

A Story of Becoming: Entanglement, Settler Ghosts and Postcolonial Counterstories

“Ūkaipo,” she tells me. “Your place of contentment.”

And there it is – a gift. The gift of a word to story my “belonging” to my place. The gift from my friend, a Māori scholar. The gift of an indigenous Māori word to a Pākehā, the descendent of a colonial New Zealander. I receive this gift as a taonga, a treasure. And then we share our moments, of crossing hills, boundaries between here and there, where we come to our Ūkaipo and look out at a place where, as Wetherell (2012) says, we get that rush of feeling. It’s a feeling we embody. For me it is always when I cross over from Whakātane towards Ohope. At the top of the hill, I see stretched before me the sea and the shore, and in the distance the misty mountains of Te Urewera. I see in my mind’s eye the place of my birth, Ōpōtiki. And as the memories come flooding in I smell the smoke from the earth ovens, and I feel the heat of the hangi as my father and his friend remove the steaming sacks and lift the hot stones. I taste kumara and Māori potato, infused with the scent of meaty mutton. There is song, music, laughter, and stories in the air. There is also loss, the wailing at the tangi (funeral), and the call of the ruru (owl). These things remind me I am always between here and there, and between today and yesterday.

I speculate here that there is no conclusion for an identity that is forged between two worlds, an identity that emerges in relation to its complicated past and uncertain future. Rather, there is a constant negotiation with the process of becoming. The framework of “critical family history,” involves the process of layering the personal story alongside the wider historical and social story, and alongside stories of other peoples who are entangled in our becoming. As a strategy of decolonization, the stories are interrogated using critical theory. Cognizant of Smith’s (1999) influential work on decolonizing methodologies, this

work: illuminates the power dynamics embedded in my stories, indigenous stories and histories are central to the work, and I am grateful for the generous support from Māori Iwi and scholars. However, due to the entangled nature of the story, local indigenous histories could not be avoided.

Critical Autoethnography as Decolonizing Methodology

Critical autoethnography requires the intersection of theory and story, where they “work together in a dance of collaborative engagement,” providing a language that “unsettles the ordinary while spinning a good story” (Holman Jones, 2015, p. 2). How do I as a Pākehā enact a methodology of decolonization? Do I, as suggested by Leonardo (2015), become a “race traitor?” Or as suggested by Tuck and Yang (2012), reject a settler future and instead consider “*opening the possibility of other futures*” (p. 36). Contemporary Pākehā identity emerges between country/ies of origin and country of birth, entangled with Other. As self-ascribed betweeners, Diversi and Moreira (2009) created a decolonizing methodology using critical autoethnography to “evoke collective hope instead of individual blaming” (p. 207). Whilst resisting and challenging ideologies of domination these two authors worked toward a decolonial imaginary. Their definition of decolonizing fits my work as I actively write to emotionally connect the reader to issues of power represented in the stories. I do so, believing, as Stacy Holman Jones argues, “that words matter and writing toward the moment when the point of creating auto ethnographic texts is to change the world” (Holman Jones, 2005, p. 765).

Understanding that the settler and colonized are both mutual constructions of colonialization I am particularly interested in the concept of “colonization of the mind” and how structures of colonization were established, and continue to exist, positioning people groups to the advantage of a dominant elite (Smith, 1999; Kincheloe, 1999). The imaginary construct of whiteness, perpetuated through the process of colonization, has worked to

homogenize a range of diverse White ethnic groups into a single entity for the purposes of racial domination (Leonardo, 2009). Hence, those of us who are described as white must recognize the important historical connotations and the impact of whiteness on cultural identity. Smith describes how “[t]he binary of colonizer/colonized does not take into account . . . the development of different layering which have occurred within each group and across the two groups” (1999, p. 27). Moreover, continual immigration into postcolonial societies further complicates this ‘binary’ where, although all non-indigenous settlers are complicit in the processes of colonization, “not all settlers are created equal” (Snelgrove, Dhamoon & Corntassel, 2014, p. 6).

Importantly for this work is Smith’s (1999) argument that coming to know the past, the telling of alternative histories, alternative knowledges, is part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization. As Pākehā, the convenience of forgetting our own histories of colonialization supports the ongoing claiming of space and place (Snelgrove et al., 2014). As a method of decolonization this project is a work of remembering, paying attention to “stolen” land, and shedding light on the political and social conditions that contribute to the processes of colonization (Snelgrove et al., 2014). Non-indigenous researchers, I argue, should also engage in decolonizing methodologies, understanding that our identities are a “collection of all stories we’ve inherited from those that have come before” (Ballard and Ballard, 2011, p. 73).

Narrative inheritance refers to stories given to children by and about family members, reaching back to stories that have travelled through family genealogies and social history (Goodall, 2005). These stories are an important part of how we make sense of ourselves. Narrative inheritance resonates with MacFadyen’s (2013) work on touchstone stories where she describes how we are all haunted by our pasts, and in particular “our childhood touchstone stories, those stories that live deeply within us and inform our perspectives of the world” (p. 4) . She argues that by analyzing our touchstone stories, which often provide a

colonial meta-narrative, we engage with counter stories as an act of decolonization. As a decolonizing strategy, remembering, interrogating and retelling our stories disrupts the colonizing process of forgetting, where society has reified particular stories that work to perpetuate the standard story through acts of “remembering” and “forgetting” (Connerton, 2009). Critical autoethnography enables the researcher to interrogate narrative inheritance and critically analyze and illuminate how these stories are embedded in a “particular political context and a particular geography” (McNay, p. 1185).

Can Critical Family History Research Enhance a Critical Autoethnography?

Typically, family history research has been undertaken by people interested in their family origins. I query how this research might respond to the claim that white people in postcolonial societies need to know their histories? (Bell, 2009). Sleeter (2015) provides a productive framework to reconceptualize family history research as a form of *critical family history*. This framework is a useful way to critically interrogate family history when working as an autoethnographer, summoning up the past to make sense of our present. As Bochner (2013) argues, “The past is always open to revision and so, too, are our stories of the past and what they mean now” (p. 54).

By applying a historical lens to autoethnography I am exploring what Giorgio describes as “absent memory” and interrogating my past through the relationship of “I and the Other” (Giorgio, 2013, p. 419). Hence, in writing an autoethnography I also bear witness to memories that I have not experienced. They are memories gleaned from family stories, artefacts, and historical records. These memories are “felt like a ghost’s presence” (Giorgio, 2013, p. 418). My work intends to thread these particular stories together and link them to the social, political and historical context of the time to show how they shape my story (Pathak, 2013).

Cognizant of the range of genealogical data available, Barnes and Swain (2012) argue for its potential to answer questions about the social factors that prompted our ancestors to immigrate. An initial strategy is provided by Lee (Oct 2013) interrogates why our ancestors immigrated and what happened when they got to the “colonies.” He calls these the “Hidden Four Ps” of immigration: push, pull, punishment, and privilege. Briefly, push are the factors that encourage someone to leave their home, pull are the incentives offered through the move, punishment includes negative experiences on arrival, and privilege are those things that help and support the immigrant to settle.

Sleeter’s (2015) framework involves an approach where the researcher includes particular family details, describes the historical context and considers the social context, such as what other social groups were impacted in the same space (geographical and time). Layering these stories alongside each other the researcher, and later the reader, gets a sense of the power dynamics at play. By peeling back the layers of who we are, how we have learnt to identify ourselves and how we relate to those whose backgrounds are unlike ours, we will ultimately engage in a conversation about cultural diversity and social justice that includes everyone (Sleeter, 2015). It is through these tellings of family history that we can highlight how each of us is implicated and connected to a historical past, providing a counter-story to the sanctioned, dominant stories of our histories.

Writing as a Method of Inquiry

To make sense of the discourses generated I employed Richardson’s (1994) writing as a method of inquiry to extend sociological understanding. Autoethnography requires attention to the craft of writing and has a tradition of using fictive strategies, where it “make[s] use of convention such as dialogue and monologue to create character, calling up emotional states, sights, smells, noises and using dramatic reconstruction” (Denshire, 2014, p. 836).

Autoethnographic writing should provide verisimilitude, inviting the reader to believe in the

plausibility of the story, and to see themselves and others as “human subjects constructed in a tangle of cultural social and historical situations and relations in contact zones” (Brodkey, 1996, cited in Denshire, 2014, p. 833).

In this paper I draw on the data generated through my critical family history research and create a factionalized (Bruce, 2014) script. The purpose of the script is to give the different characters in the story an opportunity to speak to the complex and entangled nature of their relationships. Bruce (2014) argues that:

[f]actionalisation is a blend of fact and fiction, of observation and imagination. It is a form of representation that must be methodologically rigorous, theoretically informed, ethically reflexive and **interesting** to read, see or hear. Its aim is to dissolve the arguably artificial line between fact and fiction, and create the conditions for deep emotional understanding. (p. 6)

The act of creatively writing a script “transformed and stretched” my memory, enabling a “balance between the need to respond to the reality” of fragmentary data and the need to create a coherent story (Smorti, 2011, p. 306). Fiction is understood as a transformative tool that has the potential to encourage critical thinking, raise consciousness and create connection between the individual story and wider sociological understandings (Leavy, 2016). The following scripted conversations around the fire are works of fiction, where the content of the conversations are based on historical facts and childhood touchstone stories. In this work imagination was applied to the gaps, drawing on plausible scenarios through considering the wider political, social and environmental factors known of the time. The goal of this story is to provide both a critical and creative piece, to evoke emotion whilst finding a way to tell an unsettling story (Le Roux, 2017). There is not *the* story, it is *my* story.

The following four scenes draw on discourses I have gathered from trips to the museum, historical records, family stories, photos, and history books. The key historical texts drawn on are the works of Ranginui Walker (2007) and Judith Binney (1997; 2010). Walker

described Ōpōtiki as the capital of the Whakatōhea peoples (Walker, 2007). Telling my story alongside the Whakatōhea furthers Walker's argument that "the history of Whakatōhea is a microcosm of the history of New Zealand" (Walker, 2007, p. 9). However, these local stories are also important to explore and tell, since they work to dislocate the historical national narrative and focus on how radically different narratives of settler and indigenous histories are particular to certain communities (Ballantyne, 2012). The key characters are Charles my great-grandfather and Hira Te Popo an honored kaumatua (chief) of Ngāti Ira (White, 2016).

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Hira Te Popo and Charles Te Puia

Charlie and the Chief

I am peeking back through veiled layers of time, sifting through memories and half-forgotten stories, weaving the facts with the plausible, reclaiming a narrative inheritance subsumed, erased, by a dominant settler story. To remember that which has been forgotten.

Scene One

The sweet scent of Manuka wood smoldering on the fire fills my nostrils, sparks fly into the purple black night, I feel the warmth of leaping flames and bodies gathered around, huddled together, sharing the daily gossip. And all the while in the distance the ruru bird calls, opening the space for us to "speak with the ghosts," disrupting the binary of past – present, then and now.

It is early December 1875 the Pohutakawa tree has blooms of deep red welcoming Christmas, as the warm evenings stretch languidly into the night. Tradition is maintained as the people gather around the fire to share stories. This is how the ancestors' stories were told, how other stories were shared to provoke the old and young alike to remember and think (Huia, 2015). Hira Te Popo, chief of the Ngāti Ira, sits upright in a seat of authority, thoughtfully smoking on his pipe. He looks across the fire at the young Pākehā man and

smiles. The young man had proven to have great courage pitching his tent on the land he had just acquired; land that bordered that of the Ngāti Ira which had, according to Te Popo, been illegally confiscated by the Crown. After the land wars some sort of negotiated peace had been made, yet not all Māori had peace in their hearts. The scarred Waioeka Valley still smoldered and the prophet or rebel (depending on who you were talking to) Te Kooti and his followers would still turn up now and then to stir them up to retaliate against land sales. The young Pākehā had sought Hira Te Popo out as a friend and in each other they had recognized a thirst for knowledge and a passionate belief in their religion. Earlier in the year, Hira Te Popo had organized the building of a schoolhouse and the Pākehā had helped him locate a suitable teacher.

Te Popo looks at the pale-skinned man with his flaming beard and fiery bright blue eyes; this particular Pākehā was never settled and always eager. Te Popo calls out, “Te Puia tell us a story.” The Pākehā looks up and laughs, “My name is Charles!” Te Popo declares, “You need a proper name, I will now call you Te Puia – the fiery one.” Great rumbles of laughter flowed out around the camp fire and each fought to share a tale about Te Puia and his new name. Te Popo and Charles Te Puia smile at each other across the flames. It was done.

(Later it is just Hira Te Popo and Charles who remain by the fire. A few others were scattered around engaged in their own kōrero.)

Te Popo: Why don't you let us help you build a proper house?

Charles (smiling): A proper house Te Popo? Where I come from all the houses are made of grey stone squashed up against each other in a stony lane. My father was a stonecutter, and my brothers work in a deep hole in the ground digging out more stone. Some people even worship great stones that they place in a round circle. The church is made of stone and inside

the church is a tombstone of my ancestor. I think much of my life I lived on what we call stone soup! So what do you mean by a proper house?

(Te Popo chuckles quietly to himself. He can just about imagine some of these things but stone soup, he thinks, will be a story he must save for another fire.)

Te Popo: A stone house, Te Puia, I cannot do. The stones in the Waioeka belong there to stay, and they are too small and slimy. I can build you a wooden slate house, like old man Parkinson beyond you, with a thatched roof like the schoolhouse. It will be warmer and drier when the winter season comes. And you can find some work for my boys on your farm and building the new roads. We need to store up for the winter also.

(Charles scratches his beard and swats at a waeroa (mosquito) thinking carefully.)

Charles: I've only just got newly elected onto the Board Te Popo, but I will see what I can organize. Would they be prepared to travel to the Motu? There are plans to build a road to connect up through the valley to where the Motu River begins. I'd also like to get some land cleared to plant some crops. What do you suggest?

Te Popo (leans in): I will show you where to plant your crops. Your land is where some of our best lands were before the wars. And I will also show you where you must never go, where the land is tapu at the top of the hill. That is a sacred place. Can you keep that place safe for me, Te Puia?

(The old man stares keenly at the younger with bright fierce eyes. The aching memory of the battle still raw inside his heart.)

Charles (quietly and firmly): Of course Te Popo. The sacred places will be respected.

Te Popo (leans back and puffs quietly on his pipe): It is sorted then, Te Puia. And next time you will tell me more about your stone soup. Haere ra, Te Puia.

(Charles stands and stretches, smiles across at the old man and makes way to collect his horse. It is only a 10-minute trot over to his small tent tucked into the side of the hill. But it's a lonely one. He begins to dream about a long ago place, and stone soup.)

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The Whakatōhea whakapapa and my Rogers ancestors both trace back to a history of migration stories. Whakatōhea whakapapa from a legendary Hawaiki to Aotearoa (New Zealand). My Rogers ancestors' penultimate migration in Europe back to around 900 AD, when their Proto-Germanic tribe moved south from Scandinavia into Normandy, before eventually settling in Cornwall, England.

In the early 1800s the Whakatōhea people began to set up trade networks, further developing their education (taking advantage of the newly arrived writing skills of missionaries), and prospering economically (Binney, 2010; Walker, 2007). At the same time, my Rogers family were experiencing hardship in Cornwall. As farmers, miners and laborers, the industrial revolution demanded more from their labor, and resources were becoming scarce. Hence, the hunger for new lands and resources to feed Mother Britain opened up new opportunities for people to immigrate to the colonies. Charles was of the right age, he was both educated and a skilled farm laborer – exactly what the government of New Zealand was looking for. Considering Lee's (2013) Four Ps – Charles was *pushed* due to the economic hardship, his position in a poor family and no great prospects for the future. He was also *pulled* by an opportunity for assisted passage and the potential to buy available land in the new colony. How he managed to purchase land is a mystery, I suspect he was assisted through some scheme desperate to situate settlers in problematic spaces, such as the Ōpōtiki. Between 1865 and 1875 much of the Whakatōhea lands had been confiscated after continued resistance to land sales and subsequent battles between the colonial soldiers and local iwi. Many of the original settlers had left the area. Hence Charles became part of a privileged

class of people in a small settler town.

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Scene Two

The distant hills of the Urewera are covered in a blanket of cold grey mist and the sun is quickly disappearing. Charles saddles his horse, bundled inside an old oilskin and wearing the lamb's wool jersey knitted with love by his daughter, Isabella. She is the strength of his heart. He directs the horse toward the Te Ira Pa. Following secretly is his only remaining and youngest son William John. It is June 1928. Hira Te Popo left the bodily realm in October 1889, but is still Charles' closest confidant. As he gets closer to the pa Charles sees the fire and fastens the trot; it has been far too long. The old people greet him with hongis and slaps on the back, and then they reprimand him for being away too long. In an instant, he is seated comfortably by the fire. He stares into the flames as William John melts into the crowd. This is William John's home away from home, he speaks fluent Te Reo and the people in this place are his friends and his kin. Charles would not recognize him. The voices around the fire become muffled as Charles relaxes into the moment and he begins to sense someone next to him.

Charles: Ah so you came?

Te Popo: Ha . . . you are one to talk . . . I never left! I have been helping my people petition back for their land. We are up to the fourth petition to the government. I have great hopes in our cousin Āpirana Ngata.

Charles: I know. I know. You see Te Popo the large whareniui they have built to hold their meetings, where your portrait hangs in pride of place? The house Te Kooti built no longer stands.

(They both glance over toward the large meeting house with its fine carvings. It has been

built to stand for a long time.)

Te Popo (turning back to Te Puia): So what have you been up to old friend?

Charles (pauses): It is a sad story.

Te Popo: They all are. That is life. Love, loss, love, loss and then there is us. We are dead, but we still live.

Charles: I loved. I had a daughter and then I lost my wife. I loved. And I had another daughter and I lost my love. Then one daughter died and the other, well you know, she came back here to her people. Then I loved once more, or at least married sensibly to ensure I had a son to look after the land. A woman from Yorkshire, living in Auckland, her father was a Freemason like myself – he was well connected. My first two sons died in that miserable “war to end all wars.” Many of your people fought bravely in that war as well Te Popo. Can you believe it? Sailing to the other side of the world to fight in a war for the people that took their land? And so I am left with three unwed daughters, who follow after their mother in their strident religion. And then there is my dear young son, born in my old age.

Te Popo: I have heard much about this son from my own mokopuna.

Charles (sits up and looks surprised☺ What do you mean? He is a runt of a boy. Quiet as a mouse around the house and bullied by his three older sisters! His mother died when he was eight. And I was in no fit state. I just fell into a selfish depression.

Te Popo: He has been here. He is here now. He has continued your work in looking after the tapu places. He is a thoughtful and caring boy. And boy, does he like to sing!

(They both stop then and listen, on the other side of the fire a group of young people are singing waiata and one is strumming the guitar. Charles sits quietly watching and feels warmth in his heart. He can see his daughter Kahurangi (blue eyes) in the distance, every now and then she glances over and smiles. His son has a smile on his face he has never seen at

home. All will be well he thinks. Beside him something shifts.)

Charles (whispers): I will visit you in your place soon, my old friend.

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Applying critical theory asks us to consider who Charles “identified with and under what circumstances, how those identifications shaped beliefs and actions, and what class-based ideological principles undergirded those beliefs and identification” (Sleeter, 2015, p. 3). Although I believe Charles had a positive relationship with his neighbors Te Ngāti Ira, his education, religion and society at that time taught him that as a white male, he was superior in race and sex. Living on the fringes of the Waioeka and closely associated with Te Ngāti Ira, he lived an entangled life, one as Te Puia (the name Te Ngāti Ira gave him) and the other as Charles Rogers.

When Charles married his second wife Hannah, the Waioeka farm was flourishing and Charles was a respected part of the colonial population. Newspaper records tell how he worked to build roads, develop a “proper” education system, support the building of the Salvation Army Church, and become the Master of the Masonic Lodge. However, early in the next century tragedy struck with the deaths of his eldest daughter, his two eldest boys in WW1, and the death of his wife Hannah. My Poppa at the age of eight was left to inherit the farm and look after his three spinster sisters.

Applying postcolonial perspectives to these stories means interrogating how the same political, social and historical context impacted on others, in this case the Whakatōhea. First and foremost is the fact that the farm Charles developed for his family to inherit, originally belonged to the Whakatōhea people. During the late 1800s and early 1900s Whakatōhea consistently worked to fund and submit claims to the government to have some land returned. Claiming first that the lands had been unjustly confiscated, historical records also show Te

Ngāti Ira did not have enough good land to survive on (Walker, 2007). After their lands were confiscated they initially returned to traditional hunting and gathering practices to survive as they slowly built up their resources. Many of the Whakatōhea found seasonal work on local farms and building roads. Charles employed Te Ngāti Ira skilled workers to help clear and build his farm. Ironically also it was the school Hira Te Popo of the Te Ngāti Ira funded and built, that my Rogers family first attended. Hence, my family benefited from the land, from the education, and the skilled workforce of Te Ngāti Ira of the Whakatōhea. The relationship between the early colonial and the indigenous people was often based on reciprocal need. As Tuck and Yang (2012) described, the settler needed “excess labor” to help, for example in managing the farm and building of roads.

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Scene Three

The smell of smoke still permeated the village. There was stillness, a shocked silence, as the people shuffled through their mundane chores. But it was hard to ignore the barren hill, stripped bare of its entire luscious green bush, revealing to the stark hot sun the story of loss. Those with keen eyes could follow the line of trenches dug into the rim and recall the stories shared around the fire of long-ago battles and the loss of their land. Someone sees a small yellow car making its way up the Waioeka Straight. It is 1980, on most nights now families disappear into their whare to watch TV, those who have not gone to the city looking for work. However, tonight they will light the fire and share once again the stories of the past, stories of today and stories of tomorrow. The small yellow car turns off the main road and winds its way carefully up to the pa. An old Kuia comes out of her whare and watches intently as the man, aged with more than just time, slowly parks his car and emerges. “Haere mai Te Puia boy” she calls and beckons him over. “Haere mai Kahurangi,” he tiredly replies. They hongi and then hold each other close. Sorrow etched into their bodies.

(Later they sit together by the fire. Some of the young people are curious about the old Pākehā, there are not many Pākehā they know who speak fluent Te Reo and who know stories of Hira Te Popo. After a while Kahurangi and Te Puia boy are left quietly staring into the flames.)

Kahurangi (softly): What's this nonsense I hear about you throwing yourself into the river e hoa? Your mauri – our breath of life – is a taonga. It is a precious gift.

William John (raggedly): I have failed, Kahurangi. My child has corrupted the tapu. The hill is opened up like a fresh wound and the sacred place is unprotected.

(The sound of a deep wailing rose from inside the blankets he was cloaked in. Kahurangi sat with him as he mourned. The breeze rushed into the fire, sparks flew and shadows played on the edges of their vision. Both Kahurangi and Te Puia boy shivered and sat upright as they sensed they were no longer alone.)

Te Popo: Kia Kaha Te Puia boy. Be strong. There are great changes happening and some of these must pass before we reclaim what is ours. We have our Te Reo back. Now we must invest more in our young, continue to educate them in the ways of the Pākehā, but also in the stories of their whakapapa.

William John: I have failed there as well Te Popo.

Charles (gruffly): When you and your siblings went to school it was here at Ngāti Ira Pa, at Te Popo's Native school, so of course you all learnt Te Reo. They were our neighbors, our friends and our whānau. The world changed, William; your children had to go into town for schooling, where Te Reo was banned. They know little about your friends at Ngāti Ira Pa, your wife made sure the door was closed whenever they came to visit and kōrero with you. And your sisters made you promise to keep Kahurangi a secret.

Te Popo: You are not alone in how the world has changed us. It has now shrunk and

sometimes fits inside a screen! What our young people listen to are stories from other places, stories about what they can own, about the individual not about the whānau and the wider family.

William John: So who will tell the stories? Who will protect the sacred places? Who will sit around the fire and remember Hira Te Popo and Charles Te Puia? Who will tell of the battle of long ago?

Te Popo (softly): Go home and rest, Te Puia boy. There will be another fire. We are still here. There will continue to be stories and you and I will sit here again one day soon. Haere ra.

(The Ruru owl hooted into the night as William John hugged his sister Kahurangi one last time and walked back to his car. He felt rested inside now – peaceful even. He must trust that one of his mokopuna would remember Te Puia and Te Popo.)

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I imagine the initial relationship between Charles, his family and Te Ngāti Ira would have been mutually beneficial, and they worked to support each other. Te Ngāti Ira needed work to build up their resource base again, and Charles needed support to survive on the fringes of “civilization,” isolated from the town. During periods of unrest it was Charles’ home where other colonial farmers would seek refuge. I have questions about this time. How are my family related to Whakatōhea? How do I explain those times my father’s Māori friends would say, “hey we are cousins!” A Great Aunty once let slip to me that we had Māori relatives. But birth records of that time did not include Māori. Similarly, Bishop (1995) also tells his own story of Māori family whose memory had been erased from history. This work remembers those forgotten stories, those stories that have been erased from our histories as they do not fit with the standard or “acceptable” colonial story.

The story of the battle of Te Rata ridge was not found in the history books when I was a child, rather it was shared through the stories around the camp fire, or passed on to me from my Poppa stopping me when I went running over the tapu land. As such the story of Te Kooti, of the battle of Te Rata Ridge, of secret Māori whanau, these stories were part of my narrative inheritance.

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Scene Four

It was October 4th 2015. Much planning and preparation had been put into this day of commemoration, many Whakatōhea and a range of dignitaries had come to celebrate. There had been speeches, haka, waiata, feasting and remembering. It was on the TV news, it was on Facebook and other social media, and stories were being shared.

(The fire had burned late into the night and all that remained was the pile of bright hot embers, smoke swirling into the warm spring air. Four shadowy figures sat staring into the past, remembering other fires. A young man, who earlier in the day had famously stood on the back of the horse and waved the Waioeka flag, was now wrapped up in an old blanket and almost asleep. What he saw and heard, perhaps he was just dreaming.)

Te Popo (puffing rings into the air with his old pipe, his eyes gleaming with delight): It was a fine day. A fine day.

Charles Te Puia (softly and smiling): The best of days. Te Popo – the best of days my old friend.

Kahurangi (with her blue eyes shining and tears on her cheeks): It is a proud day for Ngāti Ira, a proud day for Whakatōhea, and a proud day for you Hira Te Popo.

Te Popo: Aye . . . it is a proud day. A proud day for my mokopuna.

Te Puia boy: They sang well, Kahurangi. Such song, such harmony, such unity. We will keep winning the Kapa Haka competitions and put Apanui back in their place. (They all chuckle; their distant cousins the Apanui are their strongest rivals in the national Kapa Haka competitions). And they remembered!

Te Popo: Aye. They remembered us. The battle of Te Rata has not been forgotten, even after 150 years. We are remembered.

Charles Te Puia: And the loss Te Popo ... that is still remembered.

Te Puia boy (sadly): And the sacred places.

Te Popo: They are healing, Te Puia boy, and the land is returning.

Kahurangi: Aye. The whānau have been working together. The pre-settlement claim will be submitted in November.

Charles Te Puia: The Whakatōhea Trust Board is working well Te Popo.

Te Popo: Aye. I few hiccups early on, but they are strong now. We have farms and a sound education fund for our future generations.

Te Puia boy: And the young people have returned – returned to the fire.

(The tui sings into the dusky sky and signals the beginning of a new day. There is the sound of a small child crying and the singing of an early-morning lullaby; after a long night mum isn't quite ready to face the day. Kahurangi smiles. It is her newest mokopuna, her great-great-granddaughter, Kahurangi girl. And she has eyes bright for the future, blue eyes just like hers.)

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A Closing Thought

In summoning these stories of my ancestors in the above scenes, I have remembered them. Not as heroes or villains, but as human beings. These are the complicated and entangled relationships of my early settler family with Te Ngāti Ira. These are the people who are my family and friends, and they are the actors in my childhood touchstone stories. Through interrogating these stories through the process of layering them alongside the historical, social and political factors of each time-period, a deeper understanding of what privilege and loss are realized. Hira Te Popo and Charles Te Puia are representative of many early relationships between settler and Indigenous people in Aotearoa New Zealand, and yet they are also unique.

Investigating the family history of Hira Te Popo and Charles Te Puia has been both exciting and challenging. The ghosts I have summoned up have revealed how my Pākehā family were privileged at the expense of Ngāti Ira, but the stories also reminded me of the entangled and mutually beneficial relationships of many early Māori and Pākehā settlers. It was usually Pākehā who, later, moved away from these relationships, who shut the door on Te Reo, who forgot the tapu places, or no longer cared. Hence, it is Pākehā who now need to rebuild trust in these relationships, to again turn to Māori to be our mentors, to open our doors to Te Reo and learn again about the tapu places. Critical family history provides an opportunity for Pākehā, and others, to explore and understand our histories in a richer and more human way. Furthermore, it provides us with the potential to understand the complexity of an identity forged out of a relationship with Other. Perhaps once again we will be invited to sit down at the fire with Hira Te Popo and Kahurangi, and hear the Ruru call.

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