

Dialogue

Entangled in Māori History: A Report on Experience

MICHAEL P J REILLY

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No ordinary man wants to write about himself in the sense that he thinks his life important; but if one has something to set down that concerns the world that we know now, it can only grow out of a background and certain accidents and events that have happened to the man who is writing. And it is as well, therefore, to write about these things clearly and honestly, without exaggerating the value of individual experiences.

JOHN MULGAN, *Report on Experience*

Mulgan wrote these lines in Cairo toward the end of World War Two, after serving as a liaison officer in occupied Greece with local guerrilla forces. For subsequent generations of New Zealand students, his book was read as a record of one New Zealander's experiences of the world. As I wrote this paper, the example of Mulgan's *Report on Experience* seeped back into my consciousness. The experiences I wish to report revolve, first, around learning the Māori language in a predominantly Māori classroom, and second, teaching Māori history at a university among staff and students from different ethnic backgrounds and with different motivations, expectations, hopes, and ambitions. This essay is intended as a contribution to a series of interconnected topics of debate in academia: the politics of ethnic identity, teaching authority, and the practice of biculturalism (eg, Clifford 1988; Mead 1983; Rosaldo 1993; Salmond 1983; Trask 1993). As did Mulgan in his *Report*, I address this issue through the medium of personal experience—the author's own subjective positioning, first as a student and later as a teacher.

The recording of personal experience as testimony, on a controversial subject, has a venerable genealogy. In the western tradition such testimony has taken the form of the *apologia*. A famous example is Cardinal

Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, written in response to criticism from the novelist Charles Kingsley. Newman's *Apologia* serves as one man's answer to a personal attack but also acts as a spiritual testament, a pilgrim's journal of progress (Newman 1912). An example of personal testimony in postwar New Zealand writing is Michael King's *Being Pakeha* (1985), where he reviewed and defended his involvement in documenting Māori issues, including writing Māori history. *Being Pakeha* is both a spirited defense, an *apologia*, and a moving witness to the efforts of one Pākehā writer to engage with *te ao Māori* (the Māori world).¹ Māori too have used forms of personal testimony to defend and explain a person's rights and position. *Pātere* (abusive songs) responded to belittling, derogatory, or abusive remarks made about the composer (Ngata 1972, xviii). In the art of *whaikōrero* (oratory) unknown speakers who get up to orate may be challenged and forced to defend themselves by reciting a *whakapapa* (genealogy) to demonstrate that they speak by right of birth and association or affiliation. My own recounting of involvement in *taha Māori* (Māori dimension) at school and university was inspired by all these traditions of personal witness.

Testimonies such as those by Newman or King are informed by an idea of entanglement, be it in religious or ethnic politics. This idea of entanglement has been deployed more recently by Edward Said, who is critical of theories that divide and polarize varied experiences of being female, or western, or Black, or being from a particular country or culture; rather, he wants to stress the ideas of entanglement and the dependencies of one such experience on another (Said 1993, 35–36). His stress on experience and the resulting knowledges is important: his theoretical insights are produced ultimately out of juxtapositions, interactions, entanglements between life experiences and domains of learning and thought (eg, Said 1993, xxx, 45ff). More than other writers, Said has emphasized the unique vocation of the intellectual whose own subjective position and intellectual training can contribute to resisting and recreating the ways each and every one of us perceives the world. No one, least of all an intellectual, has the ability to speak from “an Archimedean perspective”; everyone, in Said's view, is entangled in a series of overlapping and intertwining personal interests and engagements (eg, Said 1993, 37, 49, 63, 65). This very engagement, between the intellectual's subjective position and external experiences of the world, in the form of learning and teaching about Māori, is the subject of the report that follows.

A SUBJECTIVE BEGINNING

I must begin by locating myself, the historian, the storyteller, the spinner of tales. I am forced into such a subjective beginning on account of my peculiar situation as a teacher of Māori history. I am located in two university departments (Māori Studies and History) at the University of Otago, *Te Whare Wānanga o Otago*. I am employed to develop a series of courses on Māori history for students taking either Māori studies or history provided they undertake the stipulated Māori language requirements. I also belong to an anomalous category that ought not, by rights, to exist: I am a Pākehā teaching and writing on Māori history. Situated in such a liminal position I must first justify my authority; I must explain by what means and by what right I speak.

One of the first questions learned when studying Māori is very simple: *Ko wai koe?* (Who are you?) The normal response of students is to give their first name. Yet the question has more profound levels of meaning. An important one depends on how the question is inflected; it may come over as a put-down: Who are you (to get up and speak)? When I first encountered the question I was constantly struck by the issue of identity. If I answered as I was supposed to: *Ko Mikaere au* (I am Michael), I felt that a dimension of the question remained unanswered. I was struck that this seemed inadequate: Why? I think I was aware that when asked to identify myself in Māori I became painfully conscious that I was a Pākehā, a member of the dominant ethnic group, and yet in that particular classroom, on that particular day, a member of a small minority. No matter how much effort I put into my learning I continued to experience a sense of being on the outside, of being at the margin. This consciousness existed despite the surprising—and moving—degree of acceptance I received from Māori students in the class. The acceptance came about, I believe, as a consequence of my position: as a Pākehā, at least in the Māori language class, I was an absolute neophyte, whereas the Māori students had, at the very least, a knowledge of the culture from an insider's perspective. As a consequence of such study I found myself gradually and half-unconsciously entangled in the Māori language, culture, and ultimately, history.

This level of identification and entanglement proved but a first step. Through that simple question (*Ko wai koe?*) I focused more sharply on the nature of my personal identity. I came to define myself increasingly as a member of the Irish Catholic minority of New Zealand. This resulted,

in part, from the influence of the matriarch of my mother's family, who retained strong Irish affiliations and, in part, from a growing awareness that of the various groups making up the greater Pākehā whole, the Irish and other Celtic groups such as the Scots were far and away more popular among Māori than the English. This is usually put down to the existence of similar cultural values shared by Māori and Celts. In the context of studying Māori I particularized this general association. To be an Irish Catholic in that location meant becoming aware of the linkages resulting from a sense of shared colonial experiences.

I began to recognize that Irish Catholics were treated, in New Zealand, as the butt of most jokes told by other Pākehā (frequently alongside Scots and "*Horis*" [a derogatory term for Māori, derived from a Māori transliteration of George]): the Irishman was represented as abnormally thick, the Scotsman as abnormally mean, and the Māori retained—in a dumb way—a certain native craftiness. I became more conscious of traces of an oral history relating to the Irish Famine, with its associated stories of starvation and death, that continued to be mentioned in my mother's family. These references heightened my sense of difference from the dominant Pākehā-English Protestant party in New Zealand society and made me begin to perceive hitherto overlooked connections with the principal subjugated people of Aotearoa and Te Waipounamu²—the Māori (well suggested by the juxtaposition of the particular ethnicities in New Zealand jokes).

This identification developed alongside my introduction to perspectives and experiences of Aotearoa related by Māori classmates in the language classes. To hear a story told matter-of-factly, but with great humor, about the regular visitations to a student's home by the police whenever any criminal activity occurred in the general district gave me pause for thought. At one level I knew I differed from the narrator because this event had never happened to me, safely cocooned in a respectable middle-class environment. At another level I was shaken, for a moment, out of that certitude and smugness by the story, which happened to someone I knew and liked, who came across as nothing more than a bit of a rough diamond; yet clearly, this was not the police, or perhaps the middle-class, perception of him.

Another incident that shook me out of my certainty resulted from a visit by the class to the Auckland Museum, which has a world-renowned collection of Māori artifacts. Amid the tourists and other mainly Pākehā visitors surged this bunch of Māori language students and their teacher:

we all were fascinated by what we saw. A few days later the class was told that a complaint had been received from a museum official, who believed one of the students had “stolen” a Māori artifact. I recall the indignation of the class and the teacher that, as usual, it was the Māori who was picked out whenever anything went wrong. They did not see this as an isolated or unfortunate incident (the perspective a middle-class boy such as myself would have brought to it); the complaint resonated with a long history of similar accusations and implied racism on the part of Pākehā. The involvement of the teacher, June Mariu, in this sense of outrage was also significant. She was a former nationally known netball player, the niece of a prominent teacher of Māori who wrote the school texts we were then studying—hardly the stuff from which Pākehā media like to make their alleged Māori radicals. Even June Mariu related stories of Pākehā presumption, prejudice, and downright racism, again told with a wry sense of humor, the sort of humor I have experienced among gays and lesbians.

To participate in a class for the Māori language, then considered on the school margins academically, perhaps perceived by many other students and staff as some sort of sop to New Zealand’s espousal of better race relations, was to be introduced to another facet, another dimension of New Zealand’s life: a different world that I could not now draw away from but instead found myself becoming further committed to out of personal loyalties, affection, and intellectual fascination.

This entanglement has produced over time a series of connections: a genealogy of sorts, comprising teachers and mentors in *te taha Māori* or the Māori dimension of learning. I wish to acknowledge them now because, I believe, they invest much of what I say. The first and founding name in this *whakapapa* belongs to June Mariu of Te Whanau a Apanui who first taught me the Māori language at high school in Te Atatu North, Auckland. The second name belongs to Te Kapunga (Koro) Dewes of Ngāti Porou, who established the teaching of Māori at Victoria University of Wellington and who taught and argued with me in my first undergraduate year. The third name I wish to commemorate is that of Wiremu Parker of Ngāti Porou, whose profound knowledge of *te reo Māori* (the Māori language) completed my language learning. Words are not sufficient to express the debt I owe to Bill: his gentleness and consideration as a teacher kept my spirits up as I struggled to comprehend the complexities and beauty of the *reo*. The fourth name belongs to Hirini Moko Mead of Ngāti Awa, who encouraged me to continue pursuing my combined inter-

ests in Māori and history. And finally, Ruka Broughton of Ngā Rauru, who shared his learning and who, like Bill, has traveled the *ara whānui a Tāne* (the wide path of Tāne) to that other world: *haere, e pā, haere ki Hawaiki nui, ki Hawaiki roa, ki Hawaiki pāmamao, ki te Hono-i-Wairua* (Go, o sirs, go to the big Hawaiki, the long Hawaiki, the distant Hawaiki, to Te Hono-i-Wairua [the joining of spirits]).

These various associations with the study of Māori and the particular individuals who shared a part of their knowledge with me have caught me up, often without my knowing, in a series of obligations and responsibilities I feel I can discharge adequately only by passing this knowledge on myself as a teacher. Such is the nature of my affiliation with the Māori language and its history; these are some of the reasons I feel I can stand and speak.

EXPERIENCES OF ENTANGLEMENT

Such a sense of identification and entanglement across national or ethnic boundaries is not just the privilege of a singular Pākehā seeking to make sense of a particular set of cultural and emotional relationships in late twentieth century New Zealand. This capacity for empathy courses throughout the country's modern history. It was powerfully voiced by Māori last century as a direct result of their own experiences of colonization. The Ngāpuhi parliamentarian, Hone Mohi Tawhai, from Hokianga in North Auckland, spoke of identifications he made across other boundaries, when he addressed the House of Representatives in July 1880 regarding yet another bill undermining Māori control of their land:

I have heard of the people of Ireland, and the circumstances under which they were placed are very similar to the circumstances under which the Maoris are now placed. There were certain laws passed affecting their land, and it resulted in those people being deprived of their land. And now the same laws are being brought to bear upon us. I am an Irishman. I hope my words will not be treated lightly when I say that I am an Irishman. I am a Maori as far as my appearance goes, but my connections have been reared and brought up amongst Irish people. (Tawhai 1880, 37:379–380 in Caselberg 1975, 122)

Tawhai's understanding of the injustices—the oppression—meted out to the Māori, whom he represented, by the Pākehā who formed the vast majority of the House was deepened by the knowledge that neither he nor

the Māori were alone in their suffering. He saw himself as an Irishman because of a shared colonial experience under the heel of the same imperial power. Similar cultural connections persisted, in particular, through intermarriage between Irish men and Māori women. Recognizing such identifications and associations across historical, cultural, and personal boundaries provided an opening for my development of courses in Māori history. Yet I could not form these courses solely within the confines of my own thought and assumptions; instead, they were formed as a result of comments, confrontations, and conflicts with other staff and, more important, with the students who had enrolled in them.

Perceptions of Māori History

The first hint I received about the way New Zealand historians perceived the nature of the Māori history I was to teach came in the form of an aërogram letter from the head of the history department at the University of Otago before I had even arrived to take up my appointment,³ which stated that I would develop “in the first instance, a paper in Maori History generally (post-European of course).” The significant reference in that excerpt was the “of course”: why “of course”? The letter referred to the first course I was to prepare for the second-year offering of the BA (Māori 207) in 1992. Before I arrived a course prescription had been approved by the History and Māori Studies Departments for publication in the 1992 university calendar: “Selected aspects of Maori history and historiography, with particular reference to 19th century developments” (University of Otago 1992, 480). Apart from this wording and the head of the history department’s suggestion, I was left alone to divine the contents of the course from my own thinking: it was to be an autochthonous production.

For the record, I decided to ignore these hints regarding content. I saw the insistence on a postcontact orientation as typical of an assumption widely held among historians that I wanted to expose as fallacious: that history, the research and writing of the past, could not properly begin until the advent of European settlement in Aotearoa and Te Waipouamu. Instead, I formulated a course that deliberately focused on a past before European contact. This past was oriented toward the individual histories of Māori *iwi* (tribes) and *hapū* (subtribes). Stress was placed on reading narrations of the past that used indigenous perspectives: published Māori texts concerning the creation, canoe migrations, and settlement of

New Zealand, accounts of the doings of tribal ancestors, as well as first-contact European representations of *iwi*. This last theme pointed toward the impact of European contact and later colonization on Māori history. To this extent there was some truth in the head of the history department's observation. The history of the *iwi* was to become inextricably linked with that of Pākehā education, learning, and the institutions of power.

Much of our present knowledge of the Māori pasts remains the tainted product of missionaries and their converts, government officials and their indigenous associates such as chiefs, as well as ethnographers and their informants. This mix has provided both Māori and Pākehā scholars with the materials from which they have composed their works. In recognition of this colonial reality I incorporated in my course a description of the nature and content of Māori history (the views of European historians, the significance of *tapu*, the historical value of traditions, and the influences of colonialism in the forms of literacy, the land courts and, more recently, the Waitangi Tribunal). By attempting to deny the implicit assumptions betrayed in the remark of the head of Otago's history department, that Māori history ought not to begin until European colonization, I was forced to recognize, at least in part, that the tincture from the Pākehā past continued.

The implicit assumptions of New Zealand historians concerning the connectedness between Māori history and Pākehā colonization became a significant issue again during 1992 when I sought to amend the existing vaguely worded course prescription. I have tried elsewhere to describe what happened (Reilly 1993, 4–9). Here, I restrict myself to some general points and observations. I was surprised at the ease with which academic staff from other disciplines sitting in committee were able to adjudicate upon my proposed amendment, deleting material without so much as a by-your-leave. They questioned whether it was possible to explore, as part of western intellectual discourse, the pre-European past and whether it was possible to talk of that earlier time based on documents written after European contact. It was as if the assembled Pākehā scholarly wisdom knew better than I, or for that matter, the Department of Māori Studies. They clearly demonstrated the ease with which the institutions of Pākehā New Zealand continue to assume control of Māori knowledge.

My responses, then as now, remain provisional. I still believe that any past is knowable, provided the topic is approached with the appropriate respect and the requisite linguistic skills and cultural insights. The study

of Māori history should also be undertaken under the guidance of academics with some sort of affiliation to the discipline of Māori studies or the wider Māori world.⁴ This association prevents an excessive objectification of Māori history by stressing the connections between formal study and the people whose past is being discussed. I will return later to the difficulties encountered in achieving such a sympathetic identification in an academic context. I also believe that any knowledge of the past is only partial and is always interested: no documentation is entirely reliable.

Partiality within History

Pākehā students of history find the partiality of the past contentious. In 1991 and 1992 I was responsible for teaching some Māori history sections of a first-year New Zealand history course (History 104). It began its survey with European contact and settlement. During a lecture on the Treaty of Waitangi, in which I made no bones about my own views, a number of Pākehā noisily got up from their seats and walked out of the lecture theater. A Māori student came up afterward and thanked me for presenting a more Māori perspective to the class.⁵ I was at times critical, not only of actors and their actions in history, but also of their descendants sitting in the lecture theater. I sensed hostility to the profusion of Māori terms and names the students were required to write. In response to my sometimes sharp remarks on this issue, a first-year Pākehā student wrote an anonymous note to me, pointing out that my lectures had “a substantial amount of bias.” I was being “totally unprofessional.” The note ended, “I feel that you are blaming us as individuals which is totally unreasonable. Our forefathers are those to be blamed. We are the generation that can change things for the better.” Student evaluations at the end of the year indicated strong polarization in response to my lectures: one group of students indicated total support; another (presumably Pākehā) acknowledged the difficulties they had in coming to terms with some of my views but accepted the value of the course; another group described me in various obscene phrases such as “brown arselicker,” suggested I blacken my face because I evidently wanted to be a Māori, or hoped I would go home to Australia (they knew I had an Australian PhD).

After the treaty lecture I talked over the problem I was encountering with the course convener. Although I found him generally supportive, I also entered a spirited debate about my historical interpretations. A doc-

toral candidate, who has subsequently become involved in researching Treaty of Waitangi claims, accused me of being biased and lacking objectivity; his stance was symbolized by his anglicized pronunciation of even the simplest Māori words. The course convener compared my early academic training in Māori studies to being brainwashed like followers of the cult of the Reverend Moon: I had forsaken the ability to think for myself. Ironically, I had based my interpretations in the lecture on the standard writings by historians and linguists regarding the Māori texts of the Treaty of Waitangi.

I later learned that in the subsequent weeks this lecture became the talk of the tutorials. Instead of seizing on the tumult to explore the issues, the tutors panicked and explained my remarks away as coming from an inexperienced lecturer. They were critical in tutors' meetings of the remarks I made. They also took the students' comments to the head of the department. The following year I was taken off History 104 and reassigned, for administrative reasons, to a less popular Pacific history course. I joked to some students at the time that I had been sent into exile. I once asked the head of the department when I might be shifted back to the New Zealand history course, only to be told that I never would be.

Contentious Content for Māori Students

The content of courses I teach on Māori history has also been contentious, especially for some Māori students. In 1992, the first year in which Māori 207 was taught, a number of complaints were voiced about its material. Most of the comments focused on the differing expectations some of the students brought to the course: they wanted to hear stories about their own tribal ancestors; I wanted them all to think about and to critically analyze the issues and content of Māori history. The atmosphere of complaint and criticism was only partly resolved when I opened up a lecture time for any comments, critical or otherwise, which I undertook to answer as honestly and forthrightly as I could; the idea originated with the acting head of the Māori Studies Department, who saw it as a means to introduce the kind of open debate experienced on a *marae* (meeting ground). The discussions were continued at a weekend *hui* (gathering) for Māori 207. Because a number of the issues raised by individual students were articulated in subsequent encounters, I will discuss them in detail later. One point is worth noting. Several students wished me to put more stress on tribal history. As I recall the debate, they wanted a course akin

in form to a tribal *wānanga* (school of instruction). My retort was to ask Whose tribe? Could I allow Māori from other tribes or Pākehā (including myself) to attend such instruction? An older Māori woman asked too whether she, as a female, would be permitted to attend such a *wānanga*? There seemed no clear answer to the various difficulties this sort of tribal orientation raised for a university class. I pointed out that such learning could not be undertaken in that particular forum; I was more concerned to describe a general picture with reference to particular well-known tribal historical narratives; for an in-depth history of their own *iwi* and *hapū* students should go to the appropriate tribal authorities.

Following complaints about the content of my third-year Māori history course offering (Māori 307), I attempted a similar classroom-based exchange of views. Before addressing the issues raised there I need to briefly explain the nature of that course. Although part of the same history stream as Māori 207, the 300-level offering incorporates New Zealand into the wider world of eastern Polynesia, including the Hawaiian Islands and the Cook Islands. I wanted to expand the horizons of knowledge that students would be familiar with. In addition, the course explored the different ways authors have read indigenous texts: a number of these could be described as structuralist-oriented readings. I hoped to provoke students into comprehending the possibilities immanent in such textual analyses.

After several weeks of complaint and gossip about the course content, I opened up a Māori 307 seminar class for wide-ranging discussion. Several Māori students articulated certain requests. Among them was the wish for the course to proceed in accordance with a *kaupapa Māori*. An explanation of this term may help elucidate the students' meaning. In classical Māori, *kaupapa* refers to a level surface, floor, platform, or layer; it also refers to the groundwork to which feathers are attached in order to make a cloak; it can further refer to the medium communicating with the *atua* or gods (Williams 1971, 107; Ritchie 1992, 104). In other words, the *kaupapa Māori* requested by students referred to the subject matter of the course: the material that formed the backcloth, the basis, or the means for understanding the past.

A second demand, apparently related to that for a *kaupapa Māori*, was for the reorientation of the course materials to favor indigenous writers instead of the current works authored by Europeans. Another student thought the course as presently constituted represented a history paper

rather than an identifiably Māori one. The implication of this remark was amplified by remarks in later classes that the readings were colonialist and imperialist. Although these labels were not explained in any analytical sense, the import seemed to be that the writings of outsiders of their very nature weakened, undermined, or destroyed Māori society and culture.

Before the class had read more than one text I was told that the material was far too analytical rather than holistic: the student claimed that my approach was not in accord with the form of teaching pursued by my colleagues in the Māori Studies Department. By way of explanation I was later told that by analyzing, or as another student put it dissecting, the indigenous texts, the writers I had selected destroyed the *ihi*, *wehi*, and *wana* of the text. These are complex abstract terms linked with the supernatural and associated with aesthetic judgment: *ihi* (authority, power, nobility, awe-inspiring) refers to the experience of artistic perfection that is considered the expression of the performer's *tīpuna* (ancestor) acting through the performer as a medium; *wehi* refers to a sense of reverential fear, and *wana* refers to the thrill or shiver of fear or pride experienced by an audience (Kruger 1980, 138–146). In Māori 307 the texts and their subjects were dead; the students wanted to appreciate *tīpuna* and their stories, which were not just alive but lively. An older student argued that these kinds of texts were also not in accord with *mātauranga Māori* (Māori knowledge or learning), which was oral in nature and learned from the elders; an understanding of Māori could not be obtained from writings by Pākehā outsiders.

At first, I found the strength and intensity of these requests not only overwhelming but worrying. My initial, very emotional reaction was to accept these criticisms as an invitation to silence and to terminate the course, because I felt unable to continue to voice my own vision of what constituted the past for the peoples of Aotearoa and Te Moana Nui a Kiwa (The Pacific Ocean). After recollecting myself and, I admit, obtaining the support of some of the *kaumātua* (elders) in the Department of Māori Studies, I returned to the seminar. I gave the class over to my elders. As for myself I was reminded of a Māori saying: “*Ko te roimata i heke, ko te hūpē i whiua ki te marae, ka ea a aituā*” (The tears that fall, the nasal mucus planted at the *marae*, pays for misfortune). The entire class was invited to speak. Much of what they said shifted from specific requests to general platitudes and to apologies for upsetting me: this shift

was made, I suspect, because of the presence of the *kaumātua* in the room.

Personal Reflections and Responses

On reflection, a number of issues arose from this encounter. While attempting to answer the various requests and criticisms, I noticed that the lines of dissent and disagreement in the room were fracturing the students along both ethnic and disciplinary lines: in crude terms, between Māori students doing Māori studies and Pākehā students doing history. The latter disagreed that the course could be described as a history paper: they argued that it was unlike any other they had taken. Despite such remarks, neither group of students seemed able to fully understand the points they were each attempting to make. By part way through the seminar the history students largely fell silent. For a while I wondered whether this fracturing and enforced silence would become the norm. I worried whether an interdisciplinary course on a Māori topic could be mounted that acknowledged and respected the differing contributions brought by every individual, regardless of ethnicity or learning.

A couple of answers to such questions were suggested in the class. One came from a *koroua* (male elder) associated with the department: in a phrase reminiscent of Tawhai he pronounced himself a Scotsman. By invoking his Scottish ancestry he was trying to stress to everyone that they all shared in several genealogies; he could no more deny his Scottish forebears than his Māori ones. I also understood the remark as an oblique warning against the dangers of fracturing the class and the course. One of the Māori students provided another answer when she quoted a *whakataukī* (proverb) invoking cooperation: “*Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora te manuhiri*” (With your food basket and my food basket, the guest is well).⁶ To which I responded that we all had some piece of knowledge that could be deposited in the *kete* (kit) of this class. When these were all taken together we were collectively enriched.

I also sought to respond to the various comments and criticisms leveled earlier by the students. I recognized the wish for a *kaupapa Māori* and for indigenous writers who respected the cultural values that belonged to the *tīpuna* of the past and their associated stories. I sympathized with the fear that my approach and that of the authors of the course texts rendered these pasts as dead objects. But my answer remained that an analysis of a text, far from destroying the *ihi*, *wehi*, or *wana* of the story, only

enhanced and deepened our appreciation and understanding of it. If it did otherwise, then I would be the first to toss it aside. As for the existence of too many Pākehā writers I believed that the complaints missed crucial points behind the selection. The writers were selected because they provided the kind of analytical approach to texts that I sought for this course. Focusing on their ethnic origins overlooked the crucial influence of both the indigenous texts and associates or advisers on the writers' interpretations. Selecting authors simply on the grounds of their ethnic identity smacked of the kind of nativist argument that sometimes threatens to cripple the intellectual vitality of Māori studies and, more particularly, Māori history.

I believe that students of the *kōrero nehe* (history) of Māori should be fully conversant with the international world of ideas. I believe that they should have the confidence to review, criticize, or deploy ideas and methodologies in the fuller appreciation and enrichment of the world of *mātauranga Māori*. This fuller understanding also permits the rejection of such knowledge, but only after a sufficiently thoroughgoing and rigorous attempt to comprehend it. As the head of the Māori Studies Department commented in a conversation, "Reading a book is the most liberating of experiences."

Debate among Māori Studies Staff

This debate about the content of Māori 307 not only took place between myself and the students but among the teaching staff of the Māori Studies Department. A couple of colleagues suggested adding some indigenous authors to my reading list. My initial response was to defend my original choice of course reading, arguing that I did not want to add indigenous authors merely as a device to pacify student criticism. After further reflection, I have accepted the value of deploying as additional material the texts that were referred to in the readings I had already selected. The selection gives students the opportunity to compare the original vernacular texts against one author's reading of them.

The resistance I encountered from students may also have arisen from other factors. A Māori Studies colleague suspected one such factor was my own ethnicity, insofar as other staff, all of whom are Māori, use European ideas and writers in their courses. The combination of a Pākehā reading and a white teacher may have proved too combustible. This is obviously impossible to resolve. One answer was that adopted by the *kuia*

(senior woman) of the department in her talk with the Māori 307 class: she reminded the students of the Māori teachers who had taught me. Only this affiliation can, after all, justify my presence before them. Similar dilemmas are faced by other Pākehā researchers and teachers in Māori studies: people who do not know their intellectual *whakapapa* are the most critical of that European presence. As for the ethnicity of the authors of the readings, the head of the Māori Studies Department commented to a later Māori 307 seminar class that students should look less at the writer than at the material and see what they could take from it.

Some of my colleagues made delightfully colorblind responses. They reminded me that I had been the best applicant for the job: my appointment had nothing to do with being Pākehā; I was to stop making such connections. This view is frequently found among staff in Departments of Māori Studies, all of whom, regardless of their ethnic origin, derive their learning from the same sources of knowledge and are committed to the same ends: advancing the standing of Māori studies in the university and teaching the next generation. Because of the power differential existing between staff and students, Māori students are not in a position to assess the potential contributions of their Pākehā teachers so easily.

Certain colleagues put forward quite a different reading of the encounter in Māori 307. The students' critical responses originated not so much in the material but from the students themselves: many of them were still in the process of comprehending their Māori identity and distinguishing it from their Pākehā genealogical and cultural inheritance. For some, the problem may also have stemmed from encountering a different learning environment, namely, a seminar where everyone was expected to undertake close textual readings. Critical reading and analysis, involving seeing the positive and negative features of a text, was still new to a number of them. The problem too, they pointed out, ought not to be taken in isolation: the same students were often critical of other courses and teachers in the Māori Studies Department. The encounter was not simply one of accepting or rejecting the validity of a teacher who happened to be Pākehā, but of dealing with the demands and expectations of more advanced academic study.

Other Comments and Observations

In the course of developing a Māori history stream I have heard or read several other comments that are worth recording. One mature Māori stu-

dent who had heard me lecturing in Māori 207 as well as on nineteenth-century New Zealand history made an interesting remark regarding the responses of the Māori 307 students (many of whom had taken the previous course). He suggested that through my lecturing in Māori 207, which stressed a critical reading of texts often collected and recorded by Pākehā scholars last century, I may have helped stimulate students to take the first step on an intellectual journey of critical commentary. I was now reaping this selfsame critical enthusiasm in Māori 307. Individual students would come to their own decisions on whether they accepted or rejected the further steps on the intellectual journey that I was mapping out at that level. As a student friend observed, I was typical of lecturers who earnestly wanted every student to share their own intellectual preferences. In the same vein, a letter in *Critic*, the Otago University students' newspaper, once described me as the History Department's double agent in Māori Studies. The reference caused much hilarity among my colleagues. Which side did I really belong to? I remarked on the frequently fatal fate of double agents. The letter's spy analogy disguised a serious observation: the demands, difficulties, and dangers encountered by those who try simultaneously to work both sides of the fence. This is a position all the lecturers in Māori Studies, in various ways, have to deal with. What location would I claim as mine? Was I in a sort of "no man's land," an exile? Could I be trusted by others who occupied a more certain and defined position? Was the ambiguous and ambivalent life of a spy desirable for everyone? Or was I, without realizing it, entangled by connections and associations with both sides of the cultural and ethnic divide of New Zealand, not quite in exile because the attachments from other places still adhered to me?

One final question was asked by a student in Māori 307 when thanking Klaus Neumann for taking a class during a visit to Dunedin: he wondered, in Māori (which Klaus could not understand and which I neglected to translate till later) who could teach a Māori history class? He did not know. He was, of course, referring to the presence and teaching authority not only of Klaus but of myself. At the end of the encounter in Māori 307 a week or so later, the same student got up and answered his question. He had not known the answer when he first raised the question, but today he could say I was the appropriate person. While I thanked him I wondered how much this response was conditioned by the presence of the *kaumātua* of the department. There is no final answer.

FORMATION OF INTELLECTUAL *AUKATI*

This debate about the content of a Māori history course at the University of Otago echoes wider issues that have occupied New Zealand intellectuals for some years. The construction of the Māori history stream in order to connect the two disciplines of history and Māori studies has proved vulnerable to the selfsame dilemma: how to define and practice biculturalism. Too often the only response of Pākehā historians at least has been to encourage talented Māori scholars to address Māori topics and issues. Though entirely laudable, this assumes that such intellectuals will want to restrict themselves, in a sort of latterday knowledge ghetto, to a Māori topic. Such a decision also allows Pākehā not to engage with or even encounter *mātauranga Māori*: they no longer have to wrestle in their intellectual work with the language or its associated cultural values. Most important, behind this rationalization of New Zealand intellectual labor is an implicit assumption, or so it seems to me, that the wider and whiter intellectual community is able to make such decisions. This form of colonial adjudication is not ameliorated by the existence of Māori historians advocating the same solution: they are simply mirroring the Pākehā-formulated status quo. Neither side has grasped the more difficult and dangerous task of undertaking a journey outside these familiar positions.

In an earlier paper I characterized this division of labor as an *aukati* (boundary) between Pākehā and Māori scholars (Reilly 1993). In recent New Zealand history the *aukati* referred to the line drawn between the territory occupied by the *Kīngitanga* (Māori King Movement), still called the King Country, and the surrounding European settlements guarded by militia and armed constabulary units. Like this *aukati*, the present-day boundaries between Māori and Pākehā learning continue to be defined by guardians who insist on preventing passage. This may be a situation some Māori (and maybe some Pākehā) might like to insist on, but I draw my inspiration for the Māori history courses from different sources. I am reminded of the connections made by Tawhai, by Māori women and Irishmen, by the Māori who worked as sailors on ships traveling round the world and who returned home with trunks full of goods and stories to tell, and by Pākehā-Māori beachcombers. All of them found passage to other worlds, from which they derived a degree of understanding, insight,

or empathy. I would like to think that similar connections between the Pākehā practice of history and the learning found in Māori studies and among Māori students could be made at the crossover point marked by the Māori history courses.

CONCLUSION

Like their teachers, such courses must occupy a liminal position. From my own experience I might characterize this place as an intensely awkward one, akin to being caught on a barbed-wire fence. Yet it is a position that has to be experienced on occasion by all the participants. The situation of Māori 307 and other such courses facing the occupation of this twilight zone is obviously not easy. I do not think that there can be any quick conclusion or solution to the dilemma that I and the students of Māori 307 face. We can only participate in a process of discussion and debate, perhaps not always as pleasant and constructive as I would like, but nevertheless a process that stresses the value, vitality, and strengths of the opinions and their respective contributors.

I began this essay by noting the influence of Māori oratory. A *whaikōrero* is completed by a song, ideally with some relevance to the substance of the speech. I will therefore conclude by quoting a few lines from a Pākehā poem as the *kīnaki* (relish) of what I have been addressing. The poet is the English Catholic convert and Jesuit, Gerard Manley Hopkins; the poem is one of his sonnets, composed while he taught in Ireland, a place he clearly experienced as a form of exile:

To seem the stranger lies my lot, my life
Among strangers.

...

England, whose honour O all my heart woos, wife
To my creating thought, would neither hear
Me, were I pleading, plead nor do I: I weary
of idle a being but by where wars are rife.

I am in Ireland now; now I am at a third
Remove.

...

Only what word

Wisest my heart breeds dark heaven's baffling ban
 Bars or hell's spell thwarts. This to hoard unheard,
 Heard unheeded, leaves me a lonely began.

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SINCE FIRST *writing*, this paper has taken on a life of its own, being subjected to numerous readings by different academics, students, and friends who have cheered me by finding much in it of relevance to themselves. I also want to acknowledge the early encouragement of Klaus Neumann, who first asked me to write a paper on teaching Māori history for a panel on the theme of *Messy Entanglements in Postcolonial Histories* at the Tenth Pacific History Association Conference. Versions of the paper have also been presented as a seminar in the Department of Māori Studies, University of Otago, Dunedin, and at the 1994 conference of the New Zealand Historical Association. I am grateful to the conference organizers for accepting what was very much a last-minute offering. I appreciated the interest and support given by members of both audiences, in particular, Anituatua Black, Giselle Byrnes, Bronwyn Dalley, Godfrey Pohatu, Anna Shnukal, and Jim Williams. Last, I wish to thank the following for their advice: Hana O'Regan, James Ritchie, Jan Wilson, an anonymous reviewer, David Hanlon, and the editorial board of *The Contemporary Pacific*. None of them, of course, is responsible for the final text.

Notes

1 Robert MacDonald (1989) has also written a memoir of his own personal engagement with New Zealand, both his growing up and participation in the Māori land protests during 1984.

2 "Aotearoa and Te Waipounamu" is a South Island Māori expression for the North and South Islands. Where I mention Aotearoa on its own, I am following the better-known North Island usage of this term to mean the whole of New Zealand.

3 Given the sensitivity of much of the material I am discussing in this paper, I am withholding the names of any current staff and students at the University of Otago.

4 Some of the issues alluded to here and elsewhere are touched on by James Ritchie (1992).

5 Some of these events are mentioned in Reilly (1993). However, in that paper I did not comment about the responses of my colleagues in the Department of History to avoid giving offense.

6 I am grateful to Mrs Anituatua Black of the Department of Māori Studies for providing me with the text of this *whakatauki* and explaining its significance.

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