills by the author 2021.

<https://vimeo.com/540405375>

Fig 14 *I, visit (return to) Pariwhero. Complimentary video*. Video stills by the author 2021

Fig 15,16,17 *Melting Monoliths*, performance documentation by the author. Image

Taken by Charlie Walker 2020 <https://vimeo.com/544365156/219070716c>

Fig 18,19 *Test work, Reflective writing and Glossary of New Zealand gardening book, vocabulary of Pākehā identity*. Personal images by the author 2020.

Fig 20. *untitled*. Personal photography by the author. Image by Nayte 2021.

Fig. 21,22. *Making an impression (Performance documentation)*. Personal photography by author 2020.

Fig 23,24. *How did I get here*. Personal photographs by the author. Image by Nayte 2021.

Fig, 25. *How did I get here (farmed land, site 2)* photograph by author Image by Nayte 2021.

Fig 26. *Homewardbounder #02*. Caroline McQuarrie 2014. Photograph.

<http://www.carolinemcquarrie.com/index.php?/projects/homewardbounder/>

Fig 27. *Homewardbounder #04*. Caroline McQuarrie. 2014. Photograph.

<http://www.carolinemcquarrie.com/index.php?/projects/homewardbounder/>

Fig 28, 29 *A body in between the absence*. Photographic series by author. Image by Nayte 2020.

Fig 30,31 *Cave*. Video stills by author. Image by Charlie Walker 2020.

<https://www.circuit.org.nz/film/cave>

Fig 32 *Stream 2*. Bikka Ora Video still. personal collection of the artist. Butterfly Creek 2019.

Fig 33, 34 *A Place for my body to visit*. photograph by author. Image by Nayte 2020.

Fig 35. *Test work: One Pākehā woman at kaitoke*. Image by author. Image by Nayte 2020.

Fig 36. *A body in between the absence*. Photographic series by author. Image by Nayte 2020.

Fig 37. *Brought to the land by the sea, I wonder how we got here*. Film Photograph by author. Image by Nayte 2021.

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