JPS

The Journal
of the
Polynesian Society

VOLUME 127 No.4 DECEMBER 2018

THE POLYNESIAN SOCIETY
THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND

WHAT DOES HINE-NUI-TE-PŌ LOOK LIKE? A CASE STUDY OF ORAL TRADITION, MYTH AND LITERATURE IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

SIMON PERRIS
Victoria University of Wellington

Missteps and controversies notwithstanding, the 2016 Disney film *Moana* sparked an unprecedented global interest in Polynesian society and culture, especially myth, and in particular the demigod Māui.[1] Since then, the announcement of a Tahitian-language version and the release of Māori- and Hawaiian-language versions have underscored the difference between pan-Pacific traditions, pan-Polynesian traditions and traditions unique to specific islands, regions, villages, tribes and individuals. To put it bluntly, though *Moana* has enshrined Māui (at least for the rest of the world) as *the* Polynesian hero, it remains an open question how useful the concept of a "Hawaiian Māui" is, let alone a "Polynesian Māui" or a "Pacific Māui". What is more, the Māori-language *Moana* offers those of us in Aotearoa (New Zealand) a timely reminder: Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga—Māui as he is often known here—is related to but different from Māui-ki'iki'i (Hawai'i), Ti'iti'i (Sāmoa) and the like (Luomala 1949).[2]

This difference is crucial. What most distinguishes Māui in New Zealand from Māui anywhere else is his final exploit: failing to overcome the goddess of the underworld, Hine-nui(-i)-te-pō ('Great lady of the night') and dying as a result. Despite being known to folklorists throughout the world (and described in manuscripts from around the archipelago of New Zealand), Māui's encounter with Hine-nui-te-pō is historically attested only in Māori oral traditions (Best 1982: 384; Luomala 1949). In this respect above all, the New Zealand Māui is unique and incredibly influential, with his attack on Hine-nui-te-pō now established as a fixture in world mythology, including elsewhere in Polynesia where she was not known historically (see below).

During the development of *Moana*, the volcanic goddess Te Kā ('Blazing', 'Burning') was originally named Te Pō ('Night', 'Darkness') in reference to Hine-nui-te-pō. In one story from New Zealand, Hine-nui-te-pō is also the one from whom Māui steals fire, rather than Mahuika, as is standard elsewhere (Te Rangikāheke in Thornton 1992: 38–42). At the end of the film, in turn, Te Kā turns out to be one and the same as the beneficent maternal deity Te Fiti, whose heart has been stolen by Māui. This recalls the Māori myth of Māui and Hine-nui-te-pō: like Te Kā/Te Fiti, Hine-nui-te-pō is a female supernatural figure, with two distinct personae, who has suffered mistreatment by a male figure—in this instance the *atua* 'deity' Tāne (see below)—and

Journal of the Polynesian Society, 2018, 127 (4): 365–388;
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.15286/jps.127.4.365-388

who becomes a major antagonist for Māui. Understanding the New Zealand Māui and his place vis-à-vis other Polynesian Māui traditions (including Te Kā and *Moana*) entails understanding Hine-nui-te-pō.

To the extent that there is a standard account, the main Hine-nui-te-pō episodes proceed as follows. Tāne, tutelary *atua* of trees, birds and the forest (and, in many traditions, a creation figure), shapes dirt into the first female, Hine-ahu-one ('Girl made from dirt'). He then mates with her; she conceives their daughter, Hine-tītama ('Shining girl', 'Dawn girl'). Tāne later mates with Hine-tītama. When Hine-tītama discovers that her husband is also her father, she flees to the underworld in shame, resisting Tāne's efforts to bring her back, whereupon she takes the name Hine-nui-te-pō. Some say that she also takes on a monstrous form and role as goddess of death and the underworld; others stress her beneficent and maternal aspect (Perris 2015: 88–89).

Māui eventually learns of the power of Hine-nui-te-pō, the underworld goddess (and in some accounts his ancestor) whose katabasis first brought death into the cosmos. He decides to defeat her and, in so doing, defeat death itself; he plans to crawl through her vagina, up into her body and out her mouth, thus reversing the pathway of birth. Māui instructs his companions—brothers or birds—to keep silent and not laugh. He crawls between Hine-nui-te-pō's thighs; they laugh; she wakes and crushes him. And with Māui's passing, mortality becomes permanent. That is: following a recurring interpretation offered by many Māori experts, Hine-nui-te-pō's katabasis is the ultimate cause of mortality, while Māui's death at her hands—thighs—is the proximate cause. As a famous *whakataukī* 'proverb' on life and death says: humankind creates, but Hine-nui-te-pō destroys.[3] Through Hine-nui-te-pō, Polynesian mythmakers in New Zealand gave Māui what one might call an unprecedented "tragic dimension" (Tremewan 2002: 97).

TE RANGIKĀHEKE, "TAMA A RANGI"

Numerous Māori sources (though not quite all) agree on the basic details of the above, and of Hine-nui-te-pō's nature. In particular, a group of 19th-century manuscripts from around the country echo each other with close parallels and similar phrasing: more precisely, manuscripts written by Mohi Ruatapu (Ngāti Porou), Hoani Te Whatahoro (Ngāti Kahungunu), Friedrich Wohlers (dictated to him on Ruapuke Island by people from Kāti Mamoe) and Te Rangikāheke (Te Arawa). Generally speaking, Hine-nui-te-pō lives in the underworld or on the horizon at the edge of the world; she is a humanoid female, typically denoted *ruahine* or *kuia* 'old woman'; her thighs or genitals flash or gleam like lightning as they open and close.[4]

Among these texts, however, one stands out for its historical and literary importance: that of Te Rangikāheke, first published by George Grey in *Ko*

Nga Moteatea me Nga Hakirara o Nga Maori (The Traditional Chants and Songs of the Māori, 1853), then again in *Ko Nga Mahinga a Nga Tupuna Maori* (The Deeds of the Māori Ancestors, 1854), then in English in *Polynesian Mythology* (1855). Of this text, Katherina Luomala (an expert on Māui traditions throughout the Pacific) was moved to assert, "[Te Rangikāheke's] version holds a place comparable to that of Malory's 'Morte d'Arthur' in English literature. Sir George Grey is the Caxton to whom we owe gratitude for preserving this masterpiece of primitive literature" (Luomala 1949: 52). In fact, Te Rangikāheke's is the earliest published and most famous account of Hine-nui-te-pō, and the only early Māori account to describe her in any detail—memorably, influentially so. It is here for the first time, at least as far as the written record is concerned, that Hine-nui-te-pō's four canonical attributes are adumbrated: (i) greenstone eyes, (ii) kelp hair, (iii) obsidian teeth and (iv) barracouta mouth.

Te Rangikāheke, also known as Wiremu Maihi or William Marsh, came from the Rotorua area and was born into the Ngāti Kererū *hapū* 'clan' of the Ngāti Rangiwewehi *iwi* 'tribe' of the Te Arawa confederation (Curnow 1985; Loader 2008). He worked closely with Grey and wrote many manuscripts for him, including one especially famous manuscript which he himself entitled "Tama a Rangi" (Sons of Rangi, GNZMMSS 43), containing the story of Rangi, Papa and their children and the story of Māui and his exploits. Te Rangikāheke originally wrote "Tama a Rangi", however, along with another manuscript, "Tuupuna" (Ancestors, GNZMMSS 44), for the descendants of the ancient ancestors of the Māori people—that is, for indigenous people living in Hawai'i. Many at the time believed that Hawai'i was Hawaiki, the ancient Māori homeland (Curnow 1985: 120–22). And as we know from GNZMMSS 45 ("An Address to the Inhabitants of Hawaiki"), Te Rangikāheke wrote both "Tama a Rangi" and "Tuupuna" so that Hawaiian experts could check the accuracy of his history, down from the origins in Hawaiki (Curnow 2008: 30). One ought to keep in mind, therefore, that Te Rangikāheke's description of Hine-nui-te-pō is that of a single authority from a single *hapū* of a single North Island *iwi*, written for an expert audience of indigenous Hawaiians. All of this brings into sharp relief the particular qualities of "Tama a Rangi": Te Rangikāheke wrote this manuscript for feedback from other Polynesian experts not knowing himself that Hine-nui-te-pō is endemic to New Zealand. Nevertheless, this text soon became, and remains, the standard version of the myth and the standard description of Hine-nui-te-pō in New Zealand and worldwide. The Māori text, written in Te Rangikāheke's own hand in 1849, follows here with authorial orthography, punctuation and capitalisation; the original is one continuous paragraph with lines running to the edge of the page.

GNZMMSS 43 = Te Rangikāheke, "Tama a Rangi" (autograph MS, 1849: 908–9, retranscribed from a facsimile)

> Ka tahi ia ka mea atu, he pehea tona ahuatanga, ka mea ia, te mea e korapu mai ra, he huakanga no nga kuha, te mea e whero mai ra, he whero no roto i ona raho, te mea e auau ra te konapunaputanga he kotamutamutanga no tona hanga konapu raho, he koi mata tonu te ahua, ko te tinana, he tangata ano, engari nga karu he pounamu, ko nga makawe, he rimu-rehia, ko te waha ano he mangaa.
>
> Then he [Māui] said, "What does she look like?" He [Māui's father] answered, "That flashing over there is her thighs opening. The redness comes from inside her labia. The repeated shining is the flash of her brightly shining labia, which are in fact formed from sharp obsidian. Her body is indeed that of a person but her eyes are [as] greenstone, her hair is [as] sea-kelp, and her mouth is like a barracouta's."

Here, Hine-nui-te-pō (not to be confused with her earlier incarnation, Hine-tītama) is a humanoid female, and she may or may not be a giant of some kind. She is undoubtedly monstrous, as the *vagina dentata*—which is not figurative—indicates. In this specific context within Te Rangikāheke's narrative, moreover, she is marked as dangerous and indeed threatening. Māui's father, worried about his son's future, warns Māui of a premonition that his ancestor Hine-nui-te-pō will cause his death. Thereupon follows the above description.

It is important to note the unparalleled description, in this early text, of Hine-nui-te-pō's four canonical attributes: *pounamu* 'greenstone', *rimu-rehia* 'kelp', *matā* 'obsidian, flint' and *mangā* 'barracouta'. In addition to identifying the obsidian teeth in Hine's *vagina dentata*, Te Rangikāheke makes three comparisons: eyes–greenstone, hair–kelp and mouth–barracouta. Crucially, two of these comparisons can be read as figurative expressions, and one of them undoubtedly is figurative. The first two involve a classifying predicate with *he* (X belongs to the class Y). This construction indicates the composition of a thing (A is made of B), but it is also regularly used for metaphors (Joseph 2011: 101). That is: *nga karu he pounamu* could be translated 'her eyes are [made of] greenstone' or 'her eyes are [as] greenstone'; *ko nga makawe, he rimu-rehia* 'as for her hair, it is [as] sea-kelp'. (As in English, the distinction between metaphors and literal predicates can sometimes only be derived from context.)

In the third comparison, however, Te Rangikāheke combines the classifying predicate *he mangaa* 'is [that of] a barracouta' with fronted *ano* to form a figurative construction which grammars typically describe as a simile: *ko te waha <u>ano he</u> mangaa* 'as for her mouth, it is like [that of] a barracouta'. This construction, written *ānō he* in modern orthography, is regularly used

for figurative comparisons (Joseph 2011: 104–5), not unlike the construction *me he* or *me te* (Bauer 1997: 150).[5]

Accordingly, one natural reading of Te Rangikāheke's Māori, setting aside any distinction between a simile and a metaphor, is that Hine-nui-te-pō is a humanoid being with eyes *like* greenstone, hair *like* kelp and a mouth *like* a barracouta's. (We could of course allow a more cautious reading: she has eyes of actual greenstone, hair of actual sea-kelp and a mouth *like* a barracouta's. But more on that later.) The key point of course is that her eyes are green, her hair wavy and her teeth strong and numerous (and gleaming white?)—not to mention her *vagina dentata*, which is common to most other descriptions, too.

We will set aside for now the question of whether these are positive or negative attributes. It remains first to trace the textual history and literary reception of Te Rangikāheke's original Māori description. We will focus on quasi-formulaic descriptions of Hine-nui-te-pō's physiognomy which show clear influence from Te Rangikāheke. This influence is vicarious: Te Rangikāheke's Māori manuscript (held in the Auckland Public Library) is almost never the proximate source for reprints, translations, adaptations and the like; nor is Thornton's edition. What Te Rangikāheke actually wrote is not even the main source. That honour belongs to George Grey's *Ko Nga Mahinga a Nga Tupuna Maori* (1854), which is the de facto basis of all subsequent textual receptions in Māori, though publication in *Ko Nga Moteatea me Nga Hakirara o Nga Maori* (1853) came first. In turn, Grey's *Polynesian Mythology* (1855) has long been the default English source. Not that Grey is a reliable witness; far from it, in fact (Simmons 1966). Curnow (2008: 36–37) lists both *Ko Nga Mahinga* and *Polynesian Mythology* under the heading "Adaptations". At any rate, it is not in doubt that Grey did violence to Te Rangikāheke's writings, in Māori and in English (Loader 2008).

George Grey, *Ko Nga Moteatea me Nga Hakirara o Nga Maori* (1853: xlvi; Grey 1854: 29)

> Ka tahi ia ka mea atu, he pewhea tona ahuatanga? ka mea ia, te mea e korapu mai ra, ko ona mata [eyes]. Ko ona niho [teeth], kei te koi mata, ko te tinana, he tangata ano, e ngari nga karu, he pounamu, ko nga makawe, i rite ki te rimu-rehia, ko te waha, i rite ki te manga.

George Grey, *Polynesian Mythology* (first edition 1855; 1885b: 33)

> Then Maui asked his father, "What is my ancestress Hine-nui-te-po like?" and he answered, "What you see yonder shining so brightly red are her eyes, and her teeth are as sharp and hard as pieces of volcanic glass; her body is like that of a man; and as for the pupils of her eyes, they are jade [*pounamu*]; and her hair is like the tangles of long seaweed, and her mouth is like that of a barracouta."

Most egregiously, though unsurprisingly, Grey bowdlerises the *vagina dentata*. He splits the single image of a glowing-red, obsidian-toothed vulva across two new images not found in Te Rangikāheke's text: (i) red eyes, presumably irises; and (ii) teeth in Hine's actual mouth which are as sharp and hard as obsidian. (This despite printing the Māori reading *kei te koi matā* 'are sharp obsidian', alongside the confusing introduced reference to Hine's *mata* 'eyes'.) Attaching the red glow of the original description to Hine's actual eyes then leaves her pupils available to be compared to *pounamu*. Accordingly, Grey's Hine-nui-te-pō has *pounamu* pupils (i.e., pupils which are literally made of greenstone). The *rimu-rehia*, however, remains stubbornly figurative, as does the barracouta mouth. (It is as though actual greenstone eyes are acceptable but not seaweed hair.) Moreover, these two comparisons are explicitly presented as similes; the well-known construction *i rite ki te* 'just like' has long been considered a means of expressing similes in Māori and is less open to misinterpretation than the construction *ānō he*. The resultant image is thus overdetermined: Hine's mouth is both like a barracouta's *and* full of obsidian-sharp teeth. Overall, then, Grey has thoroughly rewritten Te Rangikāheke's Māori, not only censoring references to Hine's genitalia and introducing new imagery, but also rewording two comparisons to make them both unambiguously figurative.

The section of "Tama a Rangi" which deals with the demigod Māui was, finally, edited and translated in a scholarly edition by Agathe Thornton (1992) under the title "Ko Māui" (Māui). Thornton, formerly a classicist at Otago University, restored an excellent—though not error-free—Māori text (GNZMMSS 43: 896–913), accompanied by an English translation and commentary. When it comes to the description of Hine-nui-te-pō, however, Thornton (1992: 65) overcompensates for Grey's editorialising. She renders the crucial sentence, with its three comparisons, as follows: "Her body is human, but her eyes are greenstone, her hair is sea-grass and her mouth is a barracouta." Here, in contrast to Grey's texts (both English and Māori), and in contrast to my preferred reading of Te Rangikāheke's Māori, Hine's eyes are actually made of *pounamu* (as in Grey), her hair is actually *rimu-rehia* and—most bizarrely of all—her mouth *is actually* a barracouta. At this point, we must either read 'her mouth is [actually] that of a barracouta' (as Biggs 1964: 43 translates, for example) or else imagine some kind of hybrid creature with an entire barracouta grafted onto the jaw in place of a mouth. This second option, 'her mouth is [actually] a barracouta', seems prima facie unlikely. It is certainly out of step with conceptions of Hine-tītama and Hine-nui-te-pō expressed elsewhere in 19th-century Māori writings (see below). Nor is the first option, 'her mouth is [actually] that of a barracouta', the most natural reading of Te Rangikāheke's Māori. A more natural way of

expressing that idea in Māori would be something like *ko tōna waha anō, ko tō te mangā*, "her mouth itself *is* a barracouta's".

It has been quite rightly suggested (by one of the anonymous referees) that one can always read *ano* as Thornton does.[6] In modern orthography, that is: *ko te waha anō, he mangā* 'as to the mouth itself, it is that of a barracouta'. And indeed, one can read the text in this way. But a range of factors militate against doing so. For one thing, there is the word order. Earlier in the passage, intensifying *anō* follows the *he*-predicate: *ko te tinana, he tangata ano* 'as to her body, it is indeed that of a person'. Later, however, *ano* precedes the *he*-predicate: *ano he mangaa* 'is like [that of] a barracouta'. This inclines me to associate it with what follows. The use of *engari* 'but' likewise emphasises a contrast between Hine-nui-te-pō's *āhua* 'form, shape' and the figurative comparisons which flesh out the specific attributes of that form.

Tellingly, Te Rangikāheke himself used this same construction in a similar passage, again in association with the word *āhua* to denote the basic shape of a thing which is then described through figurative comparisons. In "Ko nga mahi a Tiki-Tawhito-Ariki" (GNZMMSS 79, written by Te Rangikāheke before 1854), Tiki is asked about a tattooed man and replies: *Kei te ahua o tona kanohi ano he houhounga na te tieke, kei ona papa ano he anuhe tawa-tawa.* That is, in Biggs's translation: "His face [lit. 'on the form of his face'] is as if (*ano he*) pecked by the saddle-back … and his thighs are marked like (*ano he*) a mackerel" (Biggs 1952: 184, Māori text at 188–89).

What is more, Te Rangikāheke repeatedly uses figurative *ānō he* in a similar narrative context elsewhere, in a sequence of stories about *taniwha* 'monsters'.[7] In one passage, warriors hunting a *taniwha* on land are terrified by *nga tuaitara e tutu haere ana mai, ano he urutira Taniwha Moana nui!* 'the spines getting closer and closer, like the dorsal fins of a great sea monster!' (Cooper 1851: 133). One *taniwha* is heard roaring from his den in a cliff-face, *ano he wheke rakau* 'like the creaking of a tree' (1851: 157, with corrections per Grey 1928: 134). Another *taniwha* is not only *ano he kiore e mau ana* 'caught like a rat' but also *ano he tohora kei te akau e takoto ana* 'lying on the shore like a whale' (1851: 161). He even uses *ānō he* to compare the eyes of a *taniwha* (reflecting the light) to *pounamu*, like Hine-nui-te-pō's eyes: *ano he pounamu kei nga karupango, e titiwha ana* 'it was as if there was greenstone gleaming in its pupils' (1851: 157, with corrections per Grey 1928: 134); one should note that the Māori text as transcribed by Cooper here reads *ano! He pounamu*.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly: we do in fact have a precise contemporary parallel for figurative *ānō he* describing Hine-nui-te-pō. In 1871 Mohi Ruatapu wrote that Hine-nui-te-pō "flashes (*kowhera*) on the horizon like lightning (*ānō he uwira*)" (Reedy 1993: 25). This lightning

is figurative; Hine-nui-te-pō is not a female personification like Whaitiri (Thunder). Ruatapu uses the figurative construction *ānō he* for Hine-nui-te-pō, and it makes sense to read Te Rangikāheke's *ano he mangaa*, in the same narrative context, in the same way.[8]

When interpreting Te Rangikāheke's simile *ano he mangaa* 'like [that of] a barracouta', Thornton would seem to have read *anō* in its intensifying adverbial role—something like "indeed", "actually" or "in fact"—and to have missed or at least ignored the use of *ānō*-fronted classifying predicates in figurative expressions, a usage known from elsewhere in Te Rangikāheke's oeuvre (as above).[9] Pressing a distinction between literal and figurative expressions in this way leads Thornton (1992) to give Hine-nui-te-pō greenstone eyes, sea-kelp hair and an actual barracouta for a mouth:

> Grey seems to have found the original text too stark. So he turned the original statement of identity into a comparison: 'her hair is like sea-grass, and her mouth is like a barracouta.' Grey does not alter the direct identification in the phrase 'the eyes were greenstone'. The composite nature of Hine-nui-te-pō is comparable to many composite creatures in ancient Near Eastern cultures and in early Greece. (Thornton 1992: 109)

Thornton is quite right that Grey read figurative expressions in Te Rangikāheke's text and rewrote the Māori to clarify that reading. As I see it, however, she has ignored the possibility (I would say near certainty) that Te Rangikāheke himself wrote figuratively in the relevant passage. This has led her to assume that Grey's more explicit figurative expressions (using the word *rite* in his Māori text) actively misrepresent—rather than clarify—the supposed "original statement of identity", that is, the sequence of supposedly literal predicates introduced by *he*. The impulse to preserve literal meaning from figurative impositions is laudable (e.g., Orbell 1985: 1–2). In this instance, however, the impulse is misguided: Hine-nui-te-pō does not have a barracouta instead of a mouth; nor indeed, I argue, does she have the mouth of an actual barracouta. At the same time, Thornton brings a classicist's background to bear on the content of the passage, implying that Hine-nui-te-pō is like Scylla, Medusa, the Sphinx or some other creature from world myth. Hence the strange notion that Hine's mouth "*is* a barracouta"; she thus becomes a monstrous female hybrid comparable to figures in Greek and Near Eastern myth.

Now one could say (as an anonymous referee suggested) that the *precise* meaning of the phrase *ano he mangaa* is not really important, and that what matters is the basic point, namely that Hine-nui-te-pō's mouth shares some salient quality with a barracouta. This would be an entirely reasonable

approach, but in my view it will not quite suffice here. Elsdon Best, for one, approaches Hine-nui-te-pō (in a manuscript completed around 1930 but unpublished for many decades afterwards) from a quite different angle, on both ethnographic and philological grounds. He first attributes to Te Mātorohanga—the famous Ngāti Kahungunu *tohunga* 'tribal expert' to whom much of Percy Smith's *Lore of the Whare-wānanga* is attributed—the following description (1982: 380):

> Now Maui-tikitiki consented to go and slay Hine-titama, she who is also named Hine-nui-te-po, she whose eyes gleam, whose teeth are white as those of the *mako* shark, whose hair resembles the *karengo* seaweed, whose strength is immeasurable, and whose smooth skin resembled the blushing cheek of a maid.[10]

Te Rangikāheke's *mangā* is typically understood to be *Thyrsites atun*, a fish found in Southern Hemisphere seas (known in South Africa as the "snoek" and in Australasia as the "barracouta"). Best's preferred alternative, *mako* 'mako shark', is typically understood to refer to the genus *Isurus.* One might well ask: what difference does it make? Best (1982: 384) later clarifies the point, namely, that *mako* teeth were used in Māori jewellery, and that Hine-nui-te-pō (Hine-tītama) is *beautiful*:

> The description of Hine-nui-te-po is spoilt in one published version by the statement that her mouth resembled that of a shark (*mango*), while in another it is said to have been like that of a barracoota (*manga*). The narrator or translator probably missed the point as it appears in other recitals, that the teeth of Hine resembled those of the *mako* shark [i.e., mako shark, genus *Isurus*], which are remarkably white and are much admired by the Maori and so used as ear pendants. Hine-nui-te-po is but another name of Hine-titama, the Dawn Maid, whose beauty has been acclaimed by man since the days of the gods.

Textual questions about the form of Hine-nui-te-pō's body are in fact crucial to what kind of *tangata* 'person, character' she really is, at least in Te Rangikāheke's estimation. All of which brings us back to that 1849 manuscript. What Te Rangikāheke himself wrote was: *ko te tinana, he tangata ano, engari nga karu he pounamu, ko nga makawe, he rimu-rehia, ko te waha ano he mangaa*. That is: 'Her body is indeed that of a person, but her eyes are [like] greenstone, her hair is [like] sea-kelp and her mouth is like [that of] a barracouta (*mangā*)'.

In *Nga Moteatea* (1853) and the first edition of *Nga Mahinga* (1854), Grey printed the correct reading *mangā* 'barracouta'. In the 1885 second edition of *Nga Mahinga* (titled *Nga Mahi a Nga Tupuna*), however, he printed

mangō 'shark, dogfish' (*makō* in South Island dialects). The third edition, corrected by Williams, then restored *mangā* 'barracouta' (Grey 1885a: 30, 1928: 22). *Nga Moteatea* and the second edition of *Nga Mahinga* would thus appear to be the exact texts ("one published version", "another") which Best criticises for comparing Hine-nui-te-pō to a shark (*mangō*) and a barracouta (*mangā*). This leaves a third option: *mako* 'mako shark'. Best takes this to be the correct, traditional, authentic comparison, and not without some justification, given the well-attested use of *mako* teeth in Māori jewellery. It turns out, then, that the apparent confusion between these words for fish and sharks goes beyond orthography, lexicography or natural history and bears on two important questions: (i) What exactly does Hine-nui-te-pō look like? A barracouta (*mangā*), a mako shark (*mako*) or a dogfish (*mangō*/*makō*)?[11] (ii) Is she malevolent and monstrous or benevolent and beautiful?

AFTER-IMAGES OF HINE-NUI-TE-PŌ

With respect to those questions, it may surprise some to learn that earlier studies prefigure later progressive attitudes to Hine-nui-te-pō and Hine-tītama. In the same vein as Best's corrective quoted above, Alexander Reed (1963: 47) made the point again in 1963:

> Her place in Maori thought should be considered carefully. She is dreaded as the goddess of death, but must also be remembered as [a] young woman fleeing from her shame, yet imbued with love for her innocent offspring and their descendants. In the later legend of Maui and his attempted conquest of death, a picture is conjured up of the dread figure of night swallowing up mankind, but in the legend of creation she is a beneficent being devoted to the welfare of her children. ... Tane-matua is the protector of men in life, Hine-nui-te-po the guardian of their souls in death.

Not only that, but now, over a century and a half after Te Rangikāheke wrote, Hine-nui-te-pō has taken on a remarkable life of her own in numerous texts by Pākehā *and* Māori writers.[12] Most striking of all is the specific recurring description of Hine-nui-te-pō's physiognomy as described by Te Rangikāheke: (i) *pounamu* eyes, (ii) kelp hair, (iii) obsidian-toothed *vagina dentata* and (iv) barracouta teeth. Descriptions like this, especially in poetry or fiction, are typically not attributed to any one source. Yet there is an astonishing continuity between them, as well as a certain flexibility. Older accounts and versions for children usually omit the obsidian *vagina dentata* or substitute obsidian teeth in Hine's actual mouth (though see Hyland and Puru 2003: 34). One still finds confusion between "barracouta", "barracouda" and "barracuda"—not unlike the oscillation between *mangā*, *mangō* and *makō*

observed earlier. Alpers (1964: 67), Ihimaera (2007: 74), Jillian Sullivan (2007: 25) and others describe Hine-nui-te-pō's mouth as being the same as, or like, a "barracuda". But just as *pounamu* is not jasper (see below), *Thyrsites atun* and the tropical barracuda (*Sphyraena*) are different species.

Nevertheless, even allowing for differences of detail and interpretation, modern *descriptions* of Hine-nui-te-pō's physical form—as we shall see—are remarkably formulaic and textually close to that of Te Rangikāheke, allowing for the vagaries of translation, transmission, bowdlerisation, context and adaptation. It is beyond doubt that Te Rangikāheke's 1849 manuscript "Tama a Rangi" is the ultimate source for all the descriptions of Hine-nui-te-pō quoted below and indeed for the vast majority of instances in New Zealand literature, at least where *pounamu*, kelp, obsidian or barracouta make an appearance. As the following retrospect will bear out, Hine is typically described in New Zealand literature via a combinatory poetics, with four images (*pounamu*, kelp, obsidian and barracouta) figuratively or literally deployed, almost universally, to depict Hine's eyes, hair, genitalia and mouth.[13] To put it differently: thanks to Te Rangikāheke (and George Grey), *pounamu*, kelp, obsidian (or flint) and barracouta (or barracuda or even sharks in general) have been firmly established as synecdochic attributes of Hine-nui-te-pō.

John White, *The Ancient History of the Maori, His Mythology and Traditions*, vol. 2 (1887: 106)

> Her eyes, which you see flashing yonder, are dark as greenstone; her teeth are sharp as obsidian; her mouth is like that of the barracouta; the hair of her head like the kelp of the sea: her body only is in human form.

James Izett, *Maori Lore: The Traditions of the Maori People* (1904: 76)

> Yonder two fiery clouds that shine so brightly yellow might be taken for her eyes were they set with pupils of burnished jasper; like to masses of long sea-weed and ocean tangle is her hair; like that of a barracouta is her mouth, arrayed with teeth as hard and sharp as rows of white volcanic glass; her figure partakes to that of a man, her arms being all embracing; her feet—.

Wilhelm Dittmer, *Te Tohunga: The Ancient Legends and Traditions of the Maoris* (1907: 62)

> Ah, my son, her eyes, which you see flashing yonder, are dark as greenstone; her teeth are sharp as obsidian; her mouth is like the mouth of the Baracuta [*sic*], and the hair of her head is the sea-weed; her body alone has human form!

James K. Baxter, "East Coast Journey" (1980: 273)

This brief poem from *Pig Island Letters*, written in 1962–63, concludes as follows:

> In great dryness of mind I heard the voice of the sea
> Reverberating, and thought: As a man
> Grows older he does not want beer, bread, or the prancing flesh,
> But the arms of the eater of life, Hine-nui-te-po,
> With teeth of obsidian and hair like kelp
> Flashing and glimmering on the edge of the horizon.[14]

A.W. Reed, *Treasury of Maori Folklore* (1963: 142)

> Maui was told that Hine-nui-te-po could be seen on the horizon of the underworld where the flashing lights came from her eyes. They were red and glaring like volcanic fire, with pupils cold and green like pounamu (greenstone); her hair was like long, tossing strands of seaweed; her body was that of a man; her mouth like a shark's, and her teeth like tuhua (obsidian or volcanic glass).

Antony Alpers, *Maori Myths and Tribal Legends* (1964: 67)

> What you see there is Hine nui, flashing where the sky meets the earth. Her body is like a woman's, but the pupils of her eyes are greenstone and her hair is kelp. Her mouth is that of a barracuda, and in the place where men enter her she has sharp teeth of obsidian and greenstone.

Bruce Biggs, "The Oral Literature of the Polynesians" (1964: 43)

> "The red glow of the western sky emanates from her," said the father. "Her body is that of a human being, but her eyes are greenstone, her hair is sea-kelp, and her mouth is that of a barracouta."

Bruce Biggs, "Maori Myths and Traditions" (1966: 450)

> "The red flashing in the western sky emanates from her," said the father. "Her body is that of a human being, but her eyes are greenstone, her hair is sea-kelp, and her mouth is that of a barracouta."

Witi Ihimaera, *Tangi* (1973: 93)

> As Hinetitama, you were the dawn. Now your mouth is that of a barracouta, your eyes flecked with greenstone. Your hair is sea-kelp still moist with the sea.

Hone Tuwhare, "Ron Mason" (1974, in Ihimaera and Long 1982: 47)

> my old lady, Hine-nui-te-Po, bless the old bitch:
> shrewd guardian of that infrequent duende
> that you and Lorca knew about, playing hard-to-get

Patricia Grace and Robyn Kahukiwa, *Wahine Toa* (1984: 58)

> My vagina, where he [Māui] must enter, is set with teeth of obsidian, and is a gateway through which only those who have already achieved death may freely pass.

Witi Ihimaera, *The Matriarch* (1986: 3–4, 233, 251; 2009: 10)

> Hine nui te Po, she with the human body, but whose eyes were greenstone, her hair sea-kelp, and her mouth that of a barracouta.[15]

> … Her mouth is that of a barracouta. Her eyes are flecked with greenstone. Her hair is sea-kelp, still moist from the sea.

> … Her eyes [i.e., those of the titular matriarch Riripeti "Artemis" Mahana] were wide and unseeing. They were no longer green. Within their depths a form was stirring. Hair like kelp. Teeth like the barracouta.

Patricia Grace, *Cousins* (1992: 155)
The first section ("Missy") of *Cousins* begins with this epigraph:

> Woman with
> Obsidian eye
> Made us mortal

Robert Sullivan, *Maui: Legends of the Outcast* (1996: n.p.)

> There at the rim of the Earth where it meets the sky. You can see the red glow as she opens and closes herself. She has the body of a woman but her eyes are stone, her hair is kelp and her teeth are those of the barracouda.

Queenie Rikihana Hyland and Patrick Puru, *Illustrated Māori Myths and Legends* (2003: 40; original 1997)

> Ah, my son, her eyes, which you see flashing, are dark as greenstone; her teeth are as sharp as lava rock; the opening between her legs is surrounded with volcanic flint rock; her mouth is like the mouth of a barracouta, and the hair on her head is seaweed. Don't be deceived because her body has human form!

Robert Sullivan, "*Weaving Earth and Sky: Myths and Legends of Aotearoa*" (2002: 75–76)

> She flashed red there on that western horizon. … her hair straggled like pieces of seaweed. When she opened her mouth I could see her teeth were made of black volcanic glass. Even through her closed eyelids I could see the red glow of her eyes. She had the body of a woman.

Witi Ihimaera, *The Rope of Man* (2005: 87)

In this revision of *Tangi*, Ihimaera retracted the description of Hine-nui-te-pō from the 1973 novel (quoted above):

> Some people consider that when she [Hine-nui-te-pō] transformed from Hinetitama, child of the dawn, she became a monstrous inversion of herself. Her eyes were said to be flecked with greenstone. Her hair was sea-kelp still moist from the sea. She was a fearsome apparition with a mouth like a barracouta. I like to think of her differently. Not as some Maori Medusa but, rather, as the Great Mother ….

Witi Ihimaera, "ask the posts of the house" (2007: 74)

> Malevolent Kali-like Goddess of Death? With eyes of paua, locks of hair—medusae of barracuda—and vaginal [*sic*] dentata? No. She is Great Mother of the Underworld. Hers is the redemptive role and it is through her that we achieve forgiveness.

Jillian Sullivan, *Myths and Legends: The Gift of Stories from Our Cultures* (2007: 25)

> Māui looked again to the flashing of light in the sky.
> "So what is she like, this goddess of death?"
> "That red is the shining of her eyes," his father said. "Her pupils gleam like pounamu. Her hair tangles and tosses like seaweed. Her body is strong like a warrior. Her mouth is vast like a barracuda, and between her thighs, her vagina is set with teeth of obsidian."[16]

Robert Sullivan, "Cassino Città Martire" (2010: 40)

The titular poem from Sullivan's collection *Cassino: City of Martyrs* refers to "Hine's / barracuda teeth smile".

Karen Healey, *Guardian of the Dead* (2010: 303–5)

> She was sleeping against the wall, her knees tucked firmly against her chest. Her black hair fell over her shoulders and coiled on the cavern floor in thick strands, gleaming like kelp. … Hine-nui-te-pō, guardian of the dead, once Hine-titama, the maiden of the dawn, first woman born of woman, and the mother of humanity, opened her greenstone-dark eyes and roared. … "Woman," she said, through a mouth filled with sharp obsidian teeth. "Why do you disturb me?" … There was another cave between her thighs, filled with a second set of obsidian teeth.

Here, in the climactic scene of Healey's award-winning young-adult urban fantasy *Guardian of the Dead*, the protagonist–narrator Ellie meets Hine-nui-te-pō (Healey 2017; Perris 2017: 191–93). In this syncretistic and fantastical

scene, we find represented all four of the standard physiognomic attributes, with obsidian teeth (rather than barracouta or shark teeth) in addition to the obsidian *vagina dentata*.

There are likely many more such descriptions of Hine-nui-te-pō in New Zealand literature. Even so, this survey already reveals a remarkable continuity and flexibility across numerous retellings, paraphrases, fiction and poetry. In any case, modern interpretations of Hine-nui-te-pō vary; reinterpreting her has become as much a political as a literary or mythopoetic act. Witi Ihimaera in particular has revised Hine-nui-te-pō's physical form and eschatological role in numerous successive descriptions, from *Tangi* in 1973 to "ask the posts of the house" more than 30 years later (Perris 2015). This revision was, at least in part, a response to Atareta Poananga's evisceration of *The Matriarch* in the feminist magazine *Broadsheet* (Perris 2015: 95–97). Robyn Kahukiwa's paintings and Patricia Grace's text in *Wahine Toa* (1984) likewise rescued Hine from patriarchal myth-making. In Apirana Taylor's 1990 short story *Carving up the Cross*, a special Catholic crucifix carved by Māori carvers is rejected by both a Māori elder and a Pākehā priest, specifically due to its graphic portrayal of Hine-nui-te-pō: the crucifix displays "the tara [vulva] of Hine nui te po right in the centre" (Taylor 1990: 122; see also Heim 1998: 205). In this story, the image of Hine-nui-te-pō comes to signify not only the potential for Māori–Christian syncretism, but also the vanishing point at which cross-cultural understanding is no longer possible. Most recently, Karen Healey (2017: 80–81) has outright disowned her own depiction of Hine-nui-te-pō in *Guardian of the Dead* (quoted above) as an act of Pākehā cultural appropriation, maintaining that Hine-nui-te-pō is a powerful, not villainous, symbol of female strength.

HINE-NUI-TE-PŌ AND WORLD MYTH

Hine-nui-te-pō lives on in a literary tradition which now—in an increasingly connected, globalised world—encompasses comparative or world literature, even "world myth". Barry Powell's *World Myth* (2014), a survey of world myth by a distinguished classicist, includes in a chapter on "Oceanic Myth" a modified extract from Grey's version of Te Rangikāheke's Māui story.

Barry Powell, *World Myth* (2014: 452–53)

> Then Maui asked his father, "What is my ancestress Great Hina of the Night like?"
>
> And he answered, "What you see yonder shining so brightly red are her eyes, and her teeth are as sharp and hard as pieces of volcanic glass. Her body is like that of a man, and as for the pupils of her eyes, they are jasper. And her hair is like tangles of long seaweed, and her mouth is like a barracuda's."

This is a long way off Te Rangikāheke's Māori, but it also departs significantly from Grey's English (compare Grey 1885b: 33). First, Powell writes not of Hine-nui-te-pō but of "Great Hina of the Night" (i.e., *Hina*-nui-te-pō), a subtly misleading error. Numerous Māori names of mythological figures are based on both roots, *Hine* and *Hina*. But *hine* and *hina* are different words. Māori *hine* 'girl, woman, female' derives from Proto-Polynesian (PPN) *-fine* 'female'. Cognates include *teine* (Samoan), *mahine* (Tahitian), *taahine* (Tongan), *wahine* (Hawaiian) and of course *wāhine* (Māori). Hine-nui-te-pō's Māori name, then, translates as 'Great woman of the night' or something similar; otherwise, one typically leaves her name untranslated. Māori and Hawaiian *hina* 'grey' derives from PPN *sina* 'grey', a connection which may have given rise to Hina's status as a moon goddess. Elsewhere in Polynesian myth the cognate figure Sina (Ina, Hina) is very well known as a deity, ancestor or archetypal woman, often the wife of Tinilau (Tigilau, Sinilau, Tinirau) (Tremewan 2002: 154–61). In Māori tradition, however, Hina is typically the name of Māui's wife or sister, much less often of Tinirau's wife (Orbell 1995: 53–54; Reed and Calman 2004: 145–60). The muddled-up name "Great Hina of the Night", used in reference to Hine-nui-te-pō, thus reinscribes Māui's final adventure back into the pan-Polynesian cycle of myths about Hina, to some extent occluding Hine-nui-te-pō's uniquely Māori identity.

So: Powell—or his copy-editor—has confused two names, Hine and Hina. These names have distinct PPN roots (*fine* and *sina*) but are particularly close in East Polynesian languages like Hawaiian and Māori. Indeed, oscillation between Hine/Hina is not entirely unprecedented. In Māori tradition, for example, Tinirau's wife, who is typically Sina (> Hina) elsewhere, is more often named *Hine*-te-iwaiwa 'Woman of the ninth month (of pregnancy)' (Orbell 1995: 53). Accordingly, Best considers Hine-te-iwaiwa, Hina and Hinauri to be one and the same (Best 1922: 17). In fact, John White's unpublished papers include an account of Māui's death inside "Hina nui te po" (Binney 2005: 231 n128). But still: Te Rangikāheke himself writes only of *Hine*-nui-te-pō; so does every other published Māori source I know of.

In that case, whence came Great Hina of the Night? Westervelt (1913 [1910]: 134–35), collecting stories about Māui from around the Pacific, called her "Hina-nui-te-po". In a 1924 collection of Hawaiian folklore, Padraic Colum (1924: 207) retold the story of Māui and Hine-nui-te-pō, this time explicitly as an import from Māori tradition, fumbling her name in the process: "The splendidly imaginative story of how Maui strove to win immortality for men is from New Zealand. The Goblin goddess with whom Maui struggles is Hina-nui-te-po, 'Great Hina of the Night,' or 'Hina, Great Lady of Hades'." A 1959 Hawaiian National Park guide booklet likewise speaks of Māui assaulting Hina-nui-ke-po ('Great Hina of the Night'), with Māori *te* 'the' replaced by its Hawaiian cognate *ke* (Ruhle 1959). These examples illustrate the transplanting of a localised Māori myth into a different Polynesian language context, with

Hine (PPN *-fine*) confused for *Hina* (PPN *sina*). Never mind that neither Beckwith (1940) nor Luomala (1949) nor Orbell (1995) mentions Hina-nui-te-po or Hina-nui-ke-po. By 1989, Robert Craig's *Dictionary of Polynesian Mythology* had cemented the Hine/Hina confusion in a print reference work: the index entry for "Hina-nui-te-pō" reads "same as Hine-nui-te-pō" (1989: 351). Powell's "Great Hina of the Night" is a folklorist's fiction.

Second: Powell gives Hine-nui-te-pō eyes of *jasper*. This may be a domesticating translation for North American audiences, or just possibly an echo of Izett (quoted above), but it is no less embarrassing for all that. "Jade" (as in Grey's *Polynesian Mythology*) is acceptable for *pounamu*. Nephrite jade is after all one of the materials denoted by the Māori word. But jasper (though found in New Zealand) is neither jade nor *pounamu*.

Third: like many other writers, Māori and non-Māori, Powell reintroduces the tropical barracuda (*Sphyraena*) to this South Pacific narrative in place of the local barracouta.

Fourth and finally: earlier in his account, Powell refers to Mahuika, a prominent guardian of fire in Māori myth, by her non-Māori cognate name Mafuike (Powell 2014: 451). This is the name by which she is known, for example, in Niuean and Tokelauan (Tregear 1891 s.v. Mahuika). But the modern Māori alphabet does not even contain the letter "f".[17] All in all, Powell's *World Myth* neatly illustrates the literary afterlife of Te Rangikāheke's Hine-nui-te-pō: widely known and influential but little understood; often paraphrased but rarely quoted; even more rarely *read*.

* * *

To conclude: most if not all descriptions of Hine-nui-te-pō written in English derive from Te Rangikāheke's "Tama a Rangi" via Grey's *Polynesian Mythology*. The four key attributes specified in the 1849 manuscript (greenstone, kelp, obsidian and barracouta) are now effectively invariant, reproduced or alluded to by writers who have possibly never read Grey and probably never heard of Thornton, let alone Te Rangikāheke. The result is a kind of recurring prose formula: "eyes of greenstone, hair of kelp, teeth of obsidian and a mouth like a barracouta's". Elsdon Best's challenging claim that *mangā* is the incorrect form (and that Hine's teeth shine bright like those of a *mako*) is all but forgotten, while other 19th-century Māori accounts of Hine-nui-te-pō (Hine-tītama) languish in obscurity.

There is a veritable cottage industry of Hine-nui-te-pō literature, and as far as print culture is concerned, it all started in one mid-19th-century handwritten Māori manuscript. And yet: Hine-nui-te-pō in New Zealand literature is no longer bounded by Te Rangikāheke's or even Grey's work. She is a multiform—not only a dangerous female ancestor and antagonist for Māui (as in Te Rangikāheke's manuscript) but also, at times, a hybrid monster

or a beneficent maternal deity. Such is the way of myths and mythmaking. It would be misguided to expect uniformity from modern descriptions of Hine-nui-te-pō, much as it would be misguided to expect uniformity from different accounts written by different 19th-century Māori authorities. Te Rangikāheke's Hine-nui-te-pō is canonical only by default (by virtue of having been selected by Grey); even that canonicity has been challenged by subsequent reinterpretations and retellings which, in turn, reinforce the centrality of Te Rangikāheke's Hine-nui-te-pō as a kind of straw-man argument. In this way, textual and hermeneutic controversies surrounding Hine-nui-te-pō are written onto and through literary history. The result is a kind of multilayered palimpsest that effectively blocks Te Rangikāheke's actual story from view, even as writers continue to preserve the kernel of his description in a flexible, recurring prose formula.

At the same time, copyright law and the vagaries of publishing history mean that Te Rangikāheke remains far less accessible an author of Māori than George Grey. He is effectively unknown among the general public despite having written what is perhaps the most famous single text of Polynesian myth anywhere, namely GNZMMSS 43 or "Tama a Rangi". On the one hand, Grey's *Nga Moteatea* and *Nga Mahinga* (which, as we have seen, do great violence to Te Rangikāheke's manuscript) are readily available online and in various reprints, along with the English-language volume *Polynesian Mythology*. On the other hand, GNZMMSS 43 is held in the Auckland Public Library, though a facsimile is available on request; printed editions of that manuscript (in part or whole) can only be found in obscure local periodicals or out-of-print books. Accordingly, I finish by adding my voice to the many who have for decades now been calling for Māori manuscripts to be preserved, copied, published and translated accurately in accessible venues, especially—though not only—those which have attained national or (as in this case) international prominence. Articulating who Hine-nui-te-pō was, where she came from and what she meant for 19th-century Māori writers is crucial to understanding who she is and what she might mean now, for Māori, Pākehā or anyone else. "Tama a Rangi" is a good place to start.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the Enriching National Culture steering committee at Victoria University, particularly the co-chairs Lydia Wevers and Maria Bargh, for awarding me a Treaty of Waitangi Fellowship in 2017 (during which time I drafted this article). I thank my delightful colleagues at Te Kawa a Māui (the School of Māori Studies) and the Stout Centre for New Zealand Studies, particularly Maria Bargh, Kate Hunter, Terese McLeod and Debbie Levy, for their warm hospitality. I thank the *JPS* editor, the anonymous readers and Bevan Marten for their careful reading, insightful criticism and, equally important, encouragement. Above all: ngā mihi nui, aroha nui hoki ki a

Karena Kelly koutou ko Arini Loader ko Jamie Yeates mō te mōhiotanga, te awhina me te tautoko. Note: translations are mine unless otherwise indicated; all underlining is mine. Some of the Some of the ideas in this essay are briefly rehearsed in Perris (2018).

NOTES

1. Māui is known outside Polynesia but best known from Polynesian myth. In *Moana*, he is essentially a pan-Pacific (and for the most part pan-Polynesian) demigod.
2. In Te Wai Pounamu (South Island) dialects this becomes, e.g., Māui-tikitiki-a-Te-Raka.
3. Mead and Grove (2001 #535): *He mahi atu tā te tangata, mā Hine-nui-te-Pō e kukuti mai* 'Humans may strive but Hine-nui-te-pō will cut off'. Compare Mead and Grove (2001 #349): *He ai atu tā te tangata, he huna mai tā Hine-nui-te-Pō* 'Humankind begets, but Hine-nui-te-Pō destroys'. The former is what Te Rangikāheke wrote at the conclusion of his Māui saga (GNZMMSS 43: 912; Thornton 1992: 44); the latter is attributed to George Grey's *Proverbial and Popular Sayings* (1857).
4. Ruatapu in Reedy (1993: 25, 88); Wohlers (recorded c. 1850) in Tremewan (2002: 80); Te Whatahoro in Smith (1913 [I]: 63–64); Te Rangikāheke in Thornton (1992). Ruatapu: Hine-nui-te-pō flashes (*kowhera*) on the edge of the horizon, like lightning (*ānō he uwira*). Wohlers: her vulva (*puapua*) is flashing (*nanamu*). Te Whatahoro: her thighs flash (*kohera*) and open (*tuhera*). Te Rangikāheke: she flashes (*kōwhakiwhaki*, *uira*). In a Ngāti Awa (Bay of Plenty) tradition, however, it is Hine-te-iwaiwa who becomes Hine-nui-te-pō (Orbell 1995: 64).
5. The Māori Bible regularly uses *ānō he* for similes, e.g., Ps. 92:7, Jer. 51:38. Of course, the metaphor/simile distinction in these constructions cannot truly hold for such *zero-copula* sentences (i.e., sentences in which subject and predicate are joined without any linking word like 'is'). In any case, whether simile or metaphor, *ānō he* is attested in classical Māori as a figurative construction. It is worth noting that opinions differ as to the correct vowel quantities of forms of *ano*, and that Te Rangikāheke himself writes the word with single vowels in this passage.
6. One anonymous *JPS* referee in particular asked a number of stimulating, probing questions about the Te Rangikāheke passage. Among them (I paraphrase): why not read *ko te waha anō, he mangā* 'as to the mouth itself, it is that of a barracouta'? How does Te Rangikāheke use the phrase *ānō he* elsewhere? Is the precise physiognomy of monsters and other creatures even a legitimate concern in Māori oral tradition? Isn't the point that Hine-nui-te-pō *is* a monster, and that Māui is brave to challenge her? Given the sketchiness of the evidence, can we rule out the possibility of *atua*, *taniwha* or *tipua* 'supernatural creatures' having hybrid or composite forms? I address the first three questions in the body of the essay. As to the other two questions, I can only agree: Hine-nui-te-pō's role in the story *is* that of the monstrous villain (after all, she has a *vagina dentata*), and we cannot categorically rule out her being a hybrid creature.
7. These stories were translated by Grey himself in handwritten notebooks (GNZMS 11, dated 1845–53; GNZMS 47, dated 1840–50). They were also transcribed and translated in Cooper (1851: 128–63). Cooper writes, "The following story

is translated from an original manuscript, given to me by a chief of the tribe inhabiting this side of the lake, called Te Rangi Kaheke, or William Marsh, a person of some repute in such matters … Without further preface I subjoin the story verbatim, as written down by Marsh, of which the following [English version] is a translation as nearly literal as it could be conveniently made" (1851: 28). A modified version of the Māori text was later included in *Nga Moteatea* (Grey 1853: lxxxiv–xcvi) and *Nga Mahinga* (Grey 1854: 149–63) as the bulk of "He Korero Patunga Taniwha" (Stories about Killing Taniwha). The manuscript itself is not in the Grey Collection of the Auckland Public Library (Curnow 1985: 102, 113). For the attribution, see further Simmons (1966: 186). It is worth noting that in this same sequence, Te Rangikāheke uses what would appear to be exclamatory *anō* when introducing a figurative construction with *me*: *ano te mangai o te tangata me te ia wai e tangi ana te umere* 'the people cried out and the noise was like the ocean's roar'; *ano te mahi a te ngako me te ngako poaka* 'it had a huge amount of fat, like the fat of a pig' (Cooper 1851: 161).

8. According to Thornton (1992: 107–9), Te Rangikāheke (unlike Ruatapu) depicts Hine-nui-te-pō literally emitting lightning: *e uira mai ra* 'flashing [as lightning] over there'.
9. I, too, missed this at first. Many thanks to Karena Kelly for gently pointing it out to me.
10. This description likely derives from one of the Te Whatahoro manuscripts, recording material attributed to Te Mātorohanga, which Best sighted at the Dominion Museum. I have been unable to locate this passage or a possible source for it. A thorough trawl through Best's notebooks, and indeed the Te Whatahoro material held by the Māori Purposes Fund Board (and to which access is restricted), remains a desideratum. For the Te Whatahoro manuscript and the attribution of material from *Lore* to Te Mātorohanga, see Smith (1913–1915), Simmons and Biggs (1970) and Simmons (1994).
11. The Approved Fish Names List from the Ministry for Primary Industries gives the following equivalents: *mangā* (also *makā*) = *Thyrsites atun*; *mako* = *Isurus oxyrinchus* ("mako shark"); *mango* and *mangō* (and compounds thereof) are used for various shark and dogfish species. Williams (1971) gives the following equivalents: *mangā* = "1. *Thyrsites atun*, *barracouta*; a fish. … 2. *Mustelus antarcticus*, gummy shark"; *mangō* (*makō* in South Island dialects) = "*Shark*, *dogfish*; a general name, but applied also to *Mustelus antarcticus*, *gummy shark*"; *mako* = "*Isurus glaucus*, *mako shark*".
12. I use the Māori word "Pākehā" (noun and adjective) in its modern sense to refer to New Zealanders of European (i.e., white or Caucasian) descent.
13. I owe some of these references to a list, compiled by Leonie McEwan (n.d.), which I discovered only after having completed this essay. Even so, my catalogue is likely far from exhaustive.
14. Cf. Baxter's 1966 poem "Kelp", comparing kelp to Medusa (Baxter 1980: 343). The kelp/Medusa parallel triangulates Hine-nui-te-pō's kelp hair and the recurring Medusa/Hine-nui-te-pō comparison favoured by, e.g., Witi Ihimaera (Perris 2015: 90–91).
15. In the revision of *The Matriarch*, Ihimaera (2009: 10) prints "barracuda". The latter two passages quoted from the first edition are omitted from the revision.

16. J. Sullivan (2007: 104) cites three of Alexander Reed's books: *Myths and Legends of the Pacific*, *Myths and Legends of Polynesia* and the *Reed Book of Maori Mythology* (i.e., the *Treasury of Maori Folklore,* revised by Ross Calman and published in 2004).
17. The following howler, from Powell's preliminary comments, takes the cake: "On New Zealand the native people are the Maori, who seem to have come to the island from the east in the 14th century; but an earlier population lived there, about whom we know very little" (Powell 2014: 441). This is so wrong (and so easily verifiable) as to be almost humorous, were it not for the way armchair archaeologists in New Zealand have long misappropriated Māori myth to challenge the historical facts of Polynesian discovery and settlement (Anderson 2016; Howe 2003).

REFERENCES

Alpers, Antony, 1964. *Maori Myths and Tribal Legends*. Auckland: Blackwood and Janet Paul.

Anderson, Atholl, 2016. *The First Migration: Māori Origins 3000BC–AD1450*. Wellington: Bridget Williams.

Bauer, Winifred, 1997. *The Reed Reference Grammar of Māori*. Auckland: Reed.

Baxter, James K., 1980. *Collected Poems*. Wellington: Oxford University Press.

Beckwith, Martha, 1940. *Hawaiian Mythology*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Best, Elsdon, 1922. *The Astronomical Knowledge of the Maori, Genuine and Empirical*. Wellington: Dominion Museum.

——1982. *Maori Religion and Mythology, Part 2*. Dominion Museum Bulletin 11. Wellington: Government Printer.

Biggs, Bruce, 1952. The translation and publishing of Maori material in the Auckland Public Library. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 61 (3): 177–91.

——1964. The oral literature of the Polynesians. *Te Ao Hou* 49: 23–25, 42–47.

——1966. Maori myths and traditions. In A.H. McLintock (ed.), *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2. Wellington: Government Printer, pp. 447–54.

Binney, Judith, 2005. *The Legacy of Guilt: A Life of Thomas Kendall*. 2nd edition. Wellington: Bridget Williams.

Colum, Padraic, 1924. *At the Gateways of the Day*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Cooper, George, 1851. *Journal of an Expedition from Auckland to Taranaki by way of Rotorua, Taupo, and the West Coast, Undertaken in the Summer of 1849–50, by His Excellency the Governor-in-Chief of New Zealand*. Auckland: Williamson and Wilson.

Craig, Robert, 1989. *Dictionary of Polynesian Mythology*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.

Curnow, Jenifer, 1985. Wiremu Maihi Te Rangikaheke: His life and work. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 94 (2): 97–147.

—— 2008. Wiremu Maihi Te Rangikāheke, c. 1815–1896. *Kōtare* 7 (2): 27–38.

Dittmer, Wilhelm, 1907. *Te Tohunga: The Ancient Legends and Traditions of the Maoris*. London: Routledge.

GNZMMSS 43 = Te Rangikāheke, Wiremu [1849]. Tama a Rangi. Auckland Public Library, Grey Collection.

GNZMMSS 44 = Te Rangikāheke, Wiremu [1849]. Tuupuna. Auckland Public Library, Grey Collection.
GNZMMSS 45 = Te Rangikāheke, Wiremu [1849]. An Address to the Inhabitants of Hawaiki. Auckland Public Library, Grey Collection.
GNZMMSS 79 = Te Rangikāheke, Wiremu [before 1854]. Ko Nga Mahi a Tikitawhito-ariki. Auckland Public Library, Grey Collection.
GNZMS 11 = Grey, George [1845–53]. Original manuscript translations of New Zealand legends. Auckland Public Library, Grey Collection.
GNZMS 47 = Grey, George [1840–50]. The Dragon Slayers. Auckland Public Library, Grey Collection.
Grace, Patricia, 1984. *Wahine Toa: Women of Maori Myth*. Illustrated by Robyn Kahukiwa. Auckland: Collins.
——1992. *Cousins*. Auckland: Penguin.
Grey, George, 1853. *Ko Nga Moteatea me Nga Hakirara o Nga Maori*. Wellington: Robert Stokes.
——1854. *Ko Nga Mahinga a Nga Tupuna Maori*. London: George Willis.
——1855. *Polynesian Mythology*. London: John Murray.
——1857. *Ko Nga Whakapepeha me Nga Whakaahuareka a Nga Tipuna o Aotearoa: Proverbial and Popular Sayings of the Ancestors of the New Zealand Race*. Cape Town: Saul Solomon and Co.
——1885a. *Nga Mahi a Nga Tupuna*. 2nd edition. Auckland: H. Brett.
——1885b. *Polynesian Mythology*. 2nd edition. Auckland: H. Brett.
——1928. *Nga Mahi a Nga Tupuna*. Edited by H.W. Williams. 3rd edition. New Plymouth: Thomas Avery and Sons.
Healey, Karen, 2010. *Guardian of the Dead*. New York: Little, Brown.
——2017. Girls going underground: Navigating mythologies in Aotearoa's literary landscape. In D. Burton, S. Perris and J. Tatum (eds), *Athens to Aotearoa: Greece and Rome in New Zealand Literature and Society*. Wellington: Victoria University Press, pp. 76–93.
Heim, Otto, 1998. *Writing Along Broken Lines: Violence and Ethnicity in Contemporary Maori Fiction*. Auckland: Auckland University Press.
Howe, Kerry, 2003. *The Quest for Origins: Who First Discovered and Settled New Zealand and the Pacific Islands?* Auckland: Penguin.
Hyland, Queenie Rikihana and Patrick Puru, 2003. *Illustrated Māori Myths and Legends*. Auckland: Reed. [First published in 1997 as *Paki Waitara: Myths and Legends of the Māori.*]
Ihimaera, Witi, 1973. *Tangi*. Auckland: Heinemann.
——1986. *The Matriarch*. Auckland: Heinemann.
——2005. *The Rope of Man*. Auckland: Reed.
——2007. *ask the posts of the house*. Auckland: Reed.
——2009. *The Matriarch*. Revised edition. Auckland: Penguin.
Ihimaera, Witi and D.S. (Don) Long (eds), 1982. *Into the World of Light: An Anthology of Maori Writing*. Auckland: Heinemann.
Izett, James, 1904. *Maori Lore: The Traditions of the Maori People*. Wellington: Government Printer.
Joseph, Darren, 2011. Te reo Māori: Metaphors and similes. In H. Tomlins-Jahnke and M. Mulholland (eds), *Mana Tangata: Politics of Empowerment*. Wellington: Huia, pp. 93–121.

Loader, Arini, 2008. Haere mai me tuhituhi he pukapuka; muri iho ka whawhai ai tātou: Reading Te Rangikāheke. Unpublished MA thesis, Victoria University of Wellington.

Luomala, Katharine, 1949. *Maui-of-a-Thousand-Tricks: His Oceanic and European Biographers*. Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin 198. Honolulu.

McEwan, Leonie, n.d. Pūrakau. Available at: http://mataurangamaorie.weebly.com/p363rakau.html

Mead, Hirini Moko and Neil Grove, 2001. *Ngā Pēpeha a ngā Tīpuna*. Wellington: Victoria University Press.

Orbell, Margaret, 1985. *Hawaiki: A New Approach to Maori Tradition*. Christchurch: University of Canterbury.

——1995. *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Māori Myth and Legend*. Christchurch: Canterbury University Press.

Perris, Simon, 2015. Witi Ihimaera and the dread goddess. *Journal of New Zealand Literature* 33: 85–109.

——2017. Orpheus, Māui and the underworld in New Zealand literature. In D. Burton, S. Perris and J. Tatum (eds), *Athens to Aotearoa: Greece and Rome in New Zealand Literature and Society*. Wellington: Victoria University Press, pp. 173–97.

—— 2018. What marks out our Māui from all the Māui? It's partly down to vagina dentata. *The Spinoff*, 3 June 2018. Available at: http://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/03-07-2018/maui-moana-and-hine-nui-te-po/

Powell, Barry, 2014. *World Myth*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Reed, Alexander, 1963. *Treasury of Maori Folklore*. Wellington: A.H. and A.W. Reed.

Reed, Alexander and Ross Calman, 2004. *Reed Book of Māori Mythology*. Revised edition of *Treasury of Maori Folklore*. Auckland: Reed.

Reedy, Anaru (ed. and trans.), 1993. *Ngā Kōrero a Mohi Ruatapu*. Christchurch: Canterbury University Press.

Ruhle, George, 1959. Haleakala Guide. *Hawaii Nature Notes*, June. Hawaii National Park: Hawaii Natural History Association. Available at: http://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/hawaii-notes/vol6-59.htm

Simmons, David, 1966. The sources of Sir George Grey's *Nga Mahi a Nga Tupuna*. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 75 (2): 177–88.

——1994. The words of Te Matorohanga. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 103 (2): 115–70.

Simmons, David and Bruce Biggs, 1970. The sources of "The Lore of the Whare-wananga". *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 79 (1): 22–42.

Smith, S. Percy, 1913–1915. *The Lore of the Whare-wānanga.* 2 vols. New Plymouth: Polynesian Society.

Sullivan, Jillian, 2007. *Myths and Legends: The Gift of Stories from Our Cultures*. Auckland: Pearson.

Sullivan, Robert, 1996. *Maui: Legends of the Outcast*. Illustrated by Chris Slade. Auckland: Godwit.

——2002. *Weaving Earth and Sky: Myths and Legends of Aotearoa*. Illustrated by Gavin Bishop. Auckland: Random House.

——2010. *Cassino: City of Martyrs*. Wellington: Huia.

Taylor, Apirana, 1990. *Ki te Ao: New Stories*. Auckland: Penguin.

Thornton, Agathe (ed. and trans.), 1992. *The Story of Māui by Te Rangikāheke*. Christchurch: Department of Māori, University of Canterbury.

Tregear, Edward, 1891. *Maori–Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*. Wellington: Lyon and Blair.
Tremewan, Christine (ed. and trans.), 2002. *Traditional Stories from Southern New Zealand: He Kōrero nō Te Wai Pounamu*. Christchurch: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies.
Westervelt, William, 1913 [1910]. *Legends of Maui.* Australasian edition. Melbourne: George Robinson.
White, John, 1887. *The Ancient History of the Maori, His Mythology and Traditions*, vol. 2. Wellington: Government Printer.
Williams, Herbert W., 1971. *A Dictionary of the Maori Language*. 7th edition. Wellington: Government Printer.

ABSTRACT

This essay concerns Māui's famous, canonical encounter, known only from Aotearoa (New Zealand), with one of Māori myth's most important deities: Hine-nui-(i)-te-pō, 'Great lady of the night', queen of the underworld and, some would say, goddess of death. In particular, this essay traces Hine-nui-te-pō's literary afterlife, focusing on formulaic descriptions of her physiognomy from Te Rangikāheke's "Tama a Rangi" (an 1849 manuscript) through to Karen Healey's young-adult novel *Guardian of the Dead* (2010) and Barry Powell's *World Myth* (2014). After introducing Hine-nui-te-pō and her place in Polynesian myth, I detail the textual history of the standard (and, I would argue, now formulaic) description of Hine-nui-te-pō's physical form, comprising four recurring attributes: (i) eyes of, or like, greenstone (*pounamu*), (ii) hair of, or like, sea-kelp, (iii) teeth of, or like, obsidian and (iv) a mouth of, or like that of, a barracouta. First, I present a new transcription and translation of the relevant passage of Te Rangikāheke's "Tama a Rangi", taken from a facsimile of the manuscript. Then follows an account of the textual history of this passage, through George Grey's various publications to Agathe Thornton's 1992 edition and translation. I argue that subsequent editions and translations of this passage subtly misrepresent Te Rangikāheke's handwritten Māori text. Next, I survey scholarly and literary receptions of this formulaic description, revealing that descriptions of Hine-nui-te-pō derive from, develop and indeed at times depart from Te Rangikāheke's text; and that Hine-nui-te-pō has over time become a locus of progressive mythopoesis. On the one hand, she is a multiform from whom uniformity across different texts, genres, authors and languages should not be expected. On the other hand, I conclude, it is vital that we not forget Te Rangikāheke's important but little-known account.

Keywords: Māori, mythopoesis, Te Rangikāheke, oral tradition, Hine-nui-te-pō, Māui, myth, New Zealand

CITATION AND AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Perris,[1] Simon, 2018. What does Hine-nui-te-pō look like? A case study of oral tradition, myth and literature in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 127 (4): 365–388. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.15286/jps.127.4.365-388

[1] Correspondence: Classics Programme, Victoria University of Wellington, Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand. Email: simon.perris@vuw.ac.nz