

TE PAERANGI:
DARKNESS AND LIGHT IN MĀORI ORAL TRADITION

A Thesis in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
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Abstract

Darkness and Light have come to have particular associations in Western thought. Light is associated with Goodness, Knowledge, and Reason, the dichotomising impulse of the West rendering Darkness as Evil, Ignorance, and Superstition. This valorisation, however, is not universal; what do Māori oral traditions say about Darkness and Light? How might we attend to these traditions in a manner that engages their epistemic potential, rather than treating them as products of culture?

In order to respond to these questions, a methodology is developed in which thinking, as *whaka aro*, is rehabilitated as method in its own right. If certainty and clarity represent the desiderata of academic inquiry, with reason its *sine qua non*, *whaka aro* extends the notion of thought while refusing the epistemic demands of the academy. This thesis is an attempt to reinvigorate a Māori epistemology through sustained acts of *whaka aro* that treat oral traditions as capable of producing new knowledge in the epistemic-wilderness-as-freedom.

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Any errors contained within are my own.

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Vanishing Point¹

He kokonga whare e kitea, he kokonga ngākau e kore e kitea.

A corner of a house may be seen and examined, not so the corners of the heart.

An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.

Proverbs 21:4

Martin Jay describes Descartes' metaphysical dualism as the point at which, "the radical opposition of viewing subject and viewed object supplant earlier ontological ways of being immersed in the world".² Such a metaphysics results in various "scopic regimes", which privilege the eye as providing direct access to the world, and collapse seeing into knowing. Knowledge is yoked conceptually and linguistically to sight: I see what you mean; my perspective is such-and-such; you've lost sight of the bigger picture; seeing is believing. The viewed object is known, or at least, reduced to the knowable through the gaze of the viewing subject. The gaze mediates the supposed ontological distance between the two, but (from the viewer's perspective, anyway) is strictly one-way; the abyss may gaze back, but does the painting?

// sight mediates the distance between us

but we touch that which we are a part of /

¹ Jessica Maclean. "Vanishing Point". *Hamster Ono* (2020). I thank and acknowledge The Physics Room for first publishing this piece.

² Jay Martin, *Essays from the Edge: Parerga and Paralipomena*, (University of Virginia Press, 2011), 53.

The opposition between subject and object underlies both the act of scientific observation and seeing more generally, all the while bearing a relation to knowing and understanding. It suggests the possibility of direct and objective access to an external and knowable reality, without the messy entanglements of subjectivity and the ever-present whiff of complicity.³ What illicitly escapes scrutiny in scopic regimes is a metaphysical hierarchy in which some physical sense coupled with rationality is taken as the basis for knowledge. According to this kind of Enlightenment thinking, we come to belief and understanding through observation and reason. God is dead. Beliefs may be either true or justified but must be both to qualify as knowledge.

Let us not forget that the oppositional binary of subject / object is also the basis of the colonial project. As Lewis Gordon reminds us, racism is the fundamental denial of reality; the reality of the humanity of the Other.⁴ Much easier to cause harm to those who are seen as both wholly separate and in a lesser category of being; an attitude frequently taken against Nature.

// i came, i saw , i conquered

but o god

i'm going to have to stop eating meat /

³ For example, the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle implies not only that the act of observation affects what is observed, but that reality may not exist until it is observed.

⁴ Gordon R. Lewis, "Bad faith and antiblack racism: A study in the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre", (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1994), 98.

The radical disjunct between subject and object lies in stark contrast to the relationality inherent in a Māori cosmogony. According to the taxonomies of whakapapa, there is no fundamental distinction between the human and so-called natural worlds, and more importantly, there is little distinction between the physical and spiritual realms. So it is not so much a matter of belief when it comes to wairua, but a matter of knowledge. It is a particular kind of knowledge about the world, one borne of a particular ontological immersion in the world. This immersion gives rise to a different sensorium, which goes beyond the physical; a stance clearly at odds with a scientific perspective. But one needn't necessarily be aware of something to be affected by it.

For those of us unpracticed in certain arts, it is perhaps while sleeping that the spirit realm – everywhere coextensive with the physical one – is most accessible. Understood as the byproducts of memory consolidation, or the subconscious presenting aspects of itself to the dreaming mind, many dreams seem easily understood without recourse to wairua. Other dreams remain mysterious, beyond the power of words to convey. Some dreams convey useful information; there is a particular dream I have that always precedes a fever. In that case it is not so much the narrative of the impending-fever dream that imparts the message, as the feelings and sensations. In other cases, the narrative can, with a little elucidation and a lot of hindsight, be revelatory.

When I was on the cusp of adolescence, I had a series of dreams that felt very much like nightmares. Over a period of about two weeks, every night or at least most nights, my younger brother would die in my dreams. The most horrific element of the dreams was not

his death, however, which took a variety of forms, but the indifference of my family to it. Increasingly frantic, I would scream at them, to no avail. How could they not hear me?

In waking-life during this period, my parents and sisters walked up the road to get fish and chips for dinner. I was alone with my brother for perhaps twenty minutes. I am doing the dishes. I hear my brother stumbling into the kitchen behind me. I turn to look and

ohgodohgodohgod

hisfaceisblueheisnotbreathing

and

and

and i watch the movie

she calmly, slowly even

moves behind the boy

they look so much alike

she clasps her hands around him

she jerks really hard

out of his mouth shoots this massive piece of orange

and they collapse on the lino and they're crying and crying

FUCK YOU O ORANGE

MAY YOUR ANCESTORS BE SHAMED AND DEFILED

EVERMORE WILL I DEVOUR THE FLESH OF YOUR CHILDREN

The dreams stopped after that.

So how is it that we can have spiritual experiences, including certain dream states? In relation to sensoria, which I am coming to believe are more culturally than physiologically determined, it is clear that science still understands little of the physical senses available to us humans, let alone any spiritual ones. Research suggests that humans, like bees, birds, and whales, possess the capacity to sense the Earth's magnetic field. One recent study found that volunteers, when placed in an artificially created and manipulated magnetic field, exhibited neurological responses that suggested the brain was paying attention to changes in magnetism. These volunteers did not consciously sense anything, but electroencephalograms showed brain activation consistent with sensory perception.⁵

Explanations for this phenomenon vary, but regardless of the mechanism it seems this sense is not experienced consciously by those who were tested. Indeed, blindfolded volunteers in earlier experiments were more able to accurately point homeward than when not blindfolded, suggesting that the conscious mind may actually interfere with this sensory modality.⁶

⁵ Connie X. Wang et al., "Transduction of the geomagnetic field as evidenced from alpha-band activity in the human brain," *eNeuro Journal* (March 2019).

⁶ R. Robin Baker, "Human navigation and magnetoreception: the Manchester experiments do replicate," *Animal Behaviour* 35, no. 3 (1987): 691-704.

Or could it simply be that we have lost touch with this sense, including the very awareness that it exists? Atmospheric conditions cannot always have been conducive to sighting the celestial objects relied upon by ancient Moana-nui-a-Kiwa navigators. Could it be that lore, rituals, and incantations that pertain to this craft involved sensitising oneself to magnetic fields?

rongo: to hear

to feel

to touch

to taste

to perceive

The difficulties involved in translating concepts into other languages assume a new dimension when we consider that the constituent components of phenomenological experience might differ between peoples, based on ontological difference. The privileging of the mind, of consciously-directed thought, of language, and the denigration of the body, of feeling and sensing, and the utter denial of wairua; auē, te mamae! This is the ontological violence done to our ways of being immersed in the world, which restricts the very possibilities of being.

One domain from which this ontological violence has been defended is that of kapa haka. Some criteria by which performances are deemed superlative are ihi, wehi, and wana. These terms are impossible to explain except by way of comparison and metaphor, which can at best provide only glimpses into a Māori world-view. Ihi is akin to the psychic force that the performer is able to exert, which draws an affective response from audience members. Wehi

is the response of the audience member to the ihi of the performer/s. Wehi has physiological, cognitive, emotional, and psychic components; blending a Romantic understanding of the sublime with the experience of frisson may begin to capture a sense of this. Wana is a term I am having trouble with. As I understand it at the moment, it is the state of being that results from a kind of sympathetic resonance between ihi and wehi, and thus performers and audience are united in wana. Taken together, ihi, wehi, and wana replenish the mauri, the unique and essential life force possessed by humans and other entities.

I am not suggesting a physical mechanism responsible for experiences such as prophetic dreams, or ihi, wehi, and wana. Indeed, I find materialist attempts to reduce the numinous to the physiological both a colonial assault on Māori (and other) ontologies, and profoundly misguided even in the absence of malicious intent. But this is not to say that there are no physiological correlates to spiritual experience either, because we remain integrated beings whether we are aware of it or not. Our wairua has a deep connection to the body but at times takes its leave, which is why one must never abruptly awaken a sleeping person. It departs permanently once the mauri has been extinguished, (eventually, all going well) leaving no trace of itself in the physical remains. It still exists though; mine will journey north ki Te Rerenga Wairua one day, my bones, too, shed amongst the bones of my kin.

// hurl me north

and i will leave flax-tied knots to show my passing

// lest my wairua accidentally wander into some house and thus render it tapu

// which of course is no more and no less than

the presence of some spiritual force such as i /

let doorways face north /

north to te aka

downwhichwedescend

// perhaps some descendant will sense my passing on a moonless night

a warmer current of air or water, distinct from the cold around it

pausing for a moment to wonder /

then

hurl me west

and wait, wait awhile

o sun,

let us go down together/

Atua and ancestors await me there, but they are to be found here too. The resonance between magnetoreception and wairua is instructive; both pertain to invisible energies and forces, the sense experience of which may resist conscious or linguistic expression, remaining at the level of instinct and intuition. Just as the volunteers who sensed changes in the magnetic field around them, and just as the volunteers who more unerringly pointed homeward when blindfolded, one may not necessarily consciously experience spiritual presences, events, and forces, but this does not mean we are not affected by them.

For those who do possess an awareness of themselves as beings with a spiritual element, and moreover those with culturally sanctioned means of understanding and expressing spiritual experience such as ihi, wehi, and wana, the spiritual dimension of life is not only rich, but life-affirming. It's not for nothing that many statistics correlate a spiritual practice with quality of

life. Yeats wrote that the centre cannot hold, and yet a century later we remain trapped in the widening gyre of our time. Without an acceptance of the spiritual dimension to life, there is no centre. Ignored, the spiritual organs begin to submerge themselves deep within, but like the lotus seed they wait, ready to bloom at the merest hint of warmth and light.

The vanishing point, where the perspective projections of lines in three-dimensional space meet, directs one to the correct angle from which to view the world-as-image. But as I see it, the vanishing point is where logic and geometric reality break down, where parallel lines truly converge and overcome their ontological divide at the point of infinity, ever racing towards a boundless horizon.

// don't tell me gods don't exist

just because

you've never met one /

Introduction

This thesis is a response to the simple yet pervasive idea that Light is Good and Darkness is Evil. Secularised during the Enlightenment, this idea nevertheless retains the axiological influence of preceding systems of thought.⁷ The dichotomising impulse of the West renders Darkness as ignorance and superstition in opposition to Light as reason and knowledge; Darkness remains ‘bad’, and Light ‘good’. What began as a constellation of related concerns regarding certainty, the colonisation of mātauranga, and the ontological greediness of science, resolved to become instead a simple question: What do Māori oral traditions say about Darkness and Light? By engaging the epistemic potential of our ancestral legacies through their application to our present circumstances, I hope to contribute to, and reinvigorate, a Māori epistemology in which oral traditions are not treated as objects of culture, but of knowledge, from which new theory can be derived. How might theory drawn from Māori oral traditions reframe Enlightenment notions of Light and Dark?

‘Vanishing Point’, composed during the research process, is both abstraction of and response to this thesis. For reasons I explain in Chapter One, it appears before the thesis ‘proper’ begins. It seeks to disrupt the logico-rational orientation of the putative reader to the thesis in an attempt to ‘wake up’ the senses. Within its darkness are germinating seeds that may bear fruit in future Māori epistemological inquiries.

⁷ The Manichean distinction between Night/Po and Day/Ao and the mapping of that onto a critique of the Enlightenment I acknowledge is originally the work of my supervisor Garrick Cooper’s doctorate. I have been privy to this work as we have been engaged in dialogue over a number of years.

Chapter 1 describes the methodology I have developed and the theory underlying it. Repeated calls for innovative indigenous philosophising led to the use of whaka aro as methodology, by which I hope to contribute to the task of redeeming thinking as method. Whaka aro includes non-volitional thought and non-cognitive perceptual modalities which may be brought to bear on the research process. Chapter 2 comprises a survey of the landscape; I make two arguments here. The first is that Māori oral tradition is largely treated in the academic literature according to Western epistemic norms. In taking the epistemic potential of oral traditions seriously, I hope to take a different approach. The second argument I make is that Best's notion of the evolution of culture leads him to a Manichean reading of Whiro and Tāne in particular, a reading which has since become ubiquitous.

In Chapter 3, I consider Darkness and the Night in Māori oral traditions by casting attention to Te Pō, Whiro, and Hine-Nui-te-Pō. Elsdon Best and S. Percy Smith provide the bulk of the source material in this and the following chapter. What happens in the Night, and what do the actions of beings of the Night reveal? Can Darkness be considered Evil in Māori thought, and does it stand in opposition to the Light? Chapter 4 then casts attention to the emergence of Light in the world, and various beings associated with it in Māori oral traditions. Where does Light come from, and what does it do? Is Te Ao Marama simply or only the world of Day? In what ways might we respond to the effects of the Day?

In Chapter 5, I reflect on the research process, suggesting limitations of the research and further avenues of inquiry. Does thinking ever end? Where might it take me next? Chapter 6 offers some concluding remarks, bringing together some of the key points in the thesis, before I comment briefly on each chapter. Finally, I make a few statements to bring the thesis to a close.

‘Ko te Titi o te Rua’ acts as a coda to the thesis, amalgamating certain ideas and expressing others beyond them, creating an pathway to those thoughts, a tenuous link to the un-said. It is an opaque space for non-cognitive, a-rational thought, defying academic demands for certainty and clarity. Producing this work has allowed me to exorcise some ghosts who do not belong here in the thesis ‘proper’ but nevertheless continue to exert an influence on it.

Chapter 1. He Ara Pāwhati: Towards a New Methodology

When a new path was being laid out the trail breaker marked the route by means of breaking, but not severing, branchlets and the smaller young trees. This marked the line of the future path, and such a trail was known as an ara pawhati...Subsequent travellers proceeding along such a path would help to keep it open by means of breaking off any new growth encroaching on the pathway.⁸

The venerable Dame Anne Salmond, in considering which is the left and which is the right side of the wharenuī, once described a “difficulty of interpretation” which presents itself first as “a question of orientation.”⁹ When questioning her ‘informants’, she found that:

Some attributed left and right as though they were standing inside the house looking out, and this accorded well with a common image of the house as a prostrate ancestral body...Other informants, though, attributed left and right as though they were standing outside and facing the building, as indeed a European would do. The difficulty could not be dismissed as an irrelevance, since *taha maui* ‘left side’ and *taha matau/katau* ‘right side’ are important metaphors in

⁸ Elsdon Best, *Forest lore of the Maori: with methods of snaring, trapping, and preserving birds and rats, uses of berries, roots, fern-root, and forest products, with mythological notes on origins, karakia used, etc.* No. 14. EC Keating, Government Printer, 1942, 28.

⁹ Anne Salmond. “Te ao tawhito: A semantic approach to the traditional Maori cosmos”. *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 87, no. 1 (1978): 5-28.

Maori symbolism and were clearly considered significant [sic] in this context by contemporary informants.¹⁰

In attempting to work through this apparent paradox, Salmond first concluded that those who viewed left and right as from within the wharehau were 'correct', on the basis that this was more consistent with her understanding of Māori¹¹ in relation to the seniority of her 'informants' and the identification of the wharehau as an ancestral body. But upon contestation, Salmond, duly reconsidered her stance:

The model based on a vantage point in front of the house was dismissed as a borrowing from European practice, and indeed I had heard it only from younger informants at that stage...Then, after publication, when an elder from the conservative Tuuhoe tribe unequivocally attributed left and right to the meeting house sides from a vantage point outside the house, the validity of the model came into serious question.¹²

Salmond's description of the conundrum of handedness was apt. Before we can begin to interpret or approach something, we must first work through questions of orientation which should not be dismissed as irrelevant, given the metaphysical implications. In considering the

¹⁰ Anne Salmond, "Te ao tawhito: A semantic approach to the traditional Maori cosmos", 5-6

¹¹ I will use macrons in my own writing but quote sources exactly as written, and so some words will appear without.

¹² Ibid., 6-7

body of Māori oral tradition to be a whare,¹³ constructed by our ancestral knowledges and philosophies, one realises that the academy is peering into the gloom from the outside, from which vantage point traditions are viewed as mere cultural artefact, at best perhaps embodying or containing forms of knowledge, but bereft of the epistemic potential accorded to the West. If Māori Studies as a discipline might be viewed as inside the whare looking out, then the general academic orientation towards Māori oral traditions must be inverted so that they are seen as providing the impetus to produce new knowledge that speaks to the present moment. I will attempt to show that a reinvigoration of Māori epistemology is possible through engaging the epistemic potential of Māori oral traditions.

In relation to a thesis, questions of orientation necessarily involve theoretical and methodological concerns, but there is also the matter of the location of the self in relation to the thesis, and the location of the thesis within disciplinary bounds. It has become customary in Māori Studies and Kaupapa Māori methodologies to locate oneself in, or in relation to, the thesis. This is a decolonial act which ameliorates the Cartesian divorce of subject from object and subsequent delusions of dispassionate neutrality, and results in the description of a self that is not separate from the work or the world. However, beyond stating my tribal affiliations, I consider my thinking as evidenced by my writing to offer more insight into who I am than any autobiographical datum can provide; the thesis as a whole is the mihi by which I make myself known. Instead, I wonder whether the more pressing question is where to locate the thesis itself in disciplinary terms.

¹³ I will not generally offer translations of the few Māori words I use (most being proper nouns) unless it is particularly relevant. Given the formal status of Te Reo, my apprehensions towards translation in general and translation by me in particular, and the ubiquity of Māori dictionaries, I do not consider it necessary to do so.

On the one hand, this is a trivial question; the thesis is submitted to fulfil the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in Māori and Indigenous Studies. On the other hand, however, as Lewis Gordon reminds us, “teleological suspensions of disciplines are also epistemic decolonial acts.”¹⁴ I confess here to some disciplinary baggage, in that my first degree was a Bachelor of Science in Philosophy, with papers in Astronomy, Physics, and Mathematics. It was not until I returned to university that I realised that Māori Studies was the better disciplinary fit for me. Given my disciplinary history, however, I have a natural apprehension as to the limits of disciplinary thinking. I share this concern with Gordon, who introduces the notion of ‘disciplinary decadence’ in which an adherence to method is all that is required to produce knowledge; this decadence is:

...the phenomenon of turning away from living thought, which engages reality and recognises its own limitations, to a deontologised or absolute conception of disciplinary life. The discipline becomes, in solipsistic fashion, the world. And in that world, the main concern is the proper administering of its rules, regulations, or, as Fanon argued, (self-devouring) methods. Becoming ‘right’ is simply a matter of applying, as fetish, the method correctly. This is a form of decadence because of the set of considerations that fall to the wayside as the discipline turns into itself and eventually implodes. Decay, although a natural process over the course of time for living things, takes on a paradoxical quality in disciplinary formation. A

¹⁴ Lewis R. Gordon, “Disciplinary decadence and the decolonisation of knowledge”. *Africa Development* 39, no. 1 (2014): 81-92.

discipline, e.g., could be in decay through a failure to realise that decay is possible.¹⁵

If the decadent discipline deontologises itself to become 'the world', the fetish for method that Gordon describes paradoxically results in the ontologising of disciplines beyond their scope, in which:

...a decadent scientist criticizes the humanities for not being scientific; a decadent literary scholar criticizes scientists and social scientists for not being literary or textual...And of course, the decadent historian criticizes all for not being historical; and the decadent philosopher criticizes all for not being philosophical.¹⁶

Gordon suggests that one way in which such decadence might be responded to lies in the 'teleological suspension of disciplinarity' which he describes as the 'willingness to go beyond disciplines in the production of knowledge'.¹⁷ The difficulty in such an approach lies in its practical implementation; in my case, the production of a thesis demands method. Perhaps if I am to suspend disciplinary tenets for the purpose of the production of knowledge from Māori oral tradition, a new (or old) methodology is required.¹⁸ If disciplines are constrained

¹⁵ Lewis R. Gordon, "Disciplinary decadence and the decolonisation of knowledge", 86.

¹⁶ Gordon, Gordon, Lewis R. "The human condition in an age of disciplinary decadence: Thoughts on knowing and learning." *Philosophical Studies in Education* 34 (2003): 105-23

¹⁷ Gordon., *Disciplinary decadence and the decolonisation of knowledge*, 87

¹⁸ Such as, in the case of Māori Studies, the autoethnographic approach, or the adherence to a few canonical works.

by method and, I would argue, theory, then perhaps a simple, even naïve, method may transcend some of the difficulties decadence entails.¹⁹ Such a methodology must, to varying degrees of self-consciousness, engage in *thinking* if it is to produce new thought.

But is thinking enough? Gordon suggests it must be if a decline into decadence is to be averted, noting that “if one’s discipline has foreclosed the question of its scope, all that is left for it is a form of ‘applied’ work. Such work militates against thinking.”²⁰ I am not against ‘applied’ work in the context of Māori Studies because such work is essential, for reasons so obvious and well-established I do not consider it necessary to re-articulate them. But if such work is *all* that there is, then Māori Studies too might be said to have fallen into decadence. If Māori knowledge is complete, then all we can do is put it to work, reducing value to utility. But if Māori knowledge is not complete, and I think it cannot be, then how might we produce it in the academy? Can thinking be method in the academy?

Theory

“Theory helps us to bear our ignorance of fact”. – George Santayana²¹

¹⁹ Because something must stand behind method; method is prefigured in theory.

²⁰ Gordon, Lewis R. *Disciplinary decadence: Living thought in trying times*. Routledge, 2015, 5.

²¹ George Santayana, *The sense of beauty: Being the outline of aesthetic theory*. Vol. 238. Courier Corporation, 1955, 125

The genesis of the theoretical position I have adopted lies in Garrick Cooper's 2012 article 'Epistemic Wilderness as Freedom'.²² Cooper argues that "Māori are regarded as producers of *culture* rather than of *knowledge*".²³ As such, Māori are held to operate from outside the epistemic grounds upon which new knowledge might be produced in the academy. There is an important distinction to be made here; Māori knowledge is not denied, but the ongoing *production* of it is. Māori oral tradition is largely understood in academic discourse to originate in and fundamentally belong to the past, perhaps representing forms of knowledge that might prove useful or interesting as an archival endeavour, but not possessing the generative capacities of the West. Indeed, positioned along the teleologies of Enlightenment thought which reach their apotheosis in the scientific method and the normative European subject, Māori knowledge can only ever lag behind, asymptotically approaching Western standards of knowledge but formally incapable of meeting them.

To reject such thinking, Cooper proposes it is necessary to reconfigure the epistemological positioning of Māori such that we may engage in the production of knowledge on our own terms. Such calls from Māori scholars are not new, although suggestions as to how this might be achieved are less common given that so much attention has had to be devoted to establishing a place for Māori ways of being and knowing in the academy. Cooper's solution is to reclaim the epistemic wilderness Māori find themselves in as a 'move to freedom' which negates the need to continually reassert and defend these ways of being and knowing:

²² Garrick Cooper, "Kaupapa Maori research: Epistemic wilderness as freedom?" *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* 47, no. 2 (2012): 64.

²³ Coper, "Kaupapa Maori research: Epistemic wilderness as freedom?" 64.

The benefit of evoking epistemic wilderness as a move to freedom is that the starting point for the production of knowledge is not a defended one. *By this I mean that we do not have to continually explain cultural concepts, let alone defend them as starting points.* They just are. Taking this approach we are more likely to be able to get on with the business of producing knowledge *rather than arguing for alternative knowledge production practices.*²⁴

Reading the article had that profound effect on me that all avid readers and thinkers experience from time to time when the confluence of the work, the self, and the moment work together to produce a kind of magic. In this case, Cooper had neatly articulated epistemic concerns that I was grappling with in relation to the colonality of science and knowledge production in the academy. Further, he had suggested a means by which these concerns might be addressed without privileging the modes of thought I am trying to get away from. As I read, my senses seemed to sharpen and I could feel my heart beating faster. Something meaningful was happening: a horizon of thought seemed to open up along which smoothly-contiguous realms of Western ontological assumption and reciprocal epistemological justification was prised apart. From the horizon created between these formerly united planes, possibilities began to emerge.

My undergraduate exposure to philosophy had withered any nascent urges I had towards it, or at least, had annulled any critical possibilities philosophy as a discipline may have offered to engage its own problematics. Such work could amount to little more than what Gordon

²⁴ Ibid., 67

describes as the theodicean problem, by which any 'evil' located within Western philosophy must necessarily be externalised and explained away to protect the integrity of the system.²⁵ Cooper seemed to offer a way of philosophically engaging with the systems of thought that bothered me without locating any analysis within those epistemes or granting them any special ontological status, an exceedingly attractive proposition to one previously bruised by the ontological rocks concealed below the waters of Western epistemology, which would flood the whole world with its thought. Floating on the surface is one thing, but to dive into such waters is, inevitably, to strike assumptions about the world that do violence to that which is in but not of that presumed world. Leonie Pihama expresses similar concerns in her doctoral thesis, which she resolves by embracing a position 'outside' Western knowledge and theories:

I have a resistance to writing about Western knowledge and Western theories in ways that centre those understandings, and therefore consciously stand from the outside looking in, a place where most Indigenous Peoples have been positioned by our colonisers.²⁶

For Pihama, the fact that Western analyses were unable to account for her experience as a Māori woman is one to be celebrated; by exposing the inadequacies of such forms of analysis, Pihama asserts the need for us to develop our own theories without privileging Western

²⁵ "In theodicean practices, some thing is advanced as intrinsically good, which renders evil and injustice external to it." Lewis R. Gordon, "Black Existence in Philosophy of Culture". *Diogenes* 3 (2011): 130-144.

²⁶ Leonie Pihama, "Tihei mauri ora: honouring our voices: mana wahine as a kaupapa Māori: theoretical framework". PhD diss., ResearchSpace@ Auckland, 2001, 28.

modes of knowledge production.²⁷ Continually defending alternative knowledge production in the academy detracts from energies that are better spent elsewhere; as Audre Lorde notes the educative burden of the oppressed by which:

The oppressors maintain their position and evade their responsibility for their own actions. There is a constant drain of energy which might be better used in redefining ourselves and devising realistic scenarios for altering the present and constructing the future.²⁸

Sustaining the conditions in which Māori must argue and re-argue cultural concepts as starting points, even within Māori Studies, is one means by which energies that might be put to better use are diverted in the academy. Therefore, because of the body of Māori scholarship over recent decades, it is no longer necessary to assert our right to be present in the academy nor the pressing need to establish our own ways of being present in that space; despite my disciplinary apprehensions I take these as canonical. I do not intend to honour and contribute to that body of work by recapitulating it ad nauseum, but by continuing to develop the possibilities for and of Māori research through getting on with, as Cooper puts it, the business of producing knowledge.

²⁷ Pihama, "Tīhei mauri ora" 28.

²⁸ Audre Lorde, *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Penguin Classics, 2020, 115.

As Cooper notes, “Kaupapa Māori research aspires to produce knowledge from its own starting points in the epistemic-wilderness-as-freedom.”²⁹ Māori oral traditions form a natural basis for such knowledge production, and Cooper suggests that we must engage them if we are to bring Western forms of knowledge to task:

In my mind, it is inconceivable that our vibrant epistemic legacies, which served our ancestors so well, could so abruptly be rendered of no value. That Māori epistemologies do not take the form of scientific epistemologies does not render them un-epistemological. Part of the task of Kaupapa Māori research, then, is to draw and theorise from ancestral legacies, to critically engage with scientific epistemologies, and at the same time use the wilderness to critically disengage from science. This is the paradox of the wilderness.³⁰

It is just such a task that I attempt here as I ask: what do Māori oral traditions have to say about Night and Day? The question is of relevance to this task because certain core tenets of Enlightenment thought have become axiomatic in the academy. Rationalist and empiricist thought collude to produce the dominant scientific episteme in which objectivity and reason form the basis for the production of knowledge. Devised originally in relation to the ‘natural’ sciences, the scientific method has since become ubiquitous throughout the academy as a means of producing knowledge. Cooper notes that the belief that “scientific knowledge

²⁹ Garrick Cooper, “Kaupapa Maori research: Epistemic wilderness as freedom?” *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* 47, no. 2 (2012), 71.

³⁰ Cooper, 2012, Kaupapa Māori: Epistemic wilderness as freedom, 71

production methods [are] the only way to produce and recognise “real” knowledge”.³¹ The ontology underlying the deployment of the scientific method is positivist, physicalist, and inherently colonial; Māori oral traditions are thus relegated to the epistemic ghettos of belief and cultural value.

Having decided to ‘draw and theorise from ancestral legacies’ in order to critically engage with the Enlightenment, albeit obliquely, how might I actually go about doing this? Specifically, how might “speculative philosophy for its own sake” be carried out to produce new knowledge in relation to Māori oral traditions that speak of Night and Day?³² Carl Mika notes that while it is important for thinking to begin with the thoughts of another, it must carry on with a ‘wild freedom of thought’:

I want to propose that the continued thinking of mystery – the dual hiddenness and presence of an entity, the relationship of the entity to the self beyond the cognitive, the entity’s participation in Being, and so on – may best be carried out with initial recourse to a previous thinker but, most importantly, with a subsequent and wild freedom of thought.³³

Cooper and Mika are the ‘previous thinkers’ I am responding to in developing a methodology of my own rather than adopting that of another. This methodological dimension is part of my

³¹ Ibid., 71

³² Carl Mika. "Counter-colonial and philosophical claims: An indigenous observation of Western philosophy." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 47, no. 11 (2015): 1136-1142.

³³ Carl Mika, Michael Peters. “Blind, or Keenly Self-regarding? The dilemma of Western philosophy”. (2015): 1125-1127.

attempt to carry forward ‘the effects of the philosopher[s]’ in the wild and free manner called for by Mika. Cooper suggests that “Freedom here is the sense of not being constrained by, or having to conform and measure up to, external benchmarks of epistemic normativity.”³⁴ One way in which Mika and Kim Southey suggest such freedom might be exercised is to rehabilitate the notion of thinking as ‘method in its own right.’³⁵ Mika and Southey offer the term *whaka aro* – which Tākirangi Smith gives as “to cast attention to”³⁶ – to describe a valid method that might resist the theoretical and methodological demands imposed on ‘mātauranga Māori’ and ‘kaupapa Māori’ endeavours in the academy:

There is a haziness that characterises ‘whakaaro’ and that deserves exploration in its own right within Maori research... *we argue that responsive thinking, or what we refer to here as ‘whakaaro’, should be valid on its own as a method for research.* Whilst thinking may be regarded as unavoidable in any research exercise, it has rarely been referred to as a method in its own right, and it currently has to jostle with the dual research monoliths of ‘mātauranga Maori’/Maori knowledge and ‘kaupapa Maori’/Maori theoretical response, which are often more concerned with epistemic certainty than they are with speculative philosophy for its own sake (Mika, 2012, 2014b).³⁷

³⁴ Cooper, *Kaupapa Māori*, 67

³⁵ Carl Mika, Kim Southey. "Exploring whakaaro: A way of responsive thinking in Maori research." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 50, no. 8 (2018): 795-803.

³⁶ Takirangi Smith, “Nga tini ahuatanga o whakapapa korero”, *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 32, no. 1 (2000): 53-60.

³⁷ Mika and Southey, “Exploring whakaaro”, 795

The notion of thinking as method was partly what drew me to philosophy in the first place. I value the processes of thought at least as much as the products of thought, about which I often remain apprehensive; sometimes when one asks a question, what results is not an answer but more questions. There is value or at least pleasure in thinking for its own sake, yet in a society where the scientific method dominates as the sine qua non for knowledge production, thinking as method feels transgressive. Gordon goes so far as to suggest that thinking in the current age is actually indecent:

The irony of our age is that while there is an obsession with appearing smart, thinking has become an indecent activity...Since thinking requires facing the perils of reality, its connection to nakedness...requires also the risk of self-nakedness.³⁸

Self-nakedness in the context of a thesis may entail the exposure of the self to ‘reality’ through whaka aro as method. But what might the deployment of such a method entail?

Methodology

*Why should an irrational method work when rational methods were all so rotten? He had an intuitive feeling, growing rapidly, that what he had stumbled on was no small gimmick. It went far beyond. How far, he didn't know.*³⁹

³⁸ Gordon. “Disciplinary Decadence: Living Thought in Trying Times” 5.

³⁹ Robert M. Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry Into Values*, Random House 1999, 209.

If whaka aro as method is the act of casting attention, as methodology, further elaboration is required. Whaka aro is, in one sense, simply thinking, but what of the nature of that thought? My basic methodology is to read the cosmological traditions described mainly in the works of Elsdon Best and S. Percy Smith, and then to contemplate what I have read. However, I also wish to note a few key qualities of whaka aro as I understand it; namely that it can be non-volitional, non-rational, and non-cognitive.

Whaka aro should not be understood as a purely volitional act because some things *demand* our attention, leaping to the fore of awareness. I find myself wanting to distinguish this in/voluntary attentional divide further. I think this is because I am trying to get away from the tyranny of a particular rational order that seeks to impose itself on things and that makes particular demands of things, namely, that things disclose themselves when we choose to pay attention and remain silent otherwise. As Mika notes:

The uncertainty entrenched within the openness that typifies whakaaro, however, is due to one's fluid residence in the world and the self's vulnerability in the face of the world's entities (Thrupp & Mika, 2012), even as one researches...There is a particular essence to this term...that embraces a Maori worldview of interconnection and autonomy of a thing in relation to the self.⁴⁰

While affirming the importance of self-directed thought in any inquiry, whereby I direct my attention towards *things*, I therefore also want to find or make a space in which 'the autonomy of a thing' can be upheld. This would be a space in which *things can be allowed to draw attention to themselves in various ways*. Things in the world and the self 'call out' and

⁴⁰ Mika and Southey, "Exploring Whakaaro", 79.

are 'heard'. There is sometimes an attentional shift that occurs from passive hearing to active listening when certain things, having made themselves perceptible in the first place, invite further engagement and response. Mika suggests that:

For our current discussion, a beyond-perception theme can take form in the following way, somewhat within the constraints of rationalistic language: a thing has its own (but worlded) ability to reveal and conceal itself, due to its radical interconnection with the world, and this showing and withdrawal is not directly related to human perception.⁴¹

The 'showing' of the thing to the self may not directly result from human perception, but that does not necessarily preclude perceptibility. In relation to things that call out to me, it is an attentional shift that whaka aro can describe and include as method, the causative 'whaka' belonging not to me in this case but to things in the world.

Whaka aro as method therefore may not proceed in a linear or rational fashion, especially given the agency of the non-human world in directing attention. Mika and Georgina Stewart clear the way for such an approach, in which some 'initial utterance' provides the impetus for 'lateral jumps' that draw one on to other utterances:

Māori discussants may hear the other's words but leave them behind, and, to the uninitiated, it can seem as if the response has not met the logical components of the initial utterance. The lateral jump from the initial utterance, rather than neatly interlocking with it, suggests that the initial utterance has simply acted as an

⁴¹ Carl Mika. "Subjecting ourselves to madness: A Maori approach to unseen instruction." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* (2020): 1-9.

impetus. The responder has not necessarily disdained the first words, but language and thought seem to have drawn him or her on to something else.⁴²

Because of my own subjectivities the ‘something else’ I am drawn to is often not ‘Māori’ at all. The discussions of Whiro and Hinekohurangi in Chapters 3 and 4 in particular are spaces in which attentional shifts result in ideas, such as those derived from scientific or Christian thought, that lie beyond Māori oral tradition. However, this is not necessarily a methodological problem; as Mika argues:

For the indigenous writer, *thinking and writing so that the cognitive process is untethered from other things in the world is problematic*. It ensures that the strictures of a paradigm not of those writers’ making are sustained. Moreover, that paradigm is vastly different to that of indigenous thought.⁴³ [emphasis added]

To restrict thought to only ‘Māori’ things suggests the very disciplinary foreclosure of scope and thinking that Gordon warns of. In relation to Māori engagement with Christianity, Cooper also cautions against this totalising kind of view, noting that according to some “nothing but a complete rejection of Christianity and a wholesale embracing of a Māori ‘religion’ is evidence of successful decolonisation”.⁴⁴ This is problematic because “notions of purity sit behind those who argue that Christianity expunged Māori religion from its adherents.”⁴⁵ Such

⁴² Carl Mika, and Georgina Stewart. "Lost in translation: western representations of Māori knowledge". *Open Review of Educational Research* 4, no. 1 (2017): 134-146.

⁴³ Carl Mika. "Maori thinking with a dead white male: Philosophizing in the realm of Novalis". *Knowledge cultures* 2, no. 1 (2014): 23-29.

⁴⁴ Garrick Cooper, "Gods and Kaupapa Māori research", *Critical Conversations in Kaupapa Maori* (2017): 127.

⁴⁵ Cooper, Garrick. "Gods and Kaupapa Māori research", 127.

notions deny the metatextual possibilities that emerge when the Bible is viewed as a potential source of new knowledge to be considered from the perspective of a fully-realised and ever-present Māori world; the Māori identification with the plight of the Israelites is just one such example of the interplay of Māori and Biblical tradition in which some Christian idea is made to serve Māori epistemic purpose. The political dimension of these efforts in responding to colonisation tends to receive attention, as do the religious elements, whereas the epistemic dimension is fundamentally overlooked.

Scientific thought, meanwhile, offers similar possibilities for Māori epistemic adventures; it need not be rejected wholesale in order to successfully decolonise oneself, but nor should it be engaged with on its own terms. Rather, when viewed through the prism of Māori oral tradition, science may be rendered colonisable by Māori thought. In the epistemic wilderness, science can be 'tamed' – that is, stripped of any ontological status it may claim to possess, and treated as an artefact of culture. Because science is incapable of de-ontologising itself, why should we accord the universalising assumptions of scientific thought any special ontological status when science is clearly spatiotemporally bound and culturally contingent?

Sustained acts of whaka aro then may give rise to associative or relational chains of insight that stray from the initial utterance such that things beyond Māori oral traditions are invoked. If whaka aro as method is neither purely volitional nor logical, nor must it be taken as a strictly cognitive activity. As Smith notes:

If we look in any Maori dictionary the word thought is generally translated as whakaaro. If the word is broken down to whaka aro a more appropriate meaning becomes to *cast attention to*...Pre-colonial evidence in language attributes

whakaro as the activity of the stomach and the entrails (te whakaro o te ngakau).⁴⁶

Here the body is understood as a means of casting attention, suggesting the importance of ‘gut instincts’ in the research process. There are various sensory and perceptual modalities beyond the cognitive that can be brought to bear on a Māori research process. The creative works ‘Vanishing Point’ and ‘Ko te Titi o te Rua’ therefore have a twofold purpose in the thesis. The first is simply (if ambitiously) to claim, through their inclusion in an academic work, a space in which these non-cognitive modalities are given an expression as relevant forms of a particular kind of inquiry. Durie articulates a common sentiment when he states that:

Maori world views and Maori understandings of knowledges were themselves distinctive. The holistic approach, while not exclusive to Maori, was certainly favoured by Maori...Its (Maori studies) distinctive strength lies in the richness and uniqueness of Maori modes of expression: styles of thinking, speaking, relating, recalling, researching, recording, and within a developing intellectual framework that rests on Maori philosophies.⁴⁷

If I am to take Durie seriously then I must call on a holistic approach; after all, I found it impossible to merely *reason* my way through the research process. I am not a disembodied mind, and I am not wholly a physical being. Through the creation of these works my intention became to bring to bear all the powers of perception, experience and expression available to

⁴⁶ Takirangi Smith, "Nga tini ahuatanga o whakapapa korero." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 32, no. 1 (2000): 53-60.

⁴⁷ Mason Durie, "The development of Maori studies in New Zealand universities". *He Pukenga Korero* 1, no. 2 (2013).

me in exploring 'the relationship of the entity to the self beyond the cognitive' that Mika speaks of; entities such as Darkness and Light. To fully inhabit the epistemic wilderness, it may be necessary to abandon the idea that emotional, bodily, spiritual, and intuitive modes of perception have no place in academic inquiry. The research question is thus not addressed directly in the creative works: given Mika's argument that we must, as Māori, sometimes be prepared to 'withdraw from saying what the thing *is*'. The works are intended to present Darkness and Light 'as an intriguing amalgam of the sublime.'⁴⁸ Rather than relegate these works to the cultural realm Cooper warns of, I include them here as also, perhaps, products of the generative capacity for knowledge possessed by Māori oral traditions. An exegesis of the creative works is beyond the scope of this thesis, which allows some obscurity of thought to remain, something that I sense is important.

The second purpose of the creative works is to engage with Mika's notion of pōrangi, which he describes as:

...a state of being whereby a thing is launched towards possibilities, whilst (in opposition to that) simultaneously being thrown back into a state of gloom, resulting in what dominant western thought might call inconsistent encounters with the world.⁴⁹

'Vanishing Point' contains some elements that I had originally planned to form the basis of the thesis. I was 'launched towards possibilities' that ultimately did not find a place here.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Carl Mika, "'Papatūānuku/Papa", Some thoughts on the oppositional grounds of the doctoral experience." *Knowledge Cultures* 4, no. 1 (2016): 43-55.

⁴⁹ Mika, "Subjecting ourselves to madness", 3.

⁵⁰ Although I intend to cast further attention to them in my next thesis.

This was largely because the ideas felt too ‘big’ to address in truncated form, something I fear I have done enough of already. Yet I could not allow these ideas to remain completely unsaid because of their influence on my thinking, becoming inextricably bound there along with all the thoughts that have occurred during the research journey. ‘Vanishing Point’ as the first point of contact for the putative reader is both declaration and invitation. It seeks to stir up the non-cognitive and the affective in the reader – it may even induce a sense of uncertainty or confusion. Expectations may be denied or deferred as disciplinary and academic convention are transgressed.

Ko te Titi o te Rua more openly embraces pōrangi as the “madness [that] comes with recentering Maori thought, at least as far as that is possible.”⁵¹ It is not so much non-cognitive as anti-cognitive; paradoxically, it may give rise to thought. It must be read in the context of the thesis, given that it was composed as part of the research process, yet it stands alone. It is internally inconsistent, and may express ideas contrary to others contained in the thesis, evincing the ‘radical doubt’ that Mika suggests is an important lesson pōrangi can teach us:

If there is one thing that porangi could teach us as critical scholars, it is that we have to oscillate between a position of certainty and its opposite number in a form of radical doubt – of both our ideas and our motivations.⁵²

Perhaps nowhere else in the thesis is the oscillation implied by pōrangi so evident. However, in the spirit of obscurity, Ko te Titi o te Rua will speak for itself or not at all.

⁵¹ Mika, “Subjecting ourselves to madness”, 2.

⁵² Ibid., 6.

Any reader will be left to draw their own conclusions as to the efficacy of the creative works, but I could not exclude them and remain honest in my attempts to cast attention to the Night and the Day in order to allow them to appear 'in [their] own right.'⁵³ It felt risky to depart from academic convention in this way, even if the works may be considered to possess an aura of respectability due to their recently published status (albeit in the non-academic realm). Would their inclusion seem self-indulgent, irrelevant, or unwise? In the end I followed the strength of my conviction that these works might be understood as lateral yet important utterances that structurally encapsulate the thesis within the embrace of obscurity.

If failure of methodology can occur at the levels of conceptualisation or execution, I hope any failure here is of the latter kind. I recall high school music assessments in which a choice had to be made; equal marks were assigned to difficulty and proficiency. Would I choose to perform an easy piece, demonstrating technical proficiency but losing marks for difficulty, or a more challenging piece which I may not be able to perform as well? I made the latter choice every time. So too I believe the attempt here to be of value; even, and sometimes particularly, a failed attempt can be instructive. If the theoretical bases for the methodology prove inadequate for the weight they need to bear, a suggested direction for theorising will become apparent. If the theory is sound but the methodology is flawed, further refinements may suggest themselves to any who wish to forge a similar path. Perhaps, to return to my musical analogy, it will be found that I simply need to practice and play more.

⁵³ Mika, Carl. "Papatūānuku/Papa", Some thoughts on the oppositional grounds of the doctoral experience", 47.

Finally, Mika notes that we must, as Māori, sometimes be prepared to refuse to say what the thing is:

In theorising about a thing in the world we may, as students and supervisors, have to be prepared to withdraw from saying what that thing *is*. Given the obscurity that characterises Māori metaphysics, it is quite possible that, before colonisation, we never expected an object to manifest in preordained ways. It would have had its own mode of appearance...in our traditional worldview, I surmise that we had more respect for an object appearing in its own right, and not necessarily *as* any one thing but as an intriguing amalgam of the sublime.⁵⁴

In the context of the thesis, the obscurity of Māori metaphysics may result in underwhelming conclusions that resist clarity. I may not, in the final analysis, be able to say what Darkness and Light *are*, although I hope I will be able to say a little about them and what the implications might be for Māori in the academy. The following chapters represent my earnest attempt to allow Darkness and Light to appear in their ‘own mode[s] of appearance,’ through sustained acts of whaka aro that engage the epistemic potential of Māori oral traditions.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 47.

Chapter 2. Surveying the Landscape

*There was no correct text. There was no standard version. Of anything. There was not one Arbor but many, many arbors. The jungle was endless, and it was not one jungle but endless jungles, all burning with bright tigers of meaning, endless tigers...*⁵⁵

There is precedent for the particular work I am attempting here – producing new knowledge from Māori oral traditions – by those such as Cooper and Pihama, but such work is under-represented in the academy. Deciding how to frame the literature review demanded of a thesis therefore required some thought. As I am responding to a particular Enlightenment idea, at first I wondered if I should review what the literature might say about an Enlightenment orientation to Light. But this would not add anything to the discourse. The fetishisation of light, vision and knowledge in Enlightenment thought is well-established, and it is what Māori traditions have to say that most concerns me. I then considered reviewing the written accounts of the particular Māori oral traditions by Elsdon Best and S. Percy Smith that I engage with, as these form the ‘initial utterances’ I first cast attention to in the research process. But this too did not seem to add anything of value; many others have done this work, and in any case I discuss that literature throughout the thesis.

Given the methodology I have described which consists of drawing and theorising from ancestral legacies as recorded in (largely) early anthropological writings, the question underlying the chapter became: how else have these legacies and traditions been treated in

⁵⁵ Le Guin, Ursula K. *The telling*. Ace Books, 2001, 116.

academic literature? If I am treating Māori oral traditions as impetus for speculative philosophy in their own right, in what other ways are these traditions engaged with elsewhere in the academy?

Rather than undertake a literature review in the traditional sense, I decided to discuss two key arguments necessary to understanding some of the points I make in the thesis. The first is that Māori oral traditions are treated as an evolutionary stage along the teleological progression to Western ideals. The treatment of tribal traditions in particular as historical is commonplace, particularly since the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal. Bruce Biggs, distinguishing between Māori 'myths' and traditions, ascribes an explicitly historical value to the latter:

Traditions are concerned with mortals, not with the gods and heroes of the myths. They are genealogically placed not more than thirty generations from the present, and knowledge of them is usually quite local. Maori traditions, for example, are not known outside of New Zealand. The earliest Maori traditions concern the discovery and settlement of this country...

The migration and settlement traditions are thought by many people, including, I believe, everyone who has worked intensively with them, to have much historical value. The wide distribution of much of the mythology is conclusive proof that Polynesians were able to preserve legendary material for many centuries. So it is not unreasonable to suppose that settlement traditions, genealogically dated at only five or six hundred years ago, and of obvious functional importance in the

social and political organisation of the people, were maintained with equal fidelity, and reflect actual events.⁵⁶

Such a perspective is relatively uncontroversial. I am not disputing that tribal traditions as Biggs defines them may relate to 'actual events' in the past and thus, in a sense, be considered historical. What I want to emphasise here is that this treatment of oral tradition necessarily limits its epistemic potential: traditions from this perspective can only be considered to convey existing knowledge, not create it. Any such knowledge can be *applied* in the manner Gordon suggests, for instance in establishing rights and informing settlement claims, but its historical treatment paradoxically results in traditions being treated as ahistorical or existing in pristine fashion, wholly complete. My interest here is not in the 'tribal' traditions that Biggs describes, but instead 'myths' such as Māori cosmological accounts, and so I restrict my comments on the historical treatment of oral tradition to those already made.

Another example of the reduction of oral traditions to quasi- or proto- forms of Western knowledge lies in attempts to describe them as scientific. In the introduction to *The Astronomical Knowledge of the Maori, Genuine and Empirical*, Best states that:

Maori beliefs concerning the heavenly bodies were very different from our own, and must be compared with those of other uncultured races...Doubtless much of the star-lore of the Maori was empirical—astronomy and astrology were intermingled in his beliefs and teachings; but, as he firmly believed in all such lore,

⁵⁶ Bruce Biggs. "The oral literature of the Polynesians", *Te Ao Hou* 49 (1964): 23-25.

it behoves us to place it on record, however puerile some of his superstitions and myths may be.

The use to which the Maori put his knowledge of the heavenly bodies and their movements was in several instances a scientific one, as, for instance, when he navigated his vessels by them during deep-ocean voyages, and when he watched for the heliacal rising of stars to mark the commencement of the Maori year and of certain seasons and activities.⁵⁷

Here even the title is revealing; the implication is that Best has judged the traditions he describes according to ‘genuine and empirical’ standards. Māori astronomical knowledge is both dismissed as ‘belief’ and credited with science-like attributes, demonstrating, ironically, his own belief in the proto-scientific dimension of Māori oral traditions. Elsewhere Best associates Māori knowledge with the world of ‘Nature’, an association so pervasive in the academy I fear it has become orthodoxy:

Many Maori myths are based on observation, hence the profusion of Native myths and personified forms. The Maori had ever an intimate fellowship with Nature, and this fact sprang from several causes. In the first place he lived in close contact with Nature; he was compelled to observe closely natural products and forces, in order to retain life. Thus he observed the habits of birds, of fish, of plant life, their functions and peculiarities.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Elsdon Best. “The astronomical knowledge of the Maori”, *The Astronomical Knowledge of the Maori* 3 (1922), 3–4

⁵⁸ Best. ‘The Maori, Vol 1’. In *Published Works of Elsdon Best* 1982, 128–29

A strand of recent scholarship also emphasises the scientific nature of Māori oral tradition. Although here and elsewhere he is careful to point out the differences between science and ‘mātauranga Māori’,⁵⁹ Daniel Hikuroa emphasises their similarities, going so far as to suggest that some forms of Māori knowledge *are* science, somewhat undermining his claims of difference:

Clearly there are significant similarities between mātauranga Māori and science. Specifically, pūrākau and maramataka comprise knowledge generated consistent with the scientific method... some mātauranga Māori has been generated according to the scientific method, and can therefore be considered as science.⁶⁰

Hikuroa acknowledges those who view mātauranga and science as incompatible, a camp in which I find myself, but attributes such a stance to a refusal or inability to ‘comprehend’ his view that mātauranga can be ‘generated using the scientific method’:

Mātauranga Māori is considered by some scholars as incompatible with science (e.g. Howe 2016). Pūrākau and maramataka have hitherto generally been ignored or disregarded by the wider science community. What those who disregard it fail to comprehend is that pūrākau and maramataka is knowledge generated using the scientific method, explained according to a Māori world view.⁶¹

⁵⁹ See Hikuroa, Dan, Kēpa Morgan, Mason Durie, Manuka Henare, and Te Tuhi Robust. “Integration of Indigenous Knowledge and Science.” *International Journal of Science in Society* 2, no. 2 (April 2011): 105–13., Hikuroa, Dan CH. “Mātauranga Māori—knowledge, culture, values and worldview of indigenous peoples of New Zealand—its role in New Zealand Environmental Protection Authority decision-making”. *AGUFM* 2019 (2019): PA44B-07.

⁶⁰ Hikuroa, Daniel. “Mātauranga Māori—the ūkaipō of knowledge in New Zealand.” *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand* 47, no. 1 (2017): 5-10.5-10.

⁶¹ Hikuroa, Daniel. “Mātauranga Māori—the ūkaipō of knowledge in New Zealand”. 6

I am bemused by this assertion, given the fundamental incommensurability of Western and Māori ontologies: the scientific method cannot be divorced from the positivist and physicalist assumptions which underlie it, most particularly in the colonial context within which we exist. Stewart shares such concerns, arguing that mātauranga Māori:

...is better conceived as a form of philosophy of science, rather than as a form of 'science' itself. This approach possibly allows ideas from mātauranga Māori to inform science at a values level, below the level of the empirical knowledge base, without needing to claim that mātauranga Māori is the same as science or uses scientific methods.⁶²

Hikuroa instead states that "the critical difference" between science and Māori knowledge is "that mātauranga Māori includes values and is explained according to a Māori world view."⁶³ This appears to me to be no difference at all, given science too is infused with values, albeit profoundly different, merely substituting one 'world view' for another in which the scientific method remains intact, thereby ontologising it beyond its domain. The unexamined possibility that the world itself may prove the critical difference represents a 'fail[ure] to comprehend' of Hikuroa's own.

Other scholarship does not conclude that Māori oral traditions *are* scientific, but nevertheless suggests, wittingly or otherwise, that Māori knowledge can or should be validated through recourse to scientific norms; Vision Mātauranga provides an academic exemplar of both the

⁶² Stewart, Georgina Tuari. "Mātauranga Māori: a philosophy from Aotearoa." *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand* (2020): 1-7.

⁶³ Daniel Hikuroa, "Mātauranga Māori—the ūkaipō of knowledge in New Zealand", *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand* 47, no. 1 (2017): 5-10.

scientisation of mātauranga and the reduction of its scope to a few pre-determined domains.⁶⁴ Marama Muru-Lanning argues that the purpose of Vision Mātauranga is to “commodify and globalise Māori knowledge that belongs to Māori communities, and is now the expected mechanism for all engagement between university researchers and Māori communities”.⁶⁵ My concern is the pending collapse of mātauranga to, finally, a de-ontologised equivalent to scientific knowledge, thereby ignoring metaphysical difference.

Perhaps most pertinently to my argument, even when considered validated by science and its corresponding method-as-fetish, any ‘scientific’ knowledge Māori may be considered to possess is old knowledge. Māori ‘scientific’ knowledge contained within oral tradition was produced in the past and so, although like ‘historical’ Māori knowledge it may be put to work in the present, it cannot produce further knowledge; it too is complete.

If some Māori knowledge is considered proto-scientific, and thus epistemically deficient, Māori oral tradition was most commonly treated as religious, locating it even further from normative Western standards of knowledge; oral traditions thus become the titular religion and mythology that Best describes in two of his major works, *Maori Religion and Mythology Parts 1 and 2*. In fact, Best argues, there is no fundamental distinction between the two: “To

⁶⁴ A cursory examination of its website is revealing; “Vision Mātauranga”, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/science-and-technology/science-and-innovation/agencies-policies-and-budget-initiatives/vision-matauranga-policy/> accessed 25 January 2021

⁶⁵ Lanning, Marama. "Multidisciplinary research collaborations, Vision Mātauranga science and the potential of anthropology in Aotearoa-New Zealand." (2018). 137

draw a dividing-line between myth and religion in any account of Maori life is utterly impossible, so intermingled are the two”:

It is quite clear that many inferior peoples are much more religious, as we term it, than is civilized man. The former have a greater fear of supernatural powers, and their very ignorance of natural laws, and superstitions concerning natural phenomena, &c., force them to rely on their gods—that is to say, on religion—to a much greater extent than does civilized man. Our knowledge, incomplete as it is, of natural laws and phenomena, of mechanics and other matters, tends to render us more independent of religion, and to destroy faith in old superstitions. In the case of many such inferior peoples we must admit that they feel the need of religion more than we do...

The principles and precepts of Maori religion impinged upon social and industrial life in many ways. They practically usurped the place of civil law, and entered in some way into every industry in the Maori commune. Agriculture and war, fishing and fowling, house-building, canoe-making and weaving, fire-kindling and navigation, into all these and other activities some phase or tenets of religion entered.⁶⁶

Here Best collapses all branches of Māori knowledge to the notion of religious belief. Thus although some Māori knowledge may be considered proto-scientific, by its very nature, given the involvement of various supranormal beings, it cannot meet the epistemic demands that History or Science make. Perhaps representing the general secularisation of New Zealand

⁶⁶ Best, *Maori religion and mythology*, 10

society, contemporary scholarship ascribes not a religious nature to Māori oral traditions but an ethical one. Māori Marsden's "Kaitiakitanga: A definitive introduction to the holistic worldview of Māori" is one such example, in which Māori oral traditions provide the first principles from which contemporary ethical frameworks can be derived; Garth Harmsworth and Shaun Awatere's "Indigenous Māori knowledge and perspectives of ecosystems" provides another such framework.⁶⁷

I affirm the value and necessity of such work. My apprehension is that values and principles such as manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga and so on are understood, as with other Māori forms of knowledge derived from oral tradition, as pre- or a-historic. Ethical knowledge can, and I believe should, be applied to our current circumstances, but it is not clear that an ethical approach alone can allow for the production of new knowledge and theory from Māori oral traditions.

The second key argument I need to make here is that Best's treatment of oral traditions involving Whiro and Tāne in particular imposes a Manichean world-view on those traditions. Best clearly holds an evolutionary theory of religion, according to which:

A religion is evolved or adapted, not discovered or invented. Timbers from former houses are ever taken to form a new structure. A superior religion may have little effect in lifting a people to a higher culture stage, but as a people advance in general culture, mental and otherwise, their religion must advance with them; it

⁶⁷ Harmsworth, Garth R., and Shaun Awatere. "Indigenous Māori knowledge and perspectives of ecosystems." *Ecosystem services in New Zealand—conditions and trends*. Manaaki Whenua Press, Lincoln, New Zealand (2013): 274-286.

must be refined and elevated, or fall into desuetude, or be confined to an interested few, such as a priesthood.⁶⁸

Elsewhere he is more explicit as to the nature of the development of 'Maori religion':

Maori religion, again, was in a very interesting stage of development in relation to the concept of a Supreme Being, the initial step taken toward monotheism, and the expressed and half-developed faith in two distinct spirit-worlds. The graded group series of gods, as suited to different mentalities, and the peculiar control of the cult of the Supreme Being, by means of which the purity of the concept was conserved, are matters of deep interest to anthropologists, and throw light on the evolution of religions. It will be seen how the ancestors of the Maori had many customs and beliefs similar to those of the Semites, yet struck out new paths for themselves in other matters, and were developing a religious system on different lines.⁶⁹

Jeffrey Paparoa Holman describes the influences of nineteenth-century ethnographic theory on Best's treatment of Māori oral tradition, according to which Māori are understood in evolutionary terms:

The building blocks of the late 19th century ethnography embraced by Best, and deployed in a New Zealand setting were a racialised, developmental model of human cultural evolution. This progressive model of savage, barbarian and

⁶⁸ Best, *Maori Religion and Mythology* 26.

⁶⁹ Webster, Steven. "The Maori as He Was: A Brief Account of Maori Life as it was in Pre-European Days." (1976), xiii–xiv.

civilised had antecedents in classical Greek thought, through to the early explorations of what became the colonial age of European expansion in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries.⁷⁰

Holman notes certain influences as key to locating Best's work within its wider context:

Müller's philology and comparative religion, Tyrolean models of culture and in particular, an evolutionary scheme of religious development – the conviction that cultures could be described, and classified, by scientific method. It was from such ideas, and within this major historical debate that Elsdon Best was to form and shape his own view of anthropology, and in particular, the evolution of religious belief and practice.⁷¹

Support for Holman's argument is found throughout Best's work. In "Maori Religion and Mythology Part 1," Best most explicitly describes his views of the evolution of religion, locating Māori oral traditions as less advanced than Manicheism due to the lack of the notion of 'good':

With the Maori this conception was not so far advanced as it was with the Persians and some other races. It was not a clearly defined struggle between good and evil. Clearly enough Whiro represents evil, but in Tane we have not a pronounced good principle, though the tenor of old myths, and the mental attitude of the Maori, show us that he was considered to be in the right. This was clearly a case of myth in the

⁷⁰ Holman, Jeffrey Paparoa. "Best of both world: Elsdon Best and the metamorphosis of Maori spirituality. Te painga rawa o nga ao rua: Te Peehi me te putanga ke o te wairua Maori." (2007), 51.

⁷¹ Holman, Jeffrey Paparoa. "Best of both world: Elsdon Best and the metamorphosis of Maori spirituality", 52.

making; another step in development would have placed it on a level with the Persian concept... Here we actually see gods in the making, and, had the Maori become possessed of a script, these myths would have passed into his sacred books, and been preserved in that form. For such was the genesis of our Bible, and the sacred books of other faiths⁷²

Best cannot engage with the Whiro and Tāne traditions on their own terms. His belief in religious evolution as teleological contaminates his descriptions of Māori oral traditions with Manichean thought, according to which the absence of an entity of supreme good signalled the primitivity of the Māori worldview, with Whiro forced to play the role of evil. Treating Whiro and Tāne as proto-Manichean, Best argues that, eventually, the full realisation of Light as Good and Darkness as evil could be the only result:

Had the Maori carried the development of this myth further he would undoubtedly have evolved a belief in good and evil principles, in a moral God and an antagonistic Devil. He already had in Whiro the Destroyer the personification of evil, the making of a very excellent devil, but in the case of his adversary Tane development had not extended so far, for the latter cannot be said to be the emblem of goodness. And yet, in the Maori mind, we can apparently detect the feeling that Tane represents what is right, that he was the proper being to receive the various privileges and honours awarded to him. It seems as though, subconsciously, the Maori was beginning to realize that the opponent of a being personifying evil must be identified with qualities

⁷² Best, *Maori Religion and Mythology*, 112-113

that oppose evil. A further development could only have ended as in the case of the Persian myth.⁷³

Such evolutionary thought is evident elsewhere in Best's work but I want here to focus on its implications for Darkness and Light in Māori oral tradition. Such implications are important because I believe the Manichean reading of oppositional binaries imbued with particular moral qualities is one we as Māori should be suspicious of, not least because of Best's assumption that Māori were working their way towards the "higher culture plane"⁷⁴ occupied by the normative European subject.

Further, Holman argues that Best's work, problematics notwithstanding, has become influential through his role as "prime literary recorder of traditional Māori society":

While many of the [kaupapa Māori] movement's leading lights – from Maori Marsden in the early 1970s to Pita Sharples today – would undoubtedly find the racialised underpinnings of Best's cultural hierarchies distasteful, his influence is ubiquitous in their fields of study simply because he is the prime literary recorder of traditional Māori society. That he got certain things wrong, that many of his views are now passé, that he appropriated Māori knowledge to further his own career: all of this is up for debate and further study, but Best as an ancestor figure in the field, and in New Zealand literature in general, needs taking seriously.⁷⁵

⁷³ Ibid., 113.

⁷⁴ Best. *Maori Religion and Mythology*, 22.

⁷⁵ Holman, Jeffrey Paparoa. "Elsdon Best: Elegist in Search of a Poetic." *ka mate ka ora* 2 (2006), 94.

Having read just about everything I could get my hands on in relation to Whiro and Tāne traditions, I agree that Best's influence has become ubiquitous, at least in relation to Manichean readings of the encounters between Tāne and Whiro.⁷⁶ Whiro has now largely been accepted as Evil in most accounts, to the extent that he is described thus in the Māori Dictionary,⁷⁷ and he is always set in opposition to Tāne, two notions that I will critically engage with in the following chapters.

⁷⁶ I am less certain, however, that the assertion that Best "got certain things wrong, that many of his views are now passé, that he appropriated Māori knowledge to further his own career" is still up for debate. But Holman's overall point stands.

⁷⁷ "Whiro". Māori Dictionary, <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?keywords=whiro>, accessed 25 January 2021.

Chapter 3. Tiwhatiwha te Pō

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

John 3:19-20

*For those rebellious, here thir Prison ordain'd
In utter darkness, and thir portion set
As far remov'd from God and light of Heav'n
As from the Center thrice to th' utmost Pole.*

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 1, 71-74⁷⁸

I worry that...pseudoscience and superstition will seem year by year more tempting, the siren song of unreason more sonorous and attractive...The candle flame gutters. Its little pool of light trembles. Darkness gathers. The demons begin to stir.

Carl Sagan, *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*.⁷⁹

Although I want to think about what Māori oral traditions have to say about Darkness and the Night, it is first necessary to briefly outline a pervasive religious influence that has informed the Western characterisation of Light as Good and Darkness as Evil – namely, that of Manicheanism. This is necessary because, in the first instance, it is a ‘first utterance’ that I am

⁷⁸ Fowler, Alastair, ed. *Milton: Paradise Lost*. Routledge, 2014.

⁷⁹ Dawkins, Richard. *The Oxford book of modern science writing*. Oxford University Press, 2009, 240-241.

responding to, albeit it somewhat obliquely, as I prefer to devote my energies towards the casting attention to Māori oral traditions. It is also necessary because, as I argue in Chapter 2, the Light-Good/Darkness-Evil dichotomy has influenced the interpretation of Māori cosmological traditions by those such as Best, who in turn has had a pervasive influence upon many later writers. Given the role that Christianity has played in colonial history of this country, it may seem the more logical place to start in discussing religious influences on the interpretation of Māori oral tradition. However, given the general familiarity of the English-speaking world with Christianity, I will make only a few brief comments demonstrating its orientation towards Light and Dark before moving on to discuss Manicheism.

In the book of Genesis, God creates the world, his first act being to call for Light. By the fourth verse we see that Light is Good; “And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.”⁸⁰ Implicit here is the suggestion that darkness might be ‘bad’, as it is not described in the same terms as light. Genesis 3 establishes Satan as responsible for the origin of sin in the world, tempting Eve to disobey God’s instruction not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.⁸¹ Darkness is associated with sin and the fallen state of humanity; “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me”.⁸² “He has delivered us from the domain of

⁸⁰ Genesis 1:4

⁸¹ Genesis 3

⁸² Acts 26:18

darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son;”⁸³ “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them”.⁸⁴

The Gospel of John, further establishing the ‘good’-ness of light, states that “This then is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”⁸⁵ Jesus calls himself the Light of the World: “Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”⁸⁶ “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”⁸⁷

These passages illustrate the association in the Bible of God with Light and Goodness on the one hand, and Satan with Darkness and Evil on the other hand. The basic idea of Light as Good and Dark as Bad has become ubiquitous in Western thought such that it may be considered universal, although I do not think this is the case. To demonstrate its pervasiveness, I now turn to Manicheism.

Mani was a prophet who lived in what is now Iraq in the third century AD. The religion he developed was one of oppositional dualism in which Light and Dark are the two fundamental

⁸³ Colossians 1:13

⁸⁴ Ephesians 5:11

⁸⁵ 1 John 1:5

⁸⁶ John 8:12.

⁸⁷ John 9:5

principles underlying existence.⁸⁸ Light is spiritual and Good, and associated with intelligence, reason, thought, and other intellectual capacities. Darkness is evil and material, and is in essence the antithesis of Light: “The Light is essentially Good, orderly, reasonable, kindly. The Dark is Evil, disorderly, passionate, and harmful”.⁸⁹ The association between Light and various intellectual capacities speaks to Mani’s conviction that salvation would be delivered through knowledge.⁹⁰

According to Manichaen accounts, there are three ‘moments’ or periods of reality in which Light and Darkness vie for supremacy.⁹¹ In the first moment, the past, Light and Darkness were wholly and absolutely separate. Despite this separateness, Darkness saw Light and hungered for it, and as a result the world came into being through the mixing of Light and Dark: “but the Dark somehow conceived a passion for the Light, its opposite, and made an assault upon it, whereby a portion of the Light became mixed with the Dark, was in fact swallowed by it”.⁹² The pollution of Light by the Dark renders the world itself evil, which brings us to the present moment, in which the opposing forces of Light and Dark are at war. Light is prophesied to triumph through the construction of a ‘great mechanism’, consisting of the sun, moon, and stars, which will filter out the parts of the Light that were consumed by Darkness. Once this

⁸⁸ Bevan, A. A. (1930). "Manichaeism". Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Volume VIII Ed. James Hastings. London

⁸⁹ Burkitt F. Crawford. "The Religion of the Manichees." *The Journal of Religion* 2, no. 3 (1922): 263-76.

⁹⁰ J. Kevin J. Coyle *Manichaeism and its legacy*. Brill, 2009, xiv.

⁹¹ A. A. Bevan, A. A. "Manichaeism". Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Volume VIII Ed. James Hastings. London, 1930.

⁹² Burkitt F. Crawford. "The Religion of the Manichees", 263-76.

has been carried out, the Manichean eschatological belief is that, in the future moment, Light and Darkness will finally be separated again, which will result in the destruction of the world.⁹³

Manichaeism was influential, rivalling Christianity in its missionary zeal and geographical spread. The moral characteristics assigned to Light and Dark have become so pervasive that they now hold normative force; although Christianity does not assign to Satan, the Prince of Darkness, equal power as God as Light, the same moral attributes are evident.

Darkness in contemporary Western thought is reformulated from sin to ignorance, but its oppositional relationship with light as knowledge, which remains good if not Good, retains a basically religious worldview in which darkness is bad. Carl Sagan's description of science as a candle in a 'demon-haunted world' conveys the horrors the night holds in scientific thought. As Mika notes, this 'colonial fixation' does not treat Darkness kindly:

We are entangled in, and appropriated by, a colonial fixation on clarity, visibility and enlightenment - and this obsession does not treat obscurity, invisibility and endarkenment benevolently.⁹⁴

One way in which the obsession with clarity and enlightenment can be denied is through a rehabilitation of the Night through its engagement from the epistemic wilderness. In both

⁹³ Attwater, Donald. *The Catholic Encyclopædic Dictionary*. General Editor, Donald Attwater, with the Assistance of the Rev. JP Arendzen... the Rev. Thomas E. Flynn... Dom Benedict Steuart...[and Others] With Eight Half-tone Plates. Macmillan, 1931.

⁹⁴ Carl Mika, "Subjecting ourselves to madness", 1

Enlightenment and Māori thought, darkness precedes light. But if darkness in Western thought might be said to represent evil, ignorance or other undesirable qualities, what do Māori oral traditions have to say about Darkness and the Night?

Becoming in the Night

Kei te pō te timatatanga o te waiatatanga mai a te atua.

Ko te ao, ko te ao mārama, ko te ao tūroa. – Matiaha Tiramorehu

It was in the night, that the gods sang the world into existence. From the world of light, into the world of music.⁹⁵

Māori oral traditions that describe processes of becoming uniformly invoke a movement from darkness to light.⁹⁶ Darkness takes many forms: sometimes it is the Night, sometimes it is the darkness of things growing in the soil, or the womb. The following brief discussion will present some of the cosmological accounts that, although not described explicitly in terms of darkness or the Night, seem to me to occur in the absence of Light. I will then cast attention to Te Pō as a cosmogonic phase, along with Te Kore and Te Ao Marama.

⁹⁵ Shearer, Rachel Mary. “Te Oro o te Ao: the Resounding of the World”. PhD dissertation, Auckland University of Technology, 2018, 24.

⁹⁶ Marsden, Māori. *The woven universe: selected writings of Rev. Māori Marsden, edited by Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal*. Ōtaki: Estate of Rev. Māori Marsden, 2003.

Best gives one account in which the evolution of reality is described in terms of the growth of plants or trees:

Te Pu—The root or origin.

Te More—The taproot.

Te Weu—The rootlet.

Te Aka—The vine or ærial root, or long root.

Te Rea—The growth.

Te Wao nui—The great forest.

Te Kune—The development.

Te Whe—Sound.

Te Kore—Chaos. Nothingness. The Void.

Te Po—Night, or the unknown.⁹⁷

Te Pū, the 'root or origin' must lie in darkness, although it is not described in those terms. Best states that Rangi and Papa emerged from Te Pō and so on to Te Ao Marama.⁹⁸ Best identifies another account in which reality begins in the womb, the darkness life occupies before it emerges into the world:

One such, given by one Kohuora, of Rongoroa, in 1854, states that from Te Kune (signifying pregnancy) sprang Te Pupuke (signifying increase in size, swelling),

⁹⁷ P.91 Best. *The Maori Vol. 1*. 1982, 91.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 91.

from whom came Te Hihiri (denotes desire), who begat Te Mahara (signifies thought, memory), who begat Te Hinengaro (signifies the mind, desire), who had Te Manako (denotes longing, yearning), who had Te Po (signifying the unknown, unknown time or periods prior to birth and after death, hence applied to the spirit-world), who had Te Po-uriuri, who had Te Po-tango-tango (phases of darkness). Several similar names follow, and then the statement "All was dark in those times, there were no eyes" (? heavenly bodies). Then come a series of names beginning with Te Kore (signifying non-existence, non-possession, non-occurrence). Some following names are not decipherable, but the last one mates with Atea (space) and produced the heavens, Rangi who mated with the Earth...⁹⁹

A more sophisticated rendering of the same tradition is given by Salmond:

Nā te kune te pupuke

Nā te pupuke te hihiri

Nā te hihiri te mahara

Nā te mahara te hinengaro

Nā te hinengaro te manako

Ka hua te wānanga.

From the conception the increase

From the increase the thought

From the thought the remembrance

⁹⁹ Ibid., 91.

From the remembrance the consciousness

From the consciousness the desire.

Knowledge became fruitful.¹⁰⁰

Perhaps the most common cosmology given is that of the movement from Te Kore, to Te Pō, to Te Ao Marama. Te Rangi Hiroa states that:

The most remote phase, as contrasted with the fullness of life, was regarded as a period when there was nothing and the world was a void. This condition was expressed by the word kore (nothing), so Te Kore (The Void) was established at the head of the list...

The second phase was a period of darkness and ignorance. This was expressed by the term for night (po) and hence named Te Po. Qualifying terms were added to express various attributes of Te Po. The extent (nui) in space was expressed by Te Po-nui and its length (roa) in time by Te Po-roa. The negative use of te appears in the name Te Po-te-kitea (The Night-in-which-nothing-could-be-seen), which applied to both visual and mental darkness. The intensity of the darkness was expressed by such classical terms as Te Po-uriuri, Te Po-kerekere, and Te Po-tango-tango, each with fine shades of meaning for which there are no satisfactory equivalents in English. The length of Te Po was also stressed by a numerical

¹⁰⁰ Anne Salmond, *Two worlds: first meetings between Maori and Europeans, 1642–1772*. Auckland: Viking, 1991, 171–172.

sequence of ten Po from Te Po-tuatahi (Po-the-first) to Te Po-tuangahuru (Po-the-tenth).¹⁰¹

Here I immediately encounter a difficulty not dissimilar to Salmond's left-and-right conundrum; can any of these phases really be said to occur 'before' or 'after' another? While Te Ao Marama is usually understood to the 'final' stage in most accounts, Te Pō and Te Kore occupy interchangeable positions as the first stage. This is an issue that I do not think relates to tribal variants or 'inconsistencies', discussed below, so much as difficulties in understanding Māori time. That topic, however, is too broad for me to begin to broach here. Instead, my intention is provide some descriptions of Te Pō found in the literature while remaining agnostic, for now, on the matter of 'before' and 'after'. What can be said though, is that Māori cosmogonies tend to emphasise the movement from darkness to light.

Te Pō is often described as sequences of Pō, each with a distinguishing feature. Best gives two such sequences, one of which he states occur prior to conception of Papa:

The period prior to the birth of the primal offspring was divided by some Schools of Learning into twelve Po periods, two series of six each. The first series is as follows:—

Te Po—The Night, or Period of Darkness.

Te Po nui—The great Po.

¹⁰¹ Te Rangi Hiroa, *The Coming of the Māori*. 437.

Te Po roa—The long Po.

Te Po uriuri—The dark Po.

Te Po kerekere—The intensely dark Po.

Te Po tiwaha—The gloom-laden Po.¹⁰²

The next series of Pō occurred after the conception of Papatūānuku during the previous sequence, ending in the birth of the primal offspring; these Pō ‘represent the period of labour of the Earth Mother’:

Te Po te kitea—Signifies the unseen Po.

Te Po tangotango—Signifies the changing Po.

Te Po whawha—Signifies feeling or groping.

Te Po namunamu ki taiao—Refers to the narrow passage by which man enters the world.

Te Po tahuri atu—Signifies turning, movement.

Te Po tahuri mai ki taiao—Signifies turning to this world.¹⁰³

Te Mātorohanga in the Lore of the Whare Wānanga discusses two sequences of Pō. The first sequence, consisting of twelve Pō divided into two series of six, is described as the “nights, ages, aeons” of Rangi and Papa, leading eventually to Te Ao Marama:

¹⁰² Best. P.94. The Maori Vol 1. 1982

¹⁰³ Best. P.94. The Maori Vol 1. 1982

The first is that during which the offspring of Rangi [the Sky-father] and Papa [the Earth-mother] dwelt in the Pō, and eventually became desirous of breaking forth from the embrace of their parents to the Whai-ao [the World of Being] and the Ao-marama [the World of Light].¹⁰⁴

These Pō are as follows:

1. Te Po-tamaku [the age smoothed off]
2. Te Po-kakarauri [the age of extreme darkness]
3. Te Po-aoao-nui [the age of great dawn]
4. Te Po-uriuri [the age of deep black darkness]
5. Te Po-kerikeri [the age of darkness]
6. Te Po-tiwhatiwha [the age of gloom]

1. Te Po-taruaite [the night with light faintly seen]
2. Te Po-whatu-ao [the night with the eye of light]
3. Te Po-atarau [the night of moonlight]
4. Te Po-para-uriuri [the night with fragments of blackness]
5. Te Po-turu [the night confirmed]¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Stephenson Percy Smith, ed. *The Lore of the Whare-wānanga; Or, Teachings of the Maori College on Religion, Cosmogony, and History: Written Down by HT Whatahoro from the Teachings of Te Mātorohanga and Nepia Pohuhu*. Society, 1913, 161.

¹⁰⁵ Smith, *Lore of the Whare Wananga*, 99–100.

6. Te Po-whiro [the night of darkness before new moon]¹⁰⁶

I admit to being confused as to why the division of the first series of Pō occurs according to Te Mātorohanga's account; it is not discussed further. The second series of Pō is associated with Rarohenga, and given as:

Te-Pō-tē-kitea [the unseen Pō], Te Pō-tē-whaia [non-possessed Pō], Te Pō-tē-wheau [the Pō-that passes not], Te Pō-tangotango [the Pō of utter darkness], and Te Pō-tē-whawha [the Pō that cannot be touched], in Rarohenga. All these Pō were dedicated [or consecrated, or separated off] to Te Ku-watawata (23) [Guardian of the entrance to Hades] to Rarohenga.¹⁰⁷

Curiously, the second series of Pō is described as becoming fixed or made permanent:

The second series of the Pō commenced when Hine-nui-te-Pō [Great Lady of the night, goddess of Hades] passed through the angī to Pou-tere-rangi [the Guard-house of Hades] (see p. 153), and then...*became permanent* in Rarohenga [Hades].¹⁰⁸ [emphasis added]

The purpose of the making-permanent of these Pō was to “sweep away the misfortunes of the long-standing world down to Rarohenga [Hades], and where Te Kuwatawata and his

¹⁰⁶ Smith, *Lore of the Whare Wananga*, 161.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 161-162

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 162-163

companions are stationed.”¹⁰⁹ The fixing in place of these Pō suggests they continue to exist.

Te Maire Tau suggests that Māori occupied an eternal present in which:

...there is neither future or past, lineal or cyclical time, so much as a constant present that pervades everything and everywhere imaginable. All the gods and ancestors exist in the present.¹¹⁰

If there is neither future nor past, then all things that have existed must always exist. Thus, while we can speak of stages of creation, they must not be understood as proceeding in the linear fashion that would render these stages obsolete once ‘complete’. Instead, Ranginui Walker and Māori Marsden offer a different way of thought. Walker describes Te Kore, Te Pō, and Te Ao Marama as states of existence rather than stages of creation:

Although Te Kore signified space, it contained in its vastness the seeds of the universe and was therefore a state of potential. Te Po is the celestial realm and the domain of the gods. This was the source of all mana and tapu. Te Aomarama is the world of light and reality, the dwelling place of humans.¹¹¹

Māori Marden suggests that Te Kore, Te Pō and Te Ao Marama can be conceived of as realms, stating that he “suspect[s] the Maori had a three-world view, of potential being symbolized by Te Korekore, the world of becoming portrayed by Te Po, and the world of being, Te Ao

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 100

¹¹⁰ Te Maire Tau, “I-nga-ra-o-mua”. *Journal of New Zealand Studies* 10 (2011): 45

¹¹¹ Ranginui Walker. 1990, 11.

Marama".¹¹² Te Pō as the realm of becoming is not inconsistent with Walker's description of it as the 'celestial realm and the domain of the gods.'¹¹³ The notion of Te Pō as a state of existence or realm escapes some of the difficulties associated with 'before' and 'after' and seems more consistent with Tau's description of an eternal present.

If, however, things can nevertheless be said to begin in darkness, or at least the absence of light, what of the passing of time as humans measure it? Although far more might be said about a Māori understanding of time, particularly as it relates to movements through space, I am here interested in the lunar and annual cycles.

I want to note that while in the following discussion I suggest temporal cycles 'begin' in darkness, I do not mean imply that these cycles should be understood to begin and end in a linear fashion as according to Western notions of time. Rather, beginnings in this sense can perhaps be understood as a spatio-temporal points of return and departure, as beginning-as-end-as-beginning, consistent with the notion of a constant present. That caveat aside, maramataka is the Māori term for a lunar calendar. There are many maramataka recorded in the literature: in a comprehensive analysis, Mere Roberts, Frank Weko, and Liliana Clarke describe some forty different maramataka from various regions.¹¹⁴ Maramataka inform

¹¹² M. Marsden, (1977). 'God, Man and Universe: A Maori View'. In M. King (Ed.). *Te Ao Hurihuri The World Moves On* (second edition). 160.

¹¹³ Ranginui Walker, 11.

¹¹⁴ Roberts, Mere, Frank Weko, and Liliana Clarke. *Maramataka: the Maori moon calendar*. Lincoln University. Agribusiness and Economics Research Unit., 2006.

human activity: each night of the lunar cycle is given a name;¹¹⁵ Indeed, certain activities are associated with particular nights.¹¹⁶ Despite tribal variations in maramataka, extending to the number of nights and their names, one almost universally-shared feature is that they begin in darkness. Whiro, who later is described as personifying Darkness itself, appears as the name of first and darkest night of the new moon in most of the maramataka discussed by Roberts et al.¹¹⁷

Given the heterogeneity maramataka display in response to various factors, that certain similarities persist across them suggests that these elements are important enough to preserve mostly intact, and thus are likely metaphysical. While the applied aspect of maramataka may vary in response to the environments different groups inhabited, the notion that cycles of time begin in darkness is preserved, affirming the primordially of Night described in cosmological traditions.

The lunar cycle is not the only temporal rhythm that begins in darkness; the Māori New Year, calculated now principally by the appearance of Matariki and Puanga in conjunction with certain nights of the maramataka, begins in the darkest months of the year, when the nights are longest and consequently the days are shortest. There are other connections, however, to darkness and the Māori New Year.

¹¹⁵ Best. Māori Division of Time. In Published Works.. 1982 See also

¹¹⁶ Roberts, Mere, Frank Weko, and Liliana Clarke. *Maramataka: the Maori moon calendar*. Lincoln University. Agribusiness and Economics Research Unit., 2006.

¹¹⁷ Roberts, Mere, Frank Weko, and Liliana Clarke. *Maramataka: the Maori moon calendar*. Lincoln University. Agribusiness and Economics Research Unit., 2006.

Rangi Matamua states that the Māori New Year begins when the heliacal rising of Matariki occurs during the Tangaroa nights of the moon, which happens in June or July.¹¹⁸ Intriguingly, Jim Williams suggests that the period between the first appearance of Matariki and the following Whiro night of the moon was a time for the suspension of societal norms, hinting at the metaphysics behind the threshold state between old and new year:

The days between the appearance of Matariki and the new moon a few days later are the Māori equivalent of “April Fool’s”. People misbehave and even marriage contracts were considered “null and void...Acts that would normally be unacceptable could not be punished” (Leather and Hall 2004: 63). Best mentions a similar “festival” in “the far north of our North Island” (1986: 15).¹¹⁹

Whiro, the darkness of the new moon, may thus signal a resumption of social mores after a period of their relaxation coincident with the passing of the old year, suggesting that social rhythms too may aligned by and in the Night. In any case, Matariki has now become synonymous in the public consciousness with the Māori New Year, with calls for ‘Matariki’ to be made a public holiday. As Williams notes, however, “Unsurprisingly, Māori were no more homogeneous in their traditional approach to the New Year than they were in other matters”.¹²⁰ Whereas Roberts et al argue that maramataka originate in eastern Polynesia,¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Matamua, Rangi. *Matariki: The star of the year*. 2017

¹¹⁹ Jim Williams, “Puaka and Matariki: The Māori New Year”, *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* (2013): 7-19.

¹²⁰ Williams, “Puaka and Matariki” 7

¹²¹ Mere Roberts, Frank Weko, and Liliana Clarke. *Maramataka: the Maori moon calendar*. Lincoln University. Agribusiness and Economics Research Unit., 2006.

Williams contends that the two distinct New Year traditions amongst Māori have different origins. One tradition has an older, 'deeper' whakapapa reaches back to the west of the Moana, while the other, 'shorter', whakapapa originates from the east.¹²² Williams holds that Hokianga, Te Wai Pounamu, and South Taranaki iwi, which he refers to as 'Puaka iwi', are of this deeper western Moana whakapapa. 'Puaka' traditions recognise Puanga/Puaka as the herald of the new year; according to these traditions, the heliacal rising of Puanga/Puaka during the new moon, or Whiro night, signals the commencement of the new year.¹²³ Thus the new year begins with the new moon; in darkness. Best gives a similar account, although he does not mention the distinction in terms of connection to different Moana traditions:

The star Puanga is Rigel in Orion. A native authority has said: "The task of Puanga is to strive with Matariki (the Pleiades) that he may gain possession of the year."

This remark is illustrated by the fact that on the eastern coast of the North Island the commencement of the Maori year was marked by the heliacal rising of the Pleiades, but in other parts, notably the Ngapuhi district and the Chatham Islands, the year commenced with the cosmic rising of Rigel. The first new moon after such appearance of Rigel was the precise commencement of the year, according to another authority.¹²⁴

Beyond the remarks already made, I do not here want to subject Te Pō to the particular kind of analysis demanded by a thesis, even with so generous a methodology as the one I am

¹²² Williams, 7.

¹²³ Ibid., 19.

¹²⁴ Best, "The astronomical knowledge of the Maori", 38

employing. A rational starting point might be a more detailed analysis of successive and various Pō with the aim of revealing the different characteristics of the Night with the intention, ultimately, of saying what Te Pō 'is', but rationality does not form the basis of my method. Such an analysis of Te Pō would, at least in part, be a linguistic one beyond my present capabilities. More pertinently, however, I find within myself a real reluctance to do so. I think this resistance is coming from an intuitive desire to preserve the mystery of Te Pō in some sense that I am unable to presently articulate – a sort of reluctance to foreclose its possibilities by seeking to delimit them even to myself, let alone in a thesis, and a sense that to do so might be an act of ontological and epistemological precociousness I am not willing to attempt yet, if at all. Instead, I want to spend some time thinking about entities associated with the Night.

Whiro

In Whiro-te-tipua (or tupua), or Whiro the Demon, we have an important being, he being the personified form of darkness, evil, and death. For all time he has been the active enemy of Tane, who personifies light and life. Ever they wage war, for Whiro is ever pae striving to destroy the descendants of Tane (man). We shall hear much of Whiro in this chronicle.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Best, *Maori Religion and Mythology Part 2*, 76-77.

Whiro, one of the senior offspring of Rangi and Papa, is a being whose nature I suspect has been misinterpreted. Best states that “Clearly enough Whiro represents evil”,¹²⁶ describing him as “Whiro-te-tipua (personifies darkness, evil, death).”¹²⁷ Whiro is thus an entity particularly subject to religious interpretation in the literature. The Rev. William Yate, perhaps unsurprisingly, wrote that Whiro, which he gives as ‘Wiro’, is:

...more in accordance with the Scriptural accounts of Lucifer, the Prince of Darkness. They say he is a liar and the father of lies; that he tempts to murder and cannibalism; urges to adultery; incites to theft, witchcraft, self-destruction, and every description of crime; and that there is no sin but what is put into the heart by him...¹²⁸

This obvious conflation of Whiro and Lucifer is too much for Best,¹²⁹ who ridicules Yate’s account.¹³⁰ But is Best’s offering much different in its treatment of Whiro and Tāne? Best frames similarly frames Whiro and his long association with Tāne in the context of a Manichean struggle in which diametrically-opposed entities battle for dominance:

¹²⁶ Best, *Maori Religion and Mythology Part 1*, 113.

¹²⁷ Best. *Maori Religion and Mythology Part 1*, 75.

¹²⁸ William Yate, *An account of New Zealand: And of the formation and progress of the Church Missionary Society's mission in the Northern Island*. RB Seeley and W. Burnside, 1835, 145.

¹²⁹ Best. pp 76-77 *Maori Religion and Mythology Part 2*. 1982. See also Best. *Maori Religion and Mythology*. Part 1. 1982

¹³⁰ Best. *Maori Religion and Mythology Part 1*. 1982

The story of the long contest between Tane and Whiro, as seen in Maori myth, is but a repetition of the old Persian concept of the struggle between Light and Darkness. In one particular only the two myths do not agree. In the Persian version the two contending powers possess a double character: one represents light and goodness, the other darkness and evil. The Maori myth makes Whiro represent darkness and evil, while Tane personifies light, but can hardly be said to stand for goodness or virtue.¹³¹

As discussed in Chapter 2, Best sees Māori oral tradition as embodying a religion in a developmental stage along the teleological evolution towards a fully-realised monotheism. Thus Best might say that Māori lacked the conception of a Supreme Good, while possessing a conception of Evil.¹³² The relationship between Whiro and Tāne is cast as oppositional, and interpreted as an embryonic version of that between Light and Dark in Manichean cosmology:

In pursuance of the fact that Tane represented Light, and that he is the personified form of the sun, it is as well to remark here that Whiro was ever hostile to Tane, and that Whiro represents Darkness. After a long contest Whiro was driven down to the underworld, hence he is called Whiro ki te Po, and thus Light was triumphant in this world. Tane conquered Darkness.¹³³

¹³¹ Elsdon Best. *Some aspects of Maori myth and religion*. No. 1. Dominion museum, 1922.

¹³² Io is a controversial entity whose provenance is disputed, beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, Io seems to provide Best with evidence that supports his belief that Māori were on the teleological progression towards monotheism.

¹³³ "Māori personifications. Anthropogeny, solar myths and phallic symbolism: as exemplified in the demiurgic concepts of Tane and Tiki." *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 32, no. 2 (126 (1923), 107.

I disagree with Best's assertion that Light triumphantly conquered Darkness, a notion that is more likely derived from his theories of cultural evolution than the perspectives of his informants. I am apprehensive, too, about this idea of Whiro as evil. It is undeniable that Whiro is associated with Darkness, illness, and death; these things may have *become* synonymous with evil in the literature, but was this always or ever the case in Māori thought? Hare Hongi more neutrally gives Whiro as "lord of darkness...described as being the supreme antagonist of Tāne, our lord of light."¹³⁴ Absent in this description is any necessary notion of good and evil once Manichean and Christian associations with light and dark are stripped away. The presence of death in the world and that which causes it must be accounted for in some way, but do Māori oral traditions position this presence as evil, or even antithetical to life? In an aside prompted by the queries of a listener, Te Mātorohanga is very clear about the consequences of a world in which there is only life and well-being; such a world would ultimately deny the conditions of its own existence, leading inevitably to decay and decline:

If all things possessed life and welfare only, then there would be no world to serve as an abiding place for them; if all things lacked duality then all would be lone and mateless, each would be alone, and so the result would be that all things would be old, decrepit, worthless.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Hare Hongi, "The gods of Maori worship. Sons of light", *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 29, no. 1 (113 (1920): 24-28

¹³⁵ Best *Maori Religion and Mythology. Part 1*, 1982, 382

Life and welfare cannot exist then without the complementary principles of death and sickness, for “were it not for this dual aspect then all things would lack vitality, would fail to flourish, they would not increase and multiply, for each would be mateless, each one would be alone, hence it would fail and disappear.”¹³⁶ Given this insight of Te Mātorohanga, sickness and death cannot be considered *evil*, even if they result in suffering and grief. By the same token, nor can darkness be evil either. That the absence of death would result in the failure and disappearance of life itself suggests Whiro might be considered a necessary complement to the more obviously life-affirming principles embodied by Tāne that, together, sustain the existence of things.

The notion that Whiro and Tāne may be complementary is not directly supported in the literature; two major events during which they are set in opposition to it are described. The first event is the separation of Ranginui and Papatūānuku, described here by Nepia Te Ika Pohuhu in *The Lore of the Whare-Wānanga: Part 1*:

Tāne (68) said, "Let us now separate our parents that Rangi and Papa may occupy different places." Whiro (6) would not consent to this proposition, and there was much strife in consequence. But Tāne-nui-a-rangi (68) became more urgent; and then Tangaroa (8), Tu-mata-uenga (11), and Tawhiri-matea (7) finally agreed. And now Rangi-nui [the Sky-father], was propped up into the position he now holds. In the propping up by Tāne (68) with the four props, one was placed at the head, one on each side, and one at the legs, making the four that separated Rangi from

¹³⁶ Ibid., 381

Papa... But as the props were lifted and Rangi was still suspended in space, one at the legs and one at the head slipped. Tāne called out to Paia, "O Pai!" Paia replied, "Here am I!" Tāne said, "Raise him up above." In this uplifting and raising in order that Rangi-nui might float above, he did not quite rise to the position required, because the arms of both Rangi and Papa grasped one another and held fast. Then Tāne called out to Tu-mata-kaka (63) and Tu-mata-uenga (11), telling them to fetch an axe to cut the arms of their parents. Tu-mata-kaka asked, "O Tāne! Where is the source of axes to be found?" Tāne said, "Fetch one from the pillow of our elder brother, Uru-te-ngangana (1), to cut them with. Fetch a handle from Tuamataua (59), who will put a keen edge on the axe and fasten it to its handle." The two axes, named 'Te Awhio-rangi' and 'Te Whiro-nui,' were then fetched; and then the arms of Rangi-nui and Papa-tua-huku were severed and they were completely separated.

Whiro is described as vigorously opposing Tāne's separation of Rangi and Papa, which set in motion an apparently antagonistic relationship between the two, ultimately ending in Whiro's 'defeat' by Tāne and subsequent descent to the underworld after the latter is successful in retrieving the three kete mātauranga.¹³⁷ This final encounter is important, but is beyond the scope of this thesis; ideally, it will be explored in research. What I do want to think about here, however, is the characterisation this incident as the last of their encounters.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Ibid., 381

¹³⁸ Ibid., 381

Can any defeat be final in a Māori world in which time is not linear, and so events are not left behind in the past? If, as Te Maire suggests, a Māori notion of time is that of ‘an organic, synchronic whole as opposed to diachronic and lineal,’¹³⁹ then the encounters between Whiro and Tāne must continue to occur; the discussion in the following section considers one way in which we can make sense of the continuing nature of the interactions between them.

Best is adamant that Tāne is, along with Māui, a solar figure representing the Sun and its Light, making his case in a number of articles; two such arguments involve Tāne’s association in oral traditions with allusions Best suggests are solar in nature. The first is the ‘Ara Whanui ā Tāne’, described as the pathway taken by the spirits of the dead to the realm of Hawaiki. Best identifies this path with the reflection of the setting sun on the ocean:

It is the golden path of the setting sun, by which the spirits pass over the great ocean to the hidden land of Tane, and descend with him into that mysterious realm. Such is the Ara whanui a Tane, to which we farewell the souls of the dead, and which appears in the old, old saying:—“He mata mahora no te Ara whanui a Tane.”¹⁴⁰

...the passage of the freed spirit across the vast ocean to the westward is made clear to us. It traverses the way known as the Ara Whanui a Tane (the Broad Path

¹³⁹ Te Maire Tau. *I nga wa i mua*, 50

¹⁴⁰ Best, *Maori Personifications*, 116

of Tane), and that path is the gleaming sun glade, the golden path of the setting sun. Along that glittering path that traverses the heaving breast of Hine-moana fare the spirits of the dead, until in hidden, far-off seas they reach the old homeland of the race.¹⁴¹

The Waiora ā Tāne furnishes Best with a second argument for the solar aspect of Tāne. The Waiora a Tāne is described as sunlight – it is these waters that the moon bathes in to renew itself each month. Best states that:

In Maori myth it is in connection with the moon that we usually hear of the Waiora a Tane. One version is that the moon dies, or becomes enfeebled, whereupon it bathes (kau) in the Waiora of Tane and so recovers youth, or strength and life. Another version is that Rona assails and consumes the moon, and causes it to seek the Waiora. Herein we see that the enfeebled moon bathes in the Waiora a Tane, i.e., in sunlight, and is rejuvenated, which is a scientific fact. It is a curious thing that the Maori should teach that the moon is not in itself a luminous body, but shines by reflected light. Absence of heat may have led to this conclusion.¹⁴²

The other members of the Whānau Marama may be presumed to emit their own light. What might the light-reflecting quality the Moon possesses have to say about Darkness and Light? The Moon is an entity to whom further attention should be cast, but for now, it seems likely

¹⁴¹ Best. 'Spiritual Concepts of the Māori', 82

¹⁴² Ibid., 105

that the Ara-Whanui-ā-Tāne and the Waioara a Tāne are indeed associated with the sun, even if we reject the Manichean cosmology Best attributes to Tāne. Hare Hongi too identifies Tāne with the sun, further noting its connection to Hine-Titama, a point which will become relevant in due course:

...the symbol of Tāne is the Sun, our Sun. Tāne is essentially our Lord of the Year.

The myth of his annual journey, and of the appearances and disappearances of Hine-titama, the twin-goddess of Dawn and Dusk, in connection with that annual journey, constitutes one of the finest Maori epics.¹⁴³

Even if Tāne's symbol is the sun, and Whiro is Darkness, is their relationship truly *oppositional* as Best describes? Or might it relate more to the duality Te Mātorohanga insists on as a necessary feature of the world? Oral traditions relating to Whiro and Tāne may instead reveal a series of encounters that can be understood as interactions between darkness and light without any necessary moral features. How else might we theorise these encounters?

Whiro and Mercury

Tane now decided to strive against Whiro, and the struggle was a long and severe one.

The following are the names of the battles fought by the two forces: Te Paerangi, Waitaha-a-rangi, Waiharo-rangi, Whitiwhiti-rere-pari, Puoro-rangi, Tangi-apakura, Te

¹⁴³ Hongi, 26

*Ara-huapae. The end of the contest was that Whiro was defeated, and he then descended by way of Tahekeroa (long descent) to Rarohenga, the underworld.*¹⁴⁴

If Tāne is symbolised by the sun, I wondered, does Whiro have an astronomical symbol or counterpart? This led me to consider the heavens in a literal sense, and I learned that Whiro is given as a name for the planet Mercury.^{145 146} This prompts us to spend some time thinking about Mercury and what its movements and appearance might reveal about Whiro, particularly in relation to his ongoing encounters with Tāne as the Sun. I will begin with a brief description of Mercury according to Western understanding, before considering the implications of the movements of Mercury and the sun and their relevance to Whiro.

It is significant that Whiro is associated with a planet rather than a star. Stars proceed in a prograde fashion, following the apparent path of the sun, but planets display considerably more variation in their movement including retrograde motion. Given there are tens of thousands of stars visible with the naked eye but only five planets, Whiro's association with Mercury suggests there is something important or at least distinctive about him. Mercury is the closest planet to the sun, and so always appears within 30 degrees of it in the sky.¹⁴⁷ This means Mercury can only be viewed when it either rises shortly before the sun in the east, or sets shortly after the sun in the west. Mercury has an extremely elliptical orbit, ranging from

¹⁴⁴ Best *Maori Religion and Mythology*. 1982, 114-115.

¹⁴⁵ Harris, Pauline, Rangi Matamua, Tākirangi Smith, Hoturoa Kerr, and Toa Waaka. "A review of Māori astronomy in Aotearoa-New Zealand." *Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage* 16, no. 3 (2013): 325-336.

¹⁴⁶ Elsdon. Best, "The astronomical knowledge of the Māori". *Dominion Museum, Wellington* (1922), 96.

¹⁴⁷ Mercury Fact Sheet. NASA Goddard Space Flight Center. November 30, 2007. webpage

46 million km from the sun at perihelion, the point of closest approach, to 70 million km away at aphelion when Mercury reaches its furthest distance from the sun.¹⁴⁸ Such an eccentric orbit means that Mercury noticeably increases in velocity as it approaches perihelion and slows down as it reaches aphelion.

Mercury also varies in appearance. The apparent magnitude, or brightness as seen from Earth, of a celestial body is a function of its distance from Earth and absolute magnitude, or inherent brightness. Mercury's apparent magnitude changes dramatically at various points during its synodic cycle, the time it takes for Mercury to return to the same position in sky as seen from Earth. At inferior conjunction, or the point at which it is closest to us, Mercury's apparent magnitude drops below that of naked-eye visibility. At superior conjunction, meanwhile, when it is opposite the Earth on the other side of the sun, Mercury becomes one of the brightest objects in the crepuscular sky.¹⁴⁹ Given the attention paid to the night sky by Māori, the significant differences in Whiro-Mercury's appearance and behaviour would have been well noted. The variability in Whiro-Mercury's apparent magnitude, velocity, and distance from the sun suggest a being who may not possess a static or fixed nature, even if he is profoundly associated with darkness.

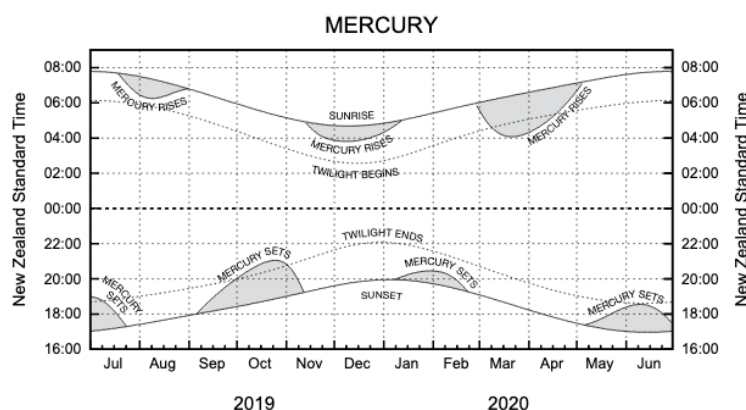
The below figure shows the rising and setting of Mercury in relation to the sun during the July 2019 to June 2020 period. The shaded areas indicate the times and days that Mercury is

¹⁴⁸ Munsell, Kirk; Smith, Harman; Harvey, Samantha (May 28, 2009). "Mercury: Facts & Figures". Solar System Exploration. NASA.

¹⁴⁹ Munsell, Kirk; Smith, Harman; Harvey, Samantha (May 28, 2009). "Mercury: Facts & Figures". Solar System Exploration. NASA.

visible in the sky; at the beginning of July, the sun set at approximately 5 pm, with Mercury following around 7 pm. Could those periods in which Mercury appears to pursue the sun to the point at which it sets enworld some aspect of the Whiro and Tāne traditions, such as their descent from the heavens after Tāne obtains the kete mātauranga?

Figure 1. Mercury rising and setting against the sun. Astronomical Information. New Zealand Nautical Almanac 2019–20, 17.



Similarly, what might the periods in which Mercury rises before the sun, which appears to follow it into the day suggest? I think of the description of Tāne's ascent to the heaven in which Whiro precedes him for a time:

Tane was now prepared to commence his ascent, *but meanwhile Whiro had already begun to scale the side of the heavens*, as he wished to obtain the prize himself, and so confuse Tane.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Best, *The Maori*, vol 1, 104.

A more thorough consideration of the encounters between Whiro and Tāne as made visible in the heavens may have much to reveal. In this thesis, however, I want to focus on the persistent horizontality of these interactions, exemplified in the name given to them; Te Paerangi:

Now, that contest between Tane and Whiro was not conducted in one place; struggles between the two forces took place in all realms, on earth, in the heavens, in space, and in the waters. The general name for the long-drawn struggle is Te Paerangi.¹⁵¹

Nepia Te Ika Pohuhu in Lore of the Whāre Wānanga agrees with this account, again noting the diversity of locations in which they fought, which further suggests their domains encompass all of reality:

Some battles were on the land, some in the Heavens, some in the intermediate space, some on the water—there was no place in which they did not fight... Such places as they thought suitable, there they fought. But these battles were fought as gods between gods... The true [or general] name of this [series of] battles is Te Pae-rangi.¹⁵²

It is notable that, given its close proximity to the rising or setting sun, Whiro-Mercury will always appear close to the horizon and never in the depths of the night; of course, it cannot

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 116.

¹⁵² Smith. Lore of the Whare Wananga Part 1 p.134.

be seen by day. The most sustained views of Mercury are of it rising from the sea in the east, or setting with the sun in the western ocean. Therefore, Te Paerangi seems an apt term that signals something of this astronomical aspect, thus framing the interactions of Whiro and Tāne in terms of horizon between Night and Day.

The final battle of Te Pae-rangi occurred at Te-Rangi-haupapa,¹⁵³ the name of which is also given to the cloak that Niwareka and Mataora retrieved from Rarohenga. This garment was of such importance that it became “the pattern from which all garments of this world were made,”¹⁵⁴ and caused the closure of the doorway to Rarohenga to the living:

They now came to the door of Pou-tere-rangi, where Te Ku-watawata again said, “Mataora! The very origin, sprouts, the roots are henceforth cut off. The door of Pou-tere-rangi will never again be opened to [the living of] the world. But only those of the night [the spirits of the dead] will pass on to Rarohenga. The body will be separated off [and left] above, the spirit alone shall tread both the upper and the lower worlds”. Mataora asked, “What is the reason for this?” Te Ku-watawata replied, “Te Rangi-haupapa is with you! Why did you conceal it?” Then Niwareka took the garment out of her bundle, saying to Te Ku-watawata, “This is ‘Te Rangi-haupapa’, leave it at ‘the origin, the sprouts and the roots’, in Pou-tere-rangi there to become a pattern for the world and for Rarohenga”. After these words of Niwareka Te Ku-watawata said, “It shall remain permanently here, ‘Te

¹⁵³ Smith, Lore of WW Part 1

¹⁵⁴ Best p.229 Maori Religion and & Myth 2

Rangi-haupapa' will never be returned to Rarohenga, let it remain as a pattern for the 'enduring world'," which ended the matter.¹⁵⁵

Although Te Kūwatawata prevents further such human travel between realms as the enigmatic consequence of their concealment of Te-Rangihaupapa and other accoutrements from the underworld, Te-Rangihaupapa's dual association with Whiro's 'fall' at Te Paerangi, alongside Te-Kūwatawata's actions in the Niwareka and Mataora traditions, is suggestive of the closing off of the border or horizon between realms. Māori Dictionary gives 'haupapa' as both a flat surface, and to ambush, or lie in wait for.¹⁵⁶ Te-Rangihaupapa may then have connotations of the surface or expanse of the heavens wherein encounters take place that lead to the closure of points at which horizons and boundaries could formerly be negotiated. That this term occurs in connection with Te Paerangi, and Niwareka and Mataora's return from Rarohenga, suggests that its influence extends from the gods to the human realm. This does not mean that the notion of Light and Darkness in Māori thought can be reduced to astronomical interpretations of phenomena. Instead, if all things are connected, simply by virtue of being in the world together, then astronomical phenomena can provide a glimpse of the underlying rhythms of the world. Further, I am coming to believe that the movements of celestial objects were understood to be the visible signs of metaphysical entities, even and perhaps particularly when those objects were understood in other ways. The rhythmic

¹⁵⁵ Smith, *Lore the Whare Wananga*, 191–92.

¹⁵⁶ 'Haupapa,' Māori Dictionary.

<https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=haupapa>, accessed 26 January 2021.

movement of Whiro-Mercury against the rising and setting sun, played out again and again across vast horizons of sea and sky, may have enworlded an eternal present in which both darkness and light are maintained. The deep and abiding interactions between Whiro and Tāne suggest not a Manichaeian opposition, but one of reciprocity and balance.

Whiro and other astronomical phenomena

*Some believe that at the beginning there was nothing. Others, when considering our ancient origins, reckon existence began with darkness. Imagine the darkest darkness, and it was darker than that.*¹⁵⁷

Whiro in some whakapapa kōrero is, via Tangotango, a grandparent of the heavenly bodies. In this sense light can be described as emerging generationally from the dark, reinforcing the primordially of the Night. Furthering this sense is Whiro's appearance as the first night of the maramataka, and the connection between Whiro and the Māori New Year described earlier. To further explore Whiro in connection to darkness though, other astronomical phenomena can be brought bear.

Rangi Matamua recently associated the first image taken of a black hole with Whiro.¹⁵⁸ Matamua describes the black hole as reminding him of the house of Whiro due to its dark and destructive nature:

¹⁵⁷ Witi Ihimaera. *Navigating the Stars*. Random House NZ Vintage, 2020.

¹⁵⁸ <https://www.teaomaori.news/black-hole-resembles-whiro-atua-darkness-maori-astronomer>

[Whiro] lives in a place called Taiwhetuki, which is a cave which is deep and dark, and it's from that point where Whiro often attacks us and tries to make the world remain in perpetual darkness... So from a Māori perspective I think maybe that's Taiwhetuki, maybe that's a place of darkness and destruction and is the origins of Te Kore.¹⁵⁹

Here Matamua associates Whiro with the destructive power of a black hole, and Te Kore is described by Cleve Barlow and Te Rangi Hiroa as, chaos and void, respectively – two states relevant to black holes.^{160 161} But if Te Kore is, as Marsden suggests, the realm of potential being, albeit one that can be characterised in black-hole-like terms, then perhaps there is a relationship between Whiro and creative potential.

Black holes are surprisingly difficult to define, as “Physicists in different fields conceive of and reason about them in radically different, and often conflicting, ways”.¹⁶² For the purpose of discussion here, a simple definition will suffice. Black holes are regions of space-time in which the force of gravity is such that neither matter nor light can escape; some black holes are

¹⁵⁹ <https://www.teaomaori.news/black-hole-resembles-whiro-atua-darkness-maori-astronomer>

¹⁶⁰ Cleve Barlow, *Tikanga whakaaro: key concepts in Māori culture*. Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1994, 55.

¹⁶¹ Te Rangi Hiroa. *The coming of the Maori*. Maori Purposes Fund Board, 1949, 508

¹⁶² E Curiel, “The many definitions of a black hole:”. *Nat Astron* 3, 27–34 (2019).

predicted to form when a star of sufficient mass collapses, while others may form as the result of high-energy collisions.¹⁶³ Still others are 'primordial', formed shortly after the Big Bang.¹⁶⁴

Peculiar things happen at the event horizon, the point beyond which the gravitational pull of a black hole becomes inescapable. More technically, the event horizon is the boundary beyond which no light or matter can escape.¹⁶⁵ Leaving aside the question of whether any observer could be considered 'external' from a Māori, and therefore relational, perspective, this means that the escape velocity of a black hole exceeds the speed of light, a limit held to be impossible for matter to overcome in this universe.¹⁶⁶ But recalling the association with Te Kore, is it not possible that matter within a black hole might after all exceed the speed of light and thus leave this universe behind? If so, this would provide the impetus for some new Te Kore, causing a new universe to be brought into being.

From this association of Whiro with black holes, a further connection to dark matter and dark energy suggests itself. In short, visible matter is insufficient to account for the behaviour of the universe; the rotational speed of a galaxy is determined by the mass it contains, and

¹⁶³ Wald, R. M. (1997). "Gravitational Collapse and Cosmic Censorship". In Iyer, B. R.; Bhawal, B. (eds.). *Black Holes, Gravitational Radiation and the Universe*. Springer, 69–86

¹⁶⁴ Carr, B. J. (2005). "Primordial Black Holes: Do They Exist and Are They Useful?". In Suzuki, H.; Yokoyama, J.; Suto, Y.; Sato, K. (eds.). *Inflating Horizon of Particle Astrophysics and Cosmology*. Universal Academy Press.

¹⁶⁵ Bernard f. Schutz. *Gravity from the ground up: An introductory guide to gravity and general relativity*. Cambridge University Press, 2003, 110.

¹⁶⁶ Penrose, R (2004). *The Road to Reality: A Complete Guide to the Laws of the Universe*. Vintage Books.

galaxies appear to rotate much faster than they should if visible matter is all there is.¹⁶⁷ This discrepancy indicates, the presence of invisible or ‘dark’ matter, which affects the movements of stars within galaxies, as well as the movement of galaxies themselves.¹⁶⁸ This form of matter, although consisting up to 85% of all matter that exists, is posited not to interact with the electromagnetic force, meaning it cannot interact with or be illuminated by light.¹⁶⁹ Thus dark matter is not merely unseen, but unseeable. The presence of dark matter so far has therefore been inferred gravitationally from the behaviour of visible matter. Dark matter is a mysterious substance that differs starkly from the matter of our everyday observation and experience, but nevertheless exerts a profound influence. That dark matter may account for so much of the universe is significant, suggesting that unseen and unseeable phenomena exert more of an influence on the world than the visible, the certain, and the known.

Dark energy also seems to bear a relation to Whiro. This form of energy is theorised to be expansive in nature, counteracting the contractive force of gravity and causing the rate of the universe’s expansion to accelerate over time.¹⁷⁰ If Whiro as dark *matter* affects things within the universe, Whiro as dark *energy* may affect the universe itself, with profoundly eschatological implications. Gravity, working in opposition to the expansive qualities of dark

¹⁶⁷ E. Corbelli, P. Salucci, (2000). “The extended rotation curve and the dark matter halo of M33”. *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society*. 311 (2): 441–447.

¹⁶⁸ Corbelli, and Salucci, “The extended rotation curve and the dark matter halo of M33”, 441–447.

¹⁶⁹ “Dark Matter”. CERN Physics. 20 January 2012

¹⁷⁰ P.J. Peebles, Bharat Ratra, (2003). “The cosmological constant and dark energy”. *Reviews of Modern Physics*. 75 (2): 559–606

energy, wants to contract matter into itself, which left unchecked might result in a 'Big Crunch' in which the universe eventually collapses in on itself, destroying all within it.¹⁷¹

The expansive tendencies must not be left unopposed, however, to reinforce the notion of complementary dualism; it is possible that the force that dark energy exerts on our universe if given free reign may instead result in a 'Big Rip' in which, at the end of the universe's life, all matter and energy, and even spacetime itself, will be torn apart and annihilated. First, galaxies would separate from each other and disintegrate, before stars and planets, and then atoms, and finally spacetime, are all destroyed.¹⁷² Some amount of gravity is therefore necessary to maintain the existence of the universe in a form conducive to life; the expansive and contractive principles must be held in balance.

Any such balance cannot however be fixed in nature. The third possible scenario, according to current scientific eschatologies, is that of the 'Big Chill'. If gravity and dark energy reach a stalemate, the universe may expand but slowly, eventually losing energy and matter as it ionises and dissipates into nothingness.¹⁷³ From such a heat death, no resurrection or reconfiguration seems possible, resulting in the decrepit state that Mātorohanga describes.

In theorising Whiro as dark energy, I am reminded here of Marsden's account of describing his experiences during WWII, and in particular the use of the atomic bomb, upon returning to

¹⁷¹ Paul Davies, (1997). *The Last Three Minutes: Conjectures About The Ultimate Fate of the Universe*.

¹⁷² Robert R. Caldwell, Marc Kamionkowski, Nevin N. Weinberg, (2003). "Phantom Energy and Cosmic Doomsday". *Physical Review Letters*. 91 (7): 071301

¹⁷³ Adams, Fred C.; Laughlin, Gregory (1997). "A dying universe: the long-term fate and evolution of astrophysical objects". *Reviews of Modern Physics*. 69 (2): 337–372.

his people at home. He is speaking of a different kind of energy, but I found my thoughts returning to this passage in which he describes the 'rhythmical patterns of pure energy' as comprising that which stands behind the 'natural' world:

One of the elders who had of course heard of the atom bomb asked me to explain the difference between an atom bomb and explosive bomb. I took the word *hihiri*, which in Māoridom means pure energy. Here I recalled Einstein's concept of the real world behind the natural world as being comprised of rhythmical patterns of pure energy and said to him that this was essentially the same concept.

He then exclaimed: "Do you mean to tell me that the Pākehā scientists have managed to rend the fabric of the universe?"

I said, "Yes."

"I suppose they shared their knowledge with the politicians?"

"Yes."

"But do they know how to sew it back together again?"

"No!"

"That's the trouble with sharing such tapu knowledge. Politicians will always abuse it."¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ P.54 Marsden, M. (2003). *The Woven Universe: Selected Writings of Rev. Māori Marsden*. (T. A. Royal, Ed.) Ōtaki: Estate of Rev. Māori Marsden.

The problem here seems not to be the ability to 'rend the fabric of the universe', but the inability to 'sew it back it together', compounded by the divulging of such tapu knowledge to politicians. This thought in turn evokes the separation of Rangi and Papa, another incident in which the fabric of the universe was rent apart; it was Whiro who most strenuously objected to this act. Perhaps there is an aspect of Whiro that is not so much expansive, as *moderating*; Whiro may act to moderate various cosmic forces such as gravity, with such acts framed in terms of contestation within oral tradition. It is not the contestation of inimical forces that may be attained, but the contestation by which balance, perhaps in the form of uneasy truces, perhaps in the form of continual advance and retreat.

The preceding discussion has suggested that Whiro as Darkness is not evil, and that illness and death are necessary if the conditions for life are to be maintained. Whiro's encounters with Tāne are suggestive not of Manichaen theology in which opposed forces battle for supremacy, but of a more complementary relationship in which balance may be obtained through contestation. A consideration of Whiro, particularly in his guise as Mercury, reveals the importance of horizons when thinking about Darkness and Light in Māori oral tradition. Other astronomical phenomena suggest a relationship between Whiro and the very fabric of the universe in which he may perform an expansive or moderating role.

Hine-Nui-Te-Pō

*If the spiritual realm is to be regarded as superior to this natural world of misfortune,
then Hine nui Te Po, who created the path for humankind to follow in order to enter*

*that spiritual realm, ought to be viewed in a positive way by all. Hine nui's path to death is more consistently viewed as a sign of aroha, a gift of continual existence.*¹⁷⁵

Hine-Nui-te-Po, goddess of Death and the Night, is an entity with obvious relevance to the question at hand, especially given her evolution from the goddess of the Dawn. Hine-Nui-te-Pō has been influential for many scholars, artists, and other practitioners, particularly in the Mana Wahine context. Much of this work has engaged in decolonising the misogynistic descriptions of her which cast her as 'evil and destructive':

Faced with the irrefutable expression of female sexual power that Hine-nui-i-te-pō posed, the redefiners of Māori cosmogony recast her as evil and destructive.

This fitted in nicely with biblical notions of woman being responsible for sin.¹⁷⁶

I affirm such work as necessary to the task of relocating Māori oral traditions from the cultural to the epistemic. To contribute to this task, in the following discussion I will consider these encounters from the perspective of the implications for the Night.

Hine-Titama is described as the 'Dawn Maid', and she is the first woman borne of woman, her parents being Tāne and Hine-Ahu-One, the first human being. Being only the second woman in existence, Hine-Titama unwittingly forms a sexual relationship with her father. Eventually

¹⁷⁵ Wyse, Rosemary Therese. "In the path of the ancestresses: a philosophical exploration of mana wahine Maori." MPhil diss., Massey University, 1992. 18.

¹⁷⁶ P.11. Ani Mikaere. 'Imposition of Patriarchy: A Ngāti Raukawa Women's Perspective' in MANA WAHINE READER. A COLLECTION OF WRITINGS 1999-2019. VOLUME II

becoming curious as to her parentage, she questions Tāne, who responds evasively that she should 'ask the posts of the house', a motif Buck describes as recurrent in Moana oral traditions.¹⁷⁷ By this very evasiveness Hine-Titama understands that Tāne is her father. Hine-Titama is usually described then as 'fleeing in shame', although along with other Mana Wahine theorists I am apprehensive of this framing. Tāne pursues Hine-Titama to the Gates of Night but is unsuccessful, further signifying her agency by asserting her will. She instructs him to remain in Te Ao Turoa, thus naming it so, to look after the welfare of humanity in the living world.

As a parting gift, Hine-Titama endows Tāne with the adam's apple that has since entered the race of man,¹⁷⁸ and is it not precisely there that grief chokes the throat, rendering one stricken and speechless? Hine-Titama thus becomes Hine-Nui-Te-Pō and takes up residence in Rarohenga, the underworld, where she has responsibility for the welfare of humanity in the realm occupied after death.¹⁷⁹ Best writes that this is the origin of permanent death in the world:

Some of our best Maori authorities have stated that permanent death began when Hine titama, the Dawn Maid, descended to the underworld and took the name of Hine-nui-te-po, calling upon Tane, her sire, to send spirits of the dead

¹⁷⁷ Te Rangi Hiroa, p.453 *Coming of the Maori*.

¹⁷⁸ Best. *The Whare Kohanga and its Lore*. P.42. 1982

¹⁷⁹ Best. *Maori Religion and Mythology Part 1*.

down to her. The stream of death down to the underworld was so instituted and became permanent.¹⁸⁰

Te Mātorohanga, however, disagrees, describing the establishment of the first 'current of death' which occurs during the Te Paerangi encounters between Whiro and Tāne:

Let me explain this part: Hine-titama was her name in this world, but changed to Hine-nui-to-po... Afterwards she descended to Hades—to the dwelling place of her relative, Whakuru-au-moko (70) [god of volcanic forces]. And now from this time onward the flow of the 'current of death' of mankind to the 'everlasting night' became permanent. *This was the second; the deaths at Te Paerangi [the wars of the gods, see p. 134] being the first* [institution of the descent of spirits to Hades].¹⁸¹ [emphasis added]

Because the deaths at Te Paerangi occurred prior to creation of humans, which occurred only after Tāne's ascent to the heaven, it may be that Hine-Nui-te-Pō is associated only with human death. As such, she is the necessary complement to Tāne as Life that ensures the conditions of human life, not just in Rarohenga, but in the eternal here-and-now too.

Although the Pō belonging to Hine-Nui-te-Pō is usually understood simply as death, further analysis beyond this reading is required; little attention has been paid in the literature to the metaphysical implications of this retreat to the Night for those caught in the glare of the

¹⁸⁰ Best, *Māui Myths*, 377-78.

¹⁸¹ Smith, *Lore of the Whare Wananga Part 1*. 148.

Enlightenment. Do Māori oral traditions show the world moves only from darkness to light? If an aspect of Tāne is the Sun, and Mercury an aspect of Whiro, by what celestial object might Hine-Nui-te-Pō reveal herself to us?

Hongi's identification of Hine-Nui-te-Pō as 'the twin-goddess of Dawn and Dusk'¹⁸² in association with Tāne the Sun, and Best's description of Hine-Titama as bounding the night and day¹⁸³ strongly suggest an association between Hine-Nui-te-Pō and another celestial object; Venus. Venus is usually given as Kopu, Meremere, and Tawera,¹⁸⁴ but I do not think this precludes Venus from being an aspect or symbol of Hine-Nui-te-Pō.¹⁸⁵ Just as Tāne's symbol is the sun, even though that entity is also known as Tama-Nui-te-Rā, so too might Hine-Nui-te-Pō be made perceptible through Venus. I am beginning to wonder if in the night sky the invisible was made visible; this leads me to think of the stars disappearing under the glare of the Sun, which conceals the light from these little suns even as it may reveal other things. I think too of the waxing and waning Moon, the only celestial being that traverses both the night and the day, an entity to whom much further attention should be cast, which brings me back to Hine-Nui-te-Pō who straddles the boundaries between these realms.

¹⁸² Hongi, Hare. "The gods of Maori worship. Sons of light." *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 29, no. 1 (1920): 24-28.

¹⁸³ Best. *Maori Religion and Myth*. Part 1. 1982

¹⁸⁴ Harris, Pauline, Rangi Matamua, Tākirangi Smith, Hoturoa Kerr, and Toa Waaka. "A review of Māori astronomy in Aotearoa-New Zealand." *Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage* 16, no. 3 (2013): 325-336.

¹⁸⁵ Incidentally, this suggests Māori were well aware that Venus was both the morning and the evening star.

Venus is the second planet from the sun, and one of the brightest objects in the night sky.¹⁸⁶

Like Whiro-Mercury, Venus' proximity to the sun means it rises and sets during the dawn and dusk hours, although it appears further from the horizon and is visible for longer. Under certain conditions, it may even be visible during the day;¹⁸⁷ could this describe the moment of Hine-Titama's departure from Tāne after she learns of her parentage?

In the following figure, an example of the rising and setting of Venus against the movements of the Sun is shown. Because the synodic period of Venus is approximately nineteen months,¹⁸⁸ the twelve-month period shown in the figure does not represent a full cycle; nevertheless, it serves to demonstrate something of Hine-Nui-te-Pō-Venus' movements. What is established is that, like Whiro-Mercury, Hine-Nui-te-Pō-Venus at times rises before the sun, giving it the appearance of pursuing her across the sky, while at other times she follows the sun into the west.

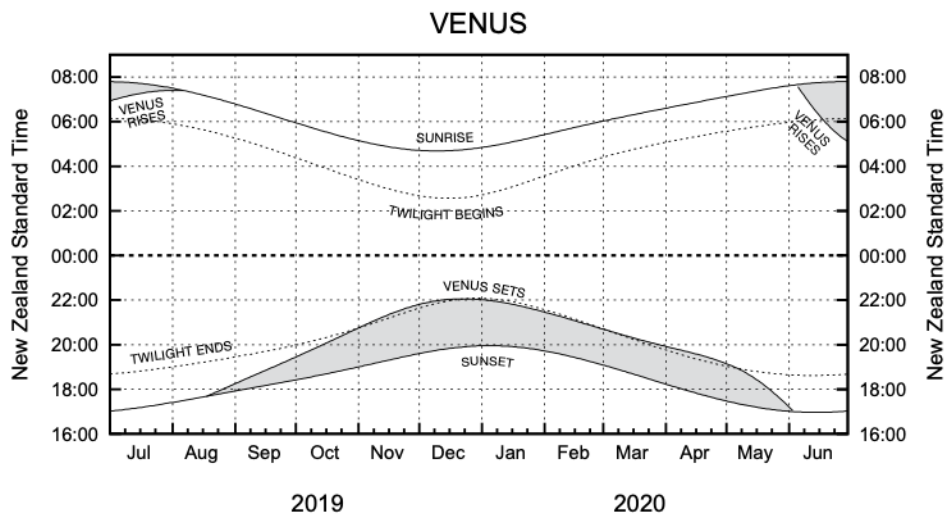
¹⁸⁶ Mallama, Anthony; Hilton, James L. (October 2018). "Computing apparent planetary magnitudes for The Astronomical Almanac". *Astronomy and Computing*. 25: 10–24.

¹⁸⁷ Walker, John. "Viewing Venus in Broad Daylight". *Fourmilab Switzerland*.

http://www.fourmilab.ch/images/venus_daytime/. Accessed 26 January 2021.

¹⁸⁸ Squyres, Steven W. (2016). "Venus". *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Retrieved 7 January 2016

Figure 2. Venus rising and setting against the sun. *Astronomical Information. New Zealand Nautical Almanac 2019–20, 17.*



A connection between Hine-Nui-Te-Pō and the Sun may feature in the last of the oral traditions associated with Māui, another possibly solar figure. Best views the Māui traditions as “superior sun myths” in which Māui, like Tāne, represents life and that which is necessary to sustain it.¹⁸⁹ Of all Māui’s boons to humanity, that which he attempts to wrest from Hine-Nui-te-Pō is the most ambitious, leading ultimately to his death (or at least, transformation). In short, in his “final act of insolence,”¹⁹⁰ Māui seeks to overcome the permanence of death. He initially proposes to Hine-Nui-te-Pō that humans should die as the moon does, to be replenished in Te Waioira-a-Tāne and come alive again, but she demurs.¹⁹¹ Māui then resolves to defeat death by entering Hine-Nui-te-Pō’s vagina, thereby reversing the birth process, in order to reach her heart and slay her.¹⁹² To do so he seeks the advice of his father, who advises

¹⁸⁹ Best, *Maori Religion and Mythology Part 2*, 333

¹⁹⁰ Jessica Maclean. “Strange Harbours”. In E. Neale (Ed.). *Strong Words*. Landfall Dunedin, 2019. 104.

¹⁹¹ A point seldom emphasised is that in asking at all, Māui is acknowledging that Hine-Nui-te-Pō indeed has the ability to grant his request; only she, it seems, can stem the tide of spirits that ever flow to her in Rarohenga.

¹⁹² Best, *Maori Religion and Mythology Part 2*, 384.

Māui as to the whereabouts and appearance of Hine-Nui-Te-Pō; significantly, she is described as flashing on the *horizon*, evoking her ambiguous status as the twin-goddess of the boundaries of night and day and thus, perhaps reinforcing her association with Venus.

Simon Perris provides an exemplar of the sanitisation of various oral traditions to conform to contemporaneous Western sensibilities as he asks simply, what does Hine-Nui-te-Pō look like? Of Māui's father's description of Hine-Nui-Te-Pō's appearance, John White wrote, per Grey's translation, that:

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.¹⁹³

Best, citing Te Mātorohanga, describes Hine-Nui-Te-Pō as “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.”¹⁹⁴ Here the key features of Hine-Nui-Te-Pō are her gleaming eyes, her sharp mouth and teeth, and her hair. But Simon Perris, translating directly from Te Rangikāheke's words, gives this passage as:

¹⁹³ John White, *The Ancient History of the Maori, His Mythology and Traditions*, vol. 2 (1887: 106).

¹⁹⁴ Best, *Maori Religion and Mythology Part 2*, 384.

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.”¹⁹⁵

Perris notes that the gleam from Hine-Nui-Te-Pō’s thighs and labia is transferred to her eyes, and her obsidian labia become sharp teeth, thus eliding the supposedly-offensive physiological elements of her description.¹⁹⁶ What is lost in such a translation? At the least, the powerful metaphorical function of her vagina as a portal between realms is glossed over, leaving behind vague descriptions Hine-Titama as “she who bounds night and day”,¹⁹⁷ the precise manner in which she does so is lost.

We know, from the presence of death in the world, that Māui was unsuccessful in his attempt. Yet if Māui is, as Best argues, a solar deity, what does his death between the thighs of Hine-Nui-te-Pō suggest about Night and Day? If Hine-Titama’s apotheosis as Hine-Nui-te-Pō demonstrates that movements from light to darkness must also occur, Māui reinforces the point; Ngāhuia Murphy asserts that Māui began life as a kind of menstrual secretion between the thighs of a woman, and ended life there too. Thus Māui, even if he is a solar figure as Best

¹⁹⁵ Simon Perris, “What does Hine-nui-te-po look like?: A case study of oral tradition, myth and literature in Aotearoa New Zealand.” *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, The 127, no. 4 (2018): 365.

¹⁹⁶ Perris, “What does Hine-nui-te-po look like?” 365.

¹⁹⁷ Elsdon Best, *Some aspects of Maori myth and religion*. No. 1. Dominion museum, 1922.

argues, shows that life begins and ends in darkness, with the vagina the literal and metaphorical portal from the womb at birth to Rarohenga in death.

Hine-Nui-te-Pō is thus an ambiguous being, bounding night and day, and death and life. She is an agent of transformation that nevertheless suggests an inexorable pull towards the Night, that may provide a haven for those subject to the tenets of the Enlightenment in the academy; clarity, certainty and reason. Hine-Nui-te-Pō's encounters with Tāne and Māui suggests two means by which Light might be engaged. In some cases, as with Tāne, the Light must be retreated from if spiritual welfare is to be secured. The lesson here perhaps is that some things should not be exposed to the light in the form of academic research. Marsden's account of his elders' response to the atom bomb, that it was tapu knowledge that should not be shared, least of all with politicians, should sound a warning to the hubris of Western intellectual endeavours. In essence, this warning might be stated thus: not all things are for you to know.

In other cases, as Māui shows, the Light must be extinguished altogether. This suggests the power of Māori epistemologies to not only resist or retreat from, but to overcome the demands imposed by the academy; it is at and from the boundaries that such work can be accomplished. Hine-Nui-te-Pō holds lessons for those of us occupying the epistemic wilderness who wish to critically engage with Western traditions while also, as Cooper suggests we should, critically disengaging from Western epistemological assumptions. Hine-Nui-te-Pō shows that this task need not be accomplished from the depths of the Night, but can, and perhaps must, occur at the horizon.

Cosmological traditions emphasise the movement from darkness to light, but Hine-Nui-te-Pō reminds us that, inevitably, light must return to darkness. But what of that Night? If Hine-Nui-te-Pō resists the Manichean association with evil, given her benevolent role as the guardian of the spiritual welfare of humanity, how is Rarohenga described in oral tradition? We might expect the realm of Hine-Nui-Pō to be one of darkness, but this is not the case; the traditions of Niwareka and Mataora, and of Māui's pursuit of Taranga, say otherwise. Niwareka, having been abused by her husband Mataora, returns to her people in Rarohenga, ever a sanctuary for women, it would seem.¹⁹⁸ In admonishing Mataora for his actions, Niwareka's father Uetonga father declares:

O Mataora! Abandon the upper world, the home of evil. All the denizens of that world eventually come here. They are slain and perish through evil ways, and (their spirits) all come hither. Let us remain below; separate the upper world and its evil ways from the lower world and its goodly life. *Observe, the upper world is as a Po with its acts and customs, a thing apart from the lower world, which is a realm of light and life, with goodly usages.*¹⁹⁹ [emphasis added]

Here Rarohenga is described as 'a realm of life and light', and our upper world as 'a Pō'. This account is surprising, given the normativity of descriptions of Te Ao Marama as the world of Light and Enlightenment. This indicates that the Manichaeian worldview has had a far greater impact on readings of Māori oral traditions than I first thought, suggesting this is the

¹⁹⁸ Maclean. "Strange Harbours". 104.

¹⁹⁹ Best, Elsdon. "Māori personifications. Anthropogeny, solar myths and phallic symbolism: as exemplified in the demiurgic concepts of Tane and Tiki." *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 32, no. 2 (126 (1923): 53-69.

description found in the Māui tradition in which he pursues his mother Taranga to Rarohenga. Becoming curious as to her whereabouts during the day, he follows her to Rarohenga, which is described as “a realm of light, a form of light much superior to that of this world, a phase of light described as maramatanga taiahoaho puratarata”.²⁰⁰ Not only is Rarohenga described as a ‘realm of light’, but as possessing a light that is superior to the light of Te Ao Marama. Rarohenga then, just as Te Ao Marama, must contain darkness and light; Te Mātorohanga’s reply to a question during his recitation of the death of Māui supports this notion:

At this stage of the recital of Te Mātorohanga there was an interruption, one Mikaera enquired: “Is there any day in the underworld; is it not said that the Reinga is a realm of gloomy darkness?” Te Mātorohanga replied: “Bear in mind that we call this world we live in the aoturoa, the ao mamma [sic], and taiao, also that we have day and night in this world; in like manner there is day and night in the underworld”.²⁰¹

It is clear that Rarohenga, like Hine-Nui-te-Pō, resists too absolute a connection with the Night; it possesses a superior form of light, and encompasses night and day in ‘like manner’ to Te Ao Marama. Yet, Rarohenga is of the Night. What are we to make of this? I can only conclude that Māori notions of Night resist the purity, the absoluteness, and the antimony of the Enlightenment conception of darkness. Absent too, is any notion that the Night, as symbolised by Hine-Nui-te-Pō and Rarohenga is evil. In fact, the suggestion from oral tradition is that if evil does exist, it is located here in Te Ao Marama.

²⁰⁰ Best, *Maori Religion and Mythology Part 1*. 1982, 345.

²⁰¹ Best, *Maori Religion and Mythology Part 2*. 1982, 381.

Māori oral traditions say that Darkness is the womb, the earth surrounding the seed, the primordial condition of the world. Death is just another word for transformation, the natural and inevitable return to Night established by Hine-Nui-te-Pō's passage to Rarohenga. Darkness holds nothing to fear – it is the necessary complement to Light according to the complementary dualism inherent in the world.

Chapter 4. Ruku i Te Ao

The knowledge which we have by natural reason requires two things: images derived from the sensible things, and a natural intelligible light enabling us to abstract intelligible conceptions from them. – Thomas Aquinas²⁰²

There is still considerable historiographical support for the conventional view according to which almost everything that is good in the modern Western world comes from the Enlightenment, including science, political freedom, human rights and...religious tolerance.²⁰³

The sun never sets on the British Empire.²⁰⁴

Mika points to the way in which language can reveal assumptions about the world, noting in particular those terms that have become invisible due to their sheer ubiquity:

Language's correspondence with things in the world and their interplay means that one term and its dominant use can disclose a great deal about how the world is to be approached and how its things are meant to relate. There are several

²⁰² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*. Vol. 6. Typographia Forzani et S., 1894, 110.

²⁰³ Domínguez, Juan Pablo. "Introduction: Religious toleration in the Age of Enlightenment." (2017): 273-287.

²⁰⁴ British adage, once technically true.

possible examples here, with the most fascinating comprising those widely used ones that have become so embedded as to be overlooked.²⁰⁵

Enlightenment is just such a term, and *the Enlightenment* provides a better example of the assumption-laden use of language. If Light is Good in religious thought, it retains this association even once religion has been abandoned, embedding it in Western thought. The Enlightenment, although eventually disavowing the Light of the Divine in favour of the Light of Reason, merely secularises the valorisation of Darkness and Light while retaining its axiology. As other commentators have noted, it would be a mistake to presume a monolithic ‘Enlightenment’ with singular aims and beliefs.²⁰⁶ However, there is a consistency in the underlying valorisation of light and darkness across different incarnations of this movement. So axiomatic is this valorisation that it is seldom questioned, or even acknowledged, just in the manner Mika suggests. Ironically, given the move away from belief and faith to reason and observation, the Enlightenment adapted ‘the rhetoric of Christianity’ by reinterpreting light and darkness in a secular manner which nevertheless retains the axiological influence of its origins.²⁰⁷ As Janne Tunturi notes:

...the secularisation process can be seen to have reached its culmination in a reinterpretation of the Biblical dualism of light and darkness. In Christianity, the idea of truth is reflected [by] the eternal light God has given humankind. This

²⁰⁵ P172 Carl Mika Te Hira. "Worlded object and its presentation: A Māori philosophy of language." *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 12, no. 2 (2016): 165-176.

²⁰⁶ Domínguez, Juan Pablo. "Introduction: Religious toleration in the Age of Enlightenment." (2017): 273-287.

²⁰⁷ Janne Tunturi, "Darkness as a metaphor in the historiography of the Enlightenment". *Approaching Religion* 1, no. 2 (2011): 20-25.

metaphor was gradually replaced by the idea of scientific truth, which illuminated the dark areas of human knowledge.²⁰⁸

Thus there are two senses of Light that we as Māori must contend with: that of Goodness, and that of truth, reason or knowledge. In contrast, do Māori oral traditions display a more nuanced approach to Light?

When Day Breaks

Awake! for Morning in the Bowl of Night

Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to Flight:

And Lo! the Hunter of the East has caught

*The Sultan's Turret in a Noose of Light.*²⁰⁹

The separation of Rangi and Papa did not, at first, result in the emergence of Te Ao Marama. The conditions that existed after their separation are described as a Pō lit by but a “feeble glimmer”; hinatore, the phosphorescent light of those such as Moko-huruhuru, the glow-worm, being the only source of light then in existence.²¹⁰ It is only after Tāne’s ascent to the heavens, and the subsequent appointment of the Poutiriao, that Te Ao Marama is brought into being.²¹¹ Best describes a sequence by which Light is introduced to the world:

²⁰⁸ Tunturi, “Darkness as a metaphor in the historiography of the Enlightenment”, 21.

²⁰⁹ Fitzgerald, Edward. *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. Oxford University Press, 2010. 10

²¹⁰ Elsdon Best, *The Maori, Vol. IV. Cosmology and Anthropology*. Government printer, 1982.95

²¹¹ Best, Best, *The Maori, Vol. IV. Cosmology and Anthropology*, 95.

1. The maramatanga tuaiti—Represented by the dim light of the glow-worm.
2. The maramatanga taruaitu—The feeble light existing between Rangi and Papa prior to their separation.
3. The maramatanga kakauri—The light that existed in space after the parents were separated.
4. The marmatanga atarau—The form of light that existed after Papa was turned over.
5. The maramatanga aoao nui—The light that prevails in winter.
6. The maramatanga tuarea—Cloudless light.
7. The maramatanga taiahoaho—The bright light of summer: the light that came when the heavenly bodies were placed on high.²¹²

Elsewhere Best states that:

It was Tane who was responsible for the distribution of the Whanau Marama, the Shining Ones. He it was who caused them to be adjusted on the body of the Sky Father, there to illuminate heaven and earth. Tane brought light into the world. In the Bay of Plenty version of the myth Tane is said to have visited Tangotango to remark, “How brightly gleam the Children of Light!” And Tangotango asked, “For what purpose do you require them?” Tane replied, “To relieve our darkness, that light may shine across the breast of our Mother.” Even so Hinatore (phosphorescent light) was given to him and placed on the breast of Rangi (the

²¹² Ibid., 95.

sky). Feeble indeed was the light emitted by Hinatore, and darkness held fast. Tane procured the stars, and now dim light was seen. He next brought the moon, and light became stronger. Then Tane placed the sun on high, and bright light entered the world. Thus the Ao marama, the realm of light, this light-possessing world, came into being.²¹³

Te Mātorohanga also describes the introduction of light to the world in terms of the actions of the gods, who experimented with various arrangements of light before the final allocation of the Whānau Mārama, or light-emitting beings, was arrived at. The first arrangement was not suitable as there was not enough light in the world. The second arrangement was not desirable either, as it resulted in ‘continuous daylight’, the effects of which are discussed in the following section. The final arrangement of the Whānau Marama results in the separation of the sun from the moon and stars:

Now, the family of the Earth-mother considered this [first] arrangement, and saw that it was not a good one, because the Waxing Moon was in the dark, as were the other minor Stars. So they separated the elder brother [the Sun] and placed him on the head of Rangi [the Sky-father], and the moon and stars on his belly. They then carefully examined [this second arrangement], and saw that it was not satisfactory either, and the reason was, that there was only one phase—there was nothing but continuous daylight; for all the 'family' of stars were in one heap. And then they changed it so that the elder brother, the Ruddy-Sun, was stationed on

²¹³ Best. *The Astronomical Knowledge of the Maori*, 11

the back of the Sky-father, and the Waxing Moon and the Stars on his belly, there to remain fixed. Again the family of the Earth-mother examined the arrangement, with the Sun on the navel (pito) [the Ecliptic] of the Sky-father, and the Moon and the Stars on his back, so that the sun might climb up by the thighs of the Sky-father, and the Moon and Stars follow him; and thus was the Sun separated from his younger brethren.²¹⁴

Already we can see that the process by which Light is brought into the world was iterative in a way that the Biblical account is not. The following section, casts attention on the Sun, to further explore the nature and role that Light plays in Māori oral tradition.

The Sun

*Now, the following is obvious to the thoughts; the sun causes death, in that [his rays] kill growing things; it is not the case that he produces good only.*²¹⁵

Oral traditions show that when the sun is first placed upon Rangi's breast together with the moon and stars, their collective intensity caused distress to the denizens of the heavens and

²¹⁴ Smith, Stephenson Percy, ed. *The Lore of the Whare-wānanga; Or, Teachings of the Maori College on Religion, Cosmogony, and History: Written Down by HT Whatahoro from the Teachings of Te Mātorohanga and Nepia Pohuhu*. Society, 1913.

²¹⁵ Smith, Stephenson Percy, ed. *The Lore of the Whare-wānanga; Or, Teachings of the Maori College on Religion, Cosmogony, and History: Written Down by HT Whatahoro from the Teachings of Te Mātorohanga and Nepia Pohuhu*. Society, 1913.

the earth.²¹⁶ The heat was such that it began to dry up the waters of the heavens, forcing “Para (frost-fish), Ngoiro (conger-eel), Tuna (river-eel), and Tuere (blind-eel)” to seek the cooler waters of the earth to avoid Matuku-whakapu.²¹⁷ Nor was Rangi spared; his ‘grievous suffering’ is described by Best:

Now, Tane looked and saw that the glowing sun had passed to the head of the Sky Parent, and their parent wailed aloud. Roiho, Haepuru, and Tu-te-wanawana looked; and, behold, the head of their elder had been burned by the glowing sun! Roiho called down to Tane, “O friend! We and our father are suffering grievously by reason of our offspring burning us by means of Matiti-tiramarama”.²¹⁸

Papa too suffered from the fierceness of light and heat, with “the intense strength and broiling effect of the sun on the progeny of the Earth Mother [causing] the whole family to wail—all those who remained below with her.”²¹⁹ *Unmitigated* Light, then, was so injurious that gods themselves were forced to seek refuge from it.

A series of actions is then taken to ameliorate the collective influence of the Whānau Marama, culminating in the separation of the sun from the moon and stars, who are grouped together and assigned to the Night.²²⁰ Because of its intense effects, Tāne places the sun in a further

²¹⁶ Elsdon Best, “Notes on Maori mythology”, *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 8, no. 2 (30 (1899): 93-121.

²¹⁷ Elsdon Best, *Fishing methods and devices of the Maori*. Vol. 12. Dominion Museum, 1929, 83.

²¹⁸ Best, *Maori Religion and Mythology, Part 1*, 93.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 92.

²²⁰ Best, *Maori Religion and Mythology, Part 1*.

heaven beyond Ranginui, separated from the other celestial bodies, and assigned to the Day. That an iterative series of placements of the sun in the heavens took place suggests that Light must be carefully managed.

Tāne is not the only entity who moderates the influence of light. Māui, having obtained the kauae raro, uses this knowledge to amend the movements of the sun, but in a manner appropriate to his status. If Tāne possessed the ability to locate the sun in the heavens, Māui must work on the land, travelling to meet the Sun at the pit from whence it rises. Previously, Tama-nui-te-Rā moved through the sky too swiftly for humans to accomplish all their tasks for the day, causing the failure of crops and other forms of life.²²¹ This reinforces the idea that Light may be useful or desirable but must be regulated to procure certain conditions and ameliorate others. The Sun's swift passage across the sky also meant the nights were too short for sufficient rest to be obtained.²²² This point does not seem to be emphasised in the literature, most of which focuses on the effects on the Day, but is an obvious one once the implications are considered; not enough sleep can be deadly.

Horizons feature again as Māui and his brothers travel to the point named Te Tāepatanga, “‘where the sky hangs down’, and joins the earth... i.e., in modern times, the limit of vision, the horizon and the bounding sky.”²²³ Here they restrain the Sun for a time, in some versions beating it into submission, after which it rose and travelled more slowly across the sky, lengthening the Day and the Night. Māui's actions reinforces the amenability of the Sun to

²²¹ White, John. *The ancient history of the Maori, his mythology and traditions*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

²²² Best, *Maori Religion and Mythology, Part 1*.

²²³ Smith, *Lore of the Whare Wananga*, 126

modification and control in order to achieve a desired outcome or state of affairs in nested metaphysical scales. First, Tāne, a primal child of Rangi and Papa, physically arranges the Sun *in the sky*. The demi-god Māui then holds it *at the horizon* where it rises. Māui does not have the power, as Tāne does, to rearrange the heavens. His point of intersection with celestial beings is on the horizon, as his final encounter with Hine-Nui-te-Pō demonstrates.

If the sun is amenable to control by gods and demi-gods in particular ways, humans too possess the capacity to modify its effects. In support of the idea of the Sun as amenable to human control, the literature references *karakia* employed to slow the sun to allow travel to be completed before night fell. Ngahoro of the Ngāti Mahanga iwi relayed to Best that:

In my young days my father and others started on a journey to Taupo. They left Ahi-kereru pa at Te Whaiti in the early morning, marching by way of O-tu-kopeka, and arrived at Opepe on the evening of the second day. On the morning of the third day I left Ahi-kereru, and by the power of this *karakia* I overtook the travellers near Tapuae-haruru the same evening. Friend! I think that it would be a good thing to write this in your book, that the White man may know what wondrous things were accomplished by the Maori in former times.²²⁴

The sun is therefore shown to be profoundly regulatable at all levels of reality, in part because its light has the potential to cause harm and even kill, and in part because some amount of it is nevertheless desirable or necessary. In general, Best describes the sun as an object of

²²⁴ Elsdon Best. "Notes on Maori mythology." *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 8, no. 2 (30 (1899): 93-121.

contempt, and disavows any sun worship amongst Māori, providing Māui's slowing of the sun as an example of the revulsion shown towards it:

There appears to be no trace of sun worship among the Maoris, rather was it an object to be belaboured and reviled, as in the case of Maui the sun snarer, who lay in wait at the edge of the world, and having caught the sun in strong rope nooses proceeded to admonish the same with a bludgeon for travelling too swiftly through the heavens.²²⁵

Te Rangi Hiroa does not go so far as Best in descriptions of contempt for the sun, albeit generally agreeing that although "the myth shows that the sun was personified and was given a personal name...it is devoid of that respect and awe which would lead to his being worshipped as a god."²²⁶ Hiroa goes on to discuss a charm recorded by Grey, which was used by children to induce the sun to shine while bathing:

Upoko, upoko,	Head, head,
Whiti te ra!	The sun shines!
Hei kai mau	You may eat
Te kutu o taku upoko.	The lice of my head
Upoko, upoko,	Head, head,
Whiti te ra.	The sun shines. ²²⁷

²²⁵ Best, "Notes on Maori mythology", 95.

²²⁶ Te Rangi Hiroa. *The coming of the Maori*. 508

²²⁷ Ibid., 239

Hiroa suggests that its purpose may have been to goad or otherwise provoke the sun to emerge from behind the clouds, noting that “The composition is a play on upoko. Children would never have been allowed to address such words to a human being, because they are insulting.”²²⁸ That the sun may be subject to abuse unacceptable when directed towards humans reinforces the general lack of respect shown to it.

If the Light in Western thought is Good, oral traditions suggest that while some quantum of it is necessary in order for the conditions of life to be established and maintained, Light alone cannot provide these conditions; nor is the Sun accorded any particular regard. The implication for those of us occupying the boundary between Western and Māori epistemologies in the academy is that for knowledge to be fruitful and multiply, it must draw from both traditions. Salmond suggests that “Approaches which draw on both Maori and European ways of interpreting the past seem likely to be far more productive than a strategy based on epistemological arrogance.”²²⁹ Although I reject the assertion that engagement with oral traditions constitutes ‘interpreting the past’, I agree that epistemological arrogance should be abandoned. It may be that a restoration of epistemic modesty can be theorised in terms of Darkness and Light according to Māori traditions, brought to light in the academy. If this is the case, is Te Ao Marama a world of light alone?

²²⁸ Ibid., 239

²²⁹ Salmond, Anne. "The study of traditional Maori society: the state of the art." *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 92, no. 3 (1983): 309-331.

Te Ao Marama

Observe well the words of Uetonga. Here in this world, alone are evil deeds known; this is the realm of darkness. As to Rarohenga [the underworld], no evil is known there, nor is darkness known; it is a realm of light and of righteousness. This is the reason why, of all spirits of the dead since the time of Hine-ahuone even unto ourselves, not a single one has ever returned hither to dwell in this world.²³⁰

I have until recently associated Te Ao Marama pretty strictly with Light and the Day, but the whaka aro-ing I have been doing has left me unsure of that. Te Ao Marama is described by Te Mātorohanga as the *arrangement* of night and day by separating ‘darkness from the daylight’:

And now, for the first time, was seen night and day; and this [arrangement] was named the Ao-marama [the world-of-light] in which the Sun travelled [across the sky], also, the Ao-marama-nui [the great-world-of-light] and the Ao-marama-roa [the enduring-world-of-light...*suffice it to say, that the third arrangement gave rise to the separation of the darkness from the daylight, and they were called night and day. The day was called 'the world-of-light'.*²³¹ [emphasis added]

Various beings beyond Tāne are implicated in such arrangements; Tangotango, in some oral traditions the co-progenitor, along with Wainui, of the celestial bodies, is described as “the

²³⁰ Best. *Maori Religion and Mythology Part 2*. 229.

²³¹ Smith, *Lore of the Whare Wananga*, 168.

origin or cause of alternate day and night. He changes day into night and night into day”.²³²

Hamiora Pio remarks to Best that “Tangotango is the object seen stretched across the heavens at night, surrounded by his star children”.²³³ Best interprets this to mean that Tangotango is “the Milky Way, the position of which was the sign of approaching dawn to the Maori; and Tangotango is said to turn night into day.”²³⁴ However, it is more likely that Tangotango is not the Milky Way itself, as he is described as being *surrounded by* his star children, as the cloudy darkness paradoxically both obscures and creates light.²³⁵

The evidence above indicates that, regardless of its apparently obvious associations with light, and through its connection with māramatanga, knowledge, Te Ao Marama might nevertheless withstand such an Enlightenment analysis. Just as beings strongly evocative of the Night retain an association with Light, Te Ao Marama seems to have more to say to me about the ordering of Night and Day than of Light alone. Nor does Te Ao Marama seem to establish an oppositional relationship between Night and Day, but one more suggestive of balance. We have seen that both utter Night and extreme and unbearable Light occurred in the periods prior to the creation of Te Ao Marama, and so it cannot be that Te Ao Marama solely bears a relation to the Day. Crucially, it is not until the ordering of the rhythms and cycles of Night and Day that Te Ao Marama is realised.²³⁶

²³² Best. *Notes on Maori Mythology*, 95.

²³³ Best, “The astronomical knowledge of the Māori”, 96.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 96.

²³⁵ Stellar nurseries are composed of clouds of gas and dust in which new stars are formed.

²³⁶ Smith, *Lore of the Whare Wananga*.

The transition from Night to Day and back again is regulated by guardians such as Tangotango. This cycle is accompanied by or associated with certain liminal beings such as Hine-Nui-te-Pō. The recurrent nature of the interactions of these beings, often characterised as conflict or struggle, suggests the notion of *equilibrium*. Equilibrium is not static, but one in which different, and sometimes opposing, elements are held in balance through active processes which determine some stable state that maintains the functioning or integrity of some system. In this context, stability should not be understood as something fixed or solid, but as being fluid and responsive to various cues; it is an active state which is actively maintained through various processes of response and regulation.

The notion of equilibrium may therefore recast the relationships between Whiro, Tāne, and Hine-nui-te-Pō from oppositional to a more nuanced form in which ground is continually gained and lost but balance is maintained. In conversation, Garrick²³⁷ has introduced me to a theory he has developed which he refers to as 'tōnā tūpapaku'.²³⁸ His theorisation draws from practices by which the rights and interests of different familial lines to the bodies of the dead were contested. Such contestation was more about establishing a form of rigour; if a whānau line wanted a relative to be buried in their urupa, their commitment must be tested to ascertain the validity of their claim.

Implicit in Cooper's theorisation of tōnā tūpapaku is that contestation was an acceptable means of establishing social equilibrium. In like manner, Whiro and Tāne may pursue 'war' to

²³⁷ I refer to Garrick Cooper by his first name when discussing conversations we have had, and Cooper when referencing his written work.

²³⁸ Personal communication, n.d.

establish a balance between their respective domains and principles. In relation to this idea of equilibrium, Smith states that night and day are required to maintain a state of 'mauri tau':

The mauri of a person can be said to rere (travel, flow). If the mauri of a person travels too fast in Te Ao Mārama, the balance is upset and the person's mauri is spending too much time in Te Pō. Mauri tau refers to the cyclical, balanced and undisturbed rhythm of the mauri as it generates energy or mā, throughout the day, and the night.²³⁹

The example Smith provides, that of the mauri spending too much time in Te Pō, suggests that mauri existing within Enlightenment paradigms may spend too *little* time in the Night. Enlightenment thinking may unbalance the mauri by causing it to linger too long in the Light, and may even (attempt to) fix the mauri in place. Such a profoundly disrupted balance between the energies of the Day and Night must be addressed if mauri tau is to be achieved. Smith goes on to discuss Māui's slowing of the sun as an example of the restoration of this balance, and notes that "In the final part of this narrative, the moon and the sun were tied together in order to maintain the balance and rhythms of the cycles that occur between these two astronomical bodies."²⁴⁰ The sun and moon therefore embody or 'enworld' an active kind of equilibrium in which Night and Day are maintained in rhythms and cycles, each with their purpose and function. Inherent in homeostatic equilibrium is the notion of a desired set or range of conditions that ought to be maintained in order for well-being to be achieved. Te Ao

²³⁹ Tākirangi Smith, Rāwiri Tinirau, Cheryl Smith. "He ara uru ora: Traditional Māori understandings of trauma and wellbeing." *Whanganui: Te Atawhai o te Ao* (2018), 18.

²⁴⁰ Smith, Tinirau, and Smith. "He ara uru ora, 19.

Marama thus cannot purely be a realm of Light, just as Rarohenga is not pure or absolute Night. Nevertheless, something occurs when Day breaks; what happens when Light strikes? Can such Light be resisted?

When Light Strikes

*As in most other folk tales of this class the advent of day brought to an end the movements of these travelling mountains and their offspring, wherever daylight found them there they became fixed. We must therefore presume that these enchanted mountains could move only at night...*²⁴¹

*So it was that all busied themselves in filling up the interstices in the walls of Uenuku's home, so that no ray of daylight might enter, all this to deceive the trusting Mist Maid.*²⁴²

A conversation with Garrick Cooper crystallised and influenced some thinking I had been doing in relation to the scientific processes of observation and measurement. Once some phenomenon has been *seen*, it is fixed in place and made static – recorded and reduced to mere data, a butterfly pinned in a museum collection. Garrick mentioned he was writing about certain traditions involving travelling mountains who move only in the night, becoming fixed in place when day broke; the traditions involving the Taupo mountains, including Tongariro, Pihanga, and others being one example.²⁴³ Elsewhere Best describes

²⁴¹ Best, *Maori Religion and Mythology, Part 3*, 469–470, 469–70.

²⁴² Ibid., 419

²⁴³ Ibid., 419.

the migration of Maunga-pōhatu, Kakarā-mea, and their children from Te Matau-a-Māui to their current locations:

In former times, that is in very ancient times, the mountains Maunga-pohatu, Kakarā-mea and Pu-tauaki migrated from the south—from Te Matau-a-Maui (Cape Kidnappers)—and came northwards to the places where we now see them. Maunga-pohatu was the wife of Kakarā-mea (Rainbow Hill at Wai-o-Tapu). They disagreed as to which direction they should travel in. The former said, “Let us go to the east.” “Ehē!” cried the husband, “to the south.” “Not so,” replied the wife, “my desire is the east.” “My own way shall I go,” said Kakarā-mea. “So soon as we have partaken of food I shall depart with our offspring to the north, there to find a new home.” But their children had already departed for the north, and were followed by their mother, by Maunga-pohatu. Those children were Tapanaua (a large rock in the Tauranga Stream at Te Wai-iti), Mou-tohora (an island off Whakatane), Tokatapu, Hinarae²¹ and Toka-a-Houmea (rocks at Whakatane). When overtaken by daylight the party were unable to travel further, hence they stand where we of to-day see them.²⁴⁴

Essentially, Garrick has identified a motif occurring throughout the travelling mountain traditions; the Light of Day fixes things in place, rendering the formerly mobile and fluid instead static.

²⁴⁴ Best. *Notes on Maori Mythology*, 119.

On reflecting later on this conversation, Hine-kohurangi, She of the Mist, came to mind, because she appears to resist the fixing effect of the day in a way the mountains could not, and this seems important. In either case such traditions affirm that the fixing tendency exists, and I began to notice a recurring motif; that of blocking out the light of the rising sun so that it might not enter a dwelling, preserving the conditions of Night therein. Some traditions invoking this motif involve mysterious beings that must return 'home' when Day breaks. Significantly, the prolongation of Night within the dwelling allows the being in question to be caught unawares, rendering them seeable and knowable in the Light, and reducing their mystery to the banality of the everyday. Other traditions describes beings to whom the Light is inimical; death and destruction results from their exposure to the day. The following brief discussion recounts a few descriptions of such incidences in oral tradition, although the fuller implications of the motif are not explored here. My intent is to introduce the motif before casting further attention to Hine-kohurangi in the following section.

One instance is found in Māui's pursuit of his mother Taranga to Rarohenga as mentioned in Chapter 3; preceding Māui's descent to Rarohenga, he had observed that his mother Taranga remained with he and his brothers only during the night, always slipping off before the sun rose. Ever curious, Māui resolved to follow her: deploying what is now a familiar stratagem, Māui covered up the parts of their house that might admit light in order to delay her departure:

Maui then bethought him of a plan whereby he might find out where his mother went to as day approached; he busied himself in plugging all interstices through

which a ray of light migaht [sic] enter their house... In the morning she awoke, and called: "It is breaking day, is it not?" but Maui replied: "Sleep on, dawn is yet afar off." Whereas day had long dawned, though the house interior was in darkness still.²⁴⁵

In this case, Māui delayed Taranga such that he was able to observe the route she took, leading him eventually to Rarohenga. Tamaiwaho is another celestial being who, like Hine-kohurangi, comes to earth during the Night, who nature was 'strange':

He came to earth and cohabited with Te Kura, wife of the famous Toi-kairakau of Whakatane, a man of parts who flourished some seven or eight centuries ago. The story of Te Kura was to the effect that she was visited at night by a strange being, that when he entered her hut a strange light and a fragrant perfume seemed to emanate from his person. It was decided to detain the intruder until daylight arrived so that he might be caught, and this was effected by means of closing all apertures of the hut walls that might admit light. Thus was it discovered that the nightly visitor was Tamaiwaho.²⁴⁶

If one consequence of this stratagem is the revelation of knowledge of some kind, another found in the literature is death. One such tradition is found in Best's account of the 'Riverman of Whanganui', a river being for whom the Light resulted in both revelation and death:

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 431–432.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 400.

One story relates to a certain young woman of former times who was visited nightly by some being that dwelt in the river, but who presumably possessed a form akin to that of man. She marvelled at the coldness of his skin, and consulted her father, the result being that all apertures of her house that might admit light were carefully blocked, and the next visit of the strange denizen of the river depths was awaited. When that being came, he passed the night as usual and waited for the first sign of dawn ere he retired to his watery home. But no sign of dawning light appeared within the house, though the folk of the hamlet had already assembled outside in the broad light of day. Ere long they opened the door and then slew the water man as he came forth.²⁴⁷

Here discovery precedes death, a notion that colonised peoples everywhere may recognise. For other beings, light is so antithetical to their nature that it alone can produce death. One description of the inimicality of light is found in Tāwhaki and Karihi's attempts to avenge their father, slain by the Pōnaturi. The Pōnaturi are described as sea beings who, like Pania, return to the ocean during the day. Seeking out the home of their enemies, Tawhaki and Karihi find there the remains of their father, and their imprisoned mother who advises her sons to block every part of the house of the Pōnaturi that might admit the light.²⁴⁸ Grey's version says that:

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 585

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 431-432.

At midnight Tawhaki and Karihi stole down from the roof of the house, and found that their mother had crept out of the door to meet them, so they sat at the doorway whispering together. Karihi then asked his mother, “Which is the best way for us to destroy these people who are sleeping here?” And their mother answered, “You had better let the sun kill them, its rays will destroy them...See that every chink in the doorway and window is stopped, so that not a ray of light can penetrate here.”²⁴⁹

Two aspects of the Light in oral tradition are shown here by the use of the blocking-the-light motif: the first is that Light allows discovery of some kind, reinforcing Garrick’s argument that the Light fixes things in place; the second is that it causes death. These aspects will be discussed in more detail in the following section, which casts attention to Hine-Kohurangi and the implications she suggests in her response to the Light.

Hine-kohurangi

*Freedom! That was the thought that sung in her heart so that even though the future was so dim, it was iridescent like the mist over the river where the morning sun fell upon it. Freedom!*²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ George Grey, *Polynesian mythology and ancient traditional history of the New Zealand race: As furnished by their priests and chiefs*. London: J. Murray, 1855. 39–40

²⁵⁰ Maugham, William Somerset. *The painted veil*. Random House, 2007.

Hine-Kohurangi, She of the Mist, appears in a number of oral traditions. To Ngāpuhi and Wairoa folk, she is Tairi-a-kohu;²⁵¹ to Whanganui folk she is Hine-makohu.²⁵² To Tūhoe, she is Hine-pūkohurangi, who along with Te Maunga, is an ancestor of the Tūhoe people.²⁵³

Best states that “One narrative has it that this Mist Maid, the personified form of mist (kohu, pukohu), was a daughter of Whiro, so that she sprang from darkness”²⁵⁴ However, there is no record of this narrative elsewhere. Edward Shortland gives a whakapapa that describes the union of Te Mangu with Mahorahoranui-a-Rangi, producing four children, one of whom is Toko-pa. Toko-pa is the parent of a sole child; Kohu. Kohu “married Te Ika-Roa (The Milky Way), and gave birth to Nga Whetu”.²⁵⁵ Already we can see intimate connections suggested between Hine-kohurangi and both Darkness in the form of her parent Whiro, and Light in the form of her children, the stars.

Furthering her connection to the celestial realm, Best states that Hine-kohurangi, as I will refer to her for consistency sake, occupies the “Cloud House known as Ahoaho o Tukapua, wherein the Cloud Children abide when not roaming the vast realm of Watea (space)”.²⁵⁶ During the period in which the Poutiriao are appointed, Smith ‘Hine-makohu-rangi [Lady of

²⁵¹ “The Story of the Rainbow”, Te Ao Hou, September 1964, 10

²⁵² Best, *Maori Religion and Mythology, Part 2*, 148.

²⁵³ Ibid., 418.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 418.

²⁵⁵ Shortland, Edward. *Maori Religion and Mythology: Illustrated by Translations of Traditions, Karakia, &c., to which are Added Notes on Maori Tenure of Land*. Longmans, Green, and Company, 1882, 17.

²⁵⁶ Best, *Maori Religion and Mythology, Part 2*, 418.

the Mists of Heaven]’ is sent to “act as clothing for their father the Sky, and to shade Mother-Earth [from the rays of the sun].”²⁵⁷ The association between Hine-kohurangi and covering or sheltering is one I will return to shortly.

Perhaps the most well-known tradition concerning Hine-Kohurangi, other than that of Tūhoe’s account of her union with Te Maunga, is that of her encounter with Uenuku, a mortal who became, eventually, the rainbow. Some details vary between tribal accounts, but many basic narrative elements are the same; a ‘Mist Maiden’, occupying the far-spread heavens, comes to earth to bathe in the waters, where she encounters a man named Uenuku. They form a relationship with Hine-kohurangi dwelling with Uenuku during the night, before returning to her celestial abode as the sun rises. Hine-kohurangi is most emphatic that she must not remain once the sun had risen, and in some versions is accompanied by her sister Hine-wai, who remains outside the house to warn of impending day. Uenuku, under strict instruction not to divulge the identity of Hine-kohurangi until their child is born, chafes under the restriction such that eventually he boasts of her to his people. Demanding proof, the blocking-of-the-light motif of sealing up every part of his house that might admit the dawn is invoked. In this instance the act was intended to allow the people to see her.²⁵⁸ This motif reinforces the idea that the light of day allows discovery, and thus, in a sense, renders things clear or transparent. Uenuku wished Hine-kohurangi to be ‘known’ by his people, to be ‘seen’ in the light of day, whereupon “the assembled people gazed upon her and marvelled at her

²⁵⁷ Smith. *Lore of the Whare Wananga*, 138.

²⁵⁸ “The Story of the Rainbow”, *Te Ao Hou*, September 1964, 10

superb beauty.”²⁵⁹ In being caught by the light, Hine-kohurangi would, presumably, cease to be a creature of mystery and become instead a thoroughly known quantity, reduced to the tangibility and mundanity of the Day. Instead, upon realising Uenuku’s treachery, Hine-kohurangi cries a lament which calls forth an obscuring mist that envelopes her and draws her upwards:

As the Maid sang her farewell song the people saw a column of mist descending from the heavens, descend until it gradually enveloped Hine-makohu; as she finished her song her form was entirely concealed, and then the mist column slowly rose and ascended to the heavens.²⁶⁰

Here the mist ‘entirely’ conceals her form; the Māori Dictionary renders ‘kohu’ as “fog, mist, haze, smog”²⁶¹ which all obscure vision and light to some degree. Hine-kohurangi also features in a variation of the Tamaiwaho tradition previously mentioned. Here, she aids Tamaiwaho by causing confusion, perhaps nullifying any benefit the light may have offered:

One version of the myth is to the effect that Tama, being a spirit, was, of course, not visible, he had no bodily form, and Te Kura explained that the spirit of some one had approached her, she had felt its presence although it was not visible and

²⁵⁹ Best. *Maori Religion and Mythology Part 2*, 419.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 419

²⁶¹ “Kohu”. Māori Dictionary.

<https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=kohu>.

Accessed 27 January, 2021.

not a tangible form. It was then planned that the spiritual form should be captured, and this was done.. The captured god was, however, not retained, for Hine-pokohu [sic], the Mist Maid, came swiftly to earth and covered the place with a dense mist that caused some confusion, and so Tamaiwaho made his escape.²⁶²

This accords with Best's description of Hine-kohurangi as "an agent of concealment"²⁶³ who may also be called upon by humans; one instance of the use of mist to prevent discovery is found in a Tūwharetoa tradition relating to the arrival of the Te Arawa waka. Evelyn Stokes describes the chiefly explorer Tia's 'cloak of mist' which he spreads over the land, concealing him from his rival, the powerful tohunga Ngātoroirangi:

Ngatoroirangi, the tohunga of the canoe Te Arawa, the ancestral canoe of Te Arawa and Tuwharetoa tribes, journeyed south from Maketu, past Tarawera and climbed Tauhara to search out the land. Tia, who had also arrived in Te Arawa, was in the region exploring and *did not want to be found just yet. He spread a cloak of mist over the region – Taupo nui a Tia, the great cloak of Tia.*²⁶⁴ [emphasis added]

²⁶² Best, *Maori Myth and religion Part Part 2*, 400

²⁶³ Ibid., 419

²⁶⁴ Stokes, Evelyn Stokes, "The legacy of Ngatoroirangi: Maori customary use of geothermal resources". (2000), 15.

One of the roles of Hine-kohurangi is to “cover the body of Rangi the Sky Parent and to provide shade and shelter for the Earth Mother.”²⁶⁵ Hine-kohurangi thus extends the connotations of concealment to include ‘shade and shelter’; a protective entity that mediates between being and light. As such, when struck by light Hine-Kohurangi may have become *translucent*, translucency being the quality of admitting light but not vision; in doing so she resists clarity and transparency. The Māori Dictionary gives transparent as “puata” and opaque as “puata-kore”, the *negation* of transparency²⁶⁶. In Hine-kohurangi, transparency is not merely absent, but may be denied. As an opaque yet diaphanous entity she may resist the penetrating quality some forms of light possess by scattering it. Some light passes through translucent objects but most is refracted or diffused; shorn of vision, one is left to apprehend mere form.²⁶⁷

Although Hine-kohurangi’s ‘superb beauty’ was revealed, this is an external and perhaps therefore superficial quality, even if it was beauty that first drew Uenuku to her. Thus the light may reduce things to ‘face-value’, the interior of some beings remaining impenetrable; the light of Day, then, may only be capable of producing shallow forms of knowledge which ignore or deny the hidden interiorities of being. Hine-kohurangi, an opaque being made translucent in the light who can be seen but not known by the people, retreats from the Day. Her being remains intact but at the cost of withdrawing her presence. Her relationship with Uenuku was only possible under the conditions of Night, and it was in the Night that he came to know her.

²⁶⁵ Best, *Māori Myth and Religion Part 2*, 419.

²⁶⁶ “Puata”. Māori Dictionary

<https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=puata>.

Accessed 26 January 2021.

²⁶⁷ Heavily-frosted glass provides a prosaic comparison.

Uenuku's actions in blocking the gaps in the house reinforces the notion that Light strikes only surfaces and exteriors, hearts of darkness remaining intact – he kokonga whare. Uenuku, unlike Tāne and Māui, does not have ability to go to or control the *source* of light; in plugging the gaps of the house, he is restricted to working with what the light strikes. This suggests that we in Māori Studies may similarly work to preserve the conditions of Night within the whare of academic knowledge.

The exposure of Hine-kohurangi to the light resulted in withdrawal *from* the world that had profound consequences *in* the world:

Never again did folk of this world gaze upon the beauteous Mist Maid, and never again did Uenuku the weak know peace, or cease to search far distant regions in quest of his lost Maid. Even so he passed long-drawn years, ever seeking his lost bride, ever hoping to atone for past weakness.²⁶⁸

This suggests that light may indeed constitute a form of knowing or knowledge, but one that can be injurious both to the known and the knower. Furthermore, light is a knowing that has consequences for the world. Marsden's account to his elders of the atomic bomb references such knowledge, and I do not believe it coincidence that the atom bomb resulted in a form of light so deadly that it annihilated life and transmogrified the very future possibilities of life. The curse of such a light is teratogenic and carries through the generations, malforming the ira. I remember vividly the French atrocity committed on Mururoa atoll in 1995 as the final

²⁶⁸ Best, Maori Myth and Religion Part 2, 419–20

atomic weapon was 'tested' in the area of the Moana that France had laid claim to.²⁶⁹ The first such weapon was inflicted on the Moana in 1966, code-named Aldebaran, a giant red star that forms the baleful eye of the constellation Taurus.²⁷⁰ Such a gaze can render the opaque transparent in a sense, but at a terrible price. In an the ITV documentary *The Day They Dropped The Bomb*, Takashi Tanemori describes his childhood recollection of a 'flash in the sky':

'...I never saw such pure white.

'When the flash came I saw the bone on my fingers. Just like looking at X-Ray. The sound almost split my skull, and that sound, so loud. And, then I don't remember what did happen for quite some time.'

Takashi said he awoke in pitch black darkness. 'You cannot see your own hand,' he recalled. 'And I tried to move but I could not. Then, I begin to smell the heat. And, then, I hear the one classmate Tano, my best friend.

'He said, "Takashi, Takashi. It's hot, hot. Come help me. Rescue me," he cry out. And I say, "Tano, I can't move."' ²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ Robert, Norris, Robert 1996 *Security Dialog*. Sage Publications. **27** (1): 39–54.

²⁷⁰ Norris, *Security Dialog*, 39–54.

²⁷¹ MailOnline, Lucy Waterlow for. "Hiroshima Survivors' Memories 70 Years after the Atomic Bomb." Daily Mail Online. Associated Newspapers, July 29, 2015. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3177649/The-flash->

At first the flash of light resulted in a 'pure white' that rendered the interior structure of Tanemori's hand visible – then, paradoxically, pure darkness in which 'you cannot see your own hand'. The destructive consequences of such a light should sound a warning to those who would unleash unmitigated Light upon the world.

The consequences of knowledge for the known are evident when we consider the harms that research has caused to Māori and other indigenous peoples. As Linda Tuhiwai-Smith famously notes in the introduction to her seminal work *Decolonizing Methodologies*:

From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write, and choose to privilege, the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary.²⁷²

We are straying into territory that I consider to be axiomatic in Māori Studies and therefore in no need of re-articulation. Instead, I want to think about the consequences of knowledge for the knower. Some things we cannot un-know, however it is we come know them; such a knowing constitutes a burden which can make demands of us, and may even be considered a loss of innocence. When Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and

came-saw-bone-fingers-just-like-looking-X-ray-Hiroshima-survivors-devastating-memories-70-years-atomic-bomb.html.

²⁷² Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. Zed Books Ltd., 2013, 1.

evil, they became aware of their nakedness, and felt shame; “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons”.²⁷³ The immediate consequences of eating the fruit were the knowledge of shame and acts to mitigate this shame, which result in a change of outward appearance. Adam and Eve’s actions in covering themselves were a tohu of the knowledge they had freshly acquired of the Tree. Further, Adam and Eve’s coming to knowledge is described in terms of *sight*; ‘and the eyes of them both were opened.’ Because nakedness was their natural state, the implication is that shame is not attached to nakedness itself but to knowledge *of* it. Children who have not yet learned otherwise seldom display shame or self-consciousness in regards to their bodies. This burden of knowledge resulted in actions which, ironically, precipitated the discovery of the originating sin:

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?” So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.” And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”²⁷⁴

²⁷³ Gen 3:7

²⁷⁴ Gen 3:8-11

It is worth, given the denigration of the flesh so common in Western thought, emphasising here that bodies are not described as the source of evil. J. David Velleman in *The Genesis of Shame* suggests that:

Although a knowledge of good and evil prompted [Adam and Eve] to remedy their nakedness -as evil, we suppose- we are still not meant to suppose that their nakedness had been evil antecedently. So the knowledge of good and evil didn't just reveal some evil in their nakedness; *it must also have put that evil there.*²⁷⁵

[emphasis added]

In this case, the sinful nature of the act of eating the fruit, thereby disobeying God's sole instruction, carries through to contaminate Adam and Eve's formerly natural and uninhibited state of being, placing evil where it did not belong before. This evil led them to hide from God and had terrible consequences for all humankind:

And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁵ David J. Velleman, "The genesis of shame." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 30, no. 1 (2001): 27-52.

²⁷⁶ Gen 3:22-24.

Of course Uenuku's attempts to make Hine-kohurangi known cannot be evil in any Christian sense, and nor do they result in universally catastrophic consequences. If Adam and Eve's actions resulted in the universal presence of something in the world, in this case shame and evil, Uenuku's actions result in loss and the absence of presence; in both cases, knowledge or the attempt to seek it changes the world itself. It is Hine-kohurangi's response to the intrusion of day that suggests a corresponding challenge to the demands for certainty and clarity latent in Enlightenment thought. If Adam and Eve and the atom bomb suggest that some things should not be known, Hine-kohurangi asserts that some things *cannot* be known.

Mika points to the obscurity of Māori metaphysics, suggesting that 'unrelenting light' in the academy results, as with our travelling mountains, in a loss of the dynamic freedom of the Night: "...unrelenting light in scholarship (in the sense of 'throwing light on' a problem) catches a 'thing' – concrete or abstract entity, including the self – in its glare. That thing then loses its fluidity."²⁷⁷ It may be that Hine-kohurangi offers us a means of theorising responses to unrelenting Light; she has been shown to conceal and to shelter those caught in the Light, and to cause confusion allowing a return to the Night. Hinekohurangi thus has implications for mātauranga; Mika proposes that:

... 'mātauranga' fixes things in the world²⁷⁸ that Māori cite that are meant to be mysterious to the self. In this counter-colonial argument I propose that the gaze

²⁷⁷ Carl Mika. "Maori thinking with a dead white male", 33.

²⁷⁸ Mātauranga may have come to have this fixing effect, as does the light, but there is not the scope here to explore this idea further. A seed has been planted which will germinate in darkness a little longer.

for things in the world that 'mātauranga' relies on is a result of epistemic certainty that detracts from a Māori focus on Being.²⁷⁹

Hine-Kohurangi may function to preserve mystery by sheltering or concealing it through the scattering of Light and, if necessary, facilitating the return of the mysterious to the Night not as Unknown but as Unknowable; her ability to confuse as a means of facilitating a movement from Light to Darkness should not be overlooked. As a potent symbol of opacity, and one who is known to aid those who call upon her, Hine-Kohurangi suggests means of responding to demands for epistemic certainty as the desideratum of inquiry. Rejecting such demands is necessary if we are to locate Māori metaphysics in the epistemic wilderness, which I am beginning to believe must be found in the friendly gloom of the Night.

²⁷⁹ Carl Mika, "Overcoming 'Being' in Favour of Knowledge: The fixing effect of 'mātauranga'." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 44, no. 10 (2012): 1080-1092.

Chapter 5. He Taumata: A Place to Rest.

At certain points were resting-places where travellers would rest a while ere proceeding on their journey. In forest-clad hill-country such spots were usually selected at some place where, by clearing a small space, a view of the surrounding lands might be obtained, and these outlooks are termed taumata... At such a place persons resting would converse on ordinary subjects, but would not indulge in any serious deliberations, and so we have a quaint saying, viz., He korero taumata that is used to denote... 'unofficial' remarks.²⁸⁰

If I had been asked not so long ago why I, or anyone, writes, I probably would have answered 'to communicate'. I have learned however, in the process of writing the thesis, that I write largely to find out what I think. However, when does thinking end? Thinking on that thinking, certain limitations have suggested themselves, as have future research possibilities.

One limitation of the research lies in the narrow delineation of *Māori* oral traditions in casting attention to various entities associated with Night and Day. I am beginning to understand the need to locate Māori oral traditions within our shared Moana heritage; Hongi's view that in order to understand Māori gods we must examine this deeper heritage has strongly influenced my thinking. William's notion of Puaka and Matariki iwi, drawing respectively on western and more recent eastern Moana traditions suggests that any further study of particular entities and traditions relating to the Night should incorporate

²⁸⁰ Best, *Forest Lore of the Maori*, 28

consideration of a range of Moana traditions. Such consideration might bring different elements into focus, or change their relationships, or perhaps obscure things too, and is necessary to ground Māori epistemic adventures within our wider Moana context. I consider this necessary because I am coming to view our separation as distinct peoples as a colonial tool deployed in the 'divide and conquer' style, and because grounding Māori thought not in colonial New Zealand but in the Moana may offer new pathways to explore, which may lead to a distinctive Moana philosophical tradition that reveals new possibilities for thought.

Another limitation to the thesis is that it only considers Māori oral traditions recorded in English language texts or translation, and these largely by male Pākehā ethnographers, the involvement of various scribes and informants notwithstanding. This is unavoidable given my lack of proficiency in te reo and the sheer ubiquity of the work by men such as Best to the point where, as Holman argues, Māori since have largely accepted the descriptions within and reproduced them in other works of writing,²⁸¹ Mana Wahine (and other) theorists notwithstanding. Others have written at length about the problematics of the work of these ethnographers, but for my purposes the written texts remain objects of use and value, not least in their potential to act as prompts for further thought, allowing me to remain agnostic as to their truth, accuracy, or authenticity. I think that Māori epistemic adventures may be undertaken in languages other than te reo, but it is obvious that, particularly in regards to names, a deep understanding of the language would bring forth

²⁸¹ Jeffrey Paparoa Holman, "Best of both world: Elsdon Best and the metamorphosis of Maori spirituality". (2007).

rich and generative insights if we are to produce new knowledge from our ancestral traditions.

Perhaps the major limitation of the thesis lies in the degree to which thoughts and ideas are coaxed out into the light. There are many things that are touched upon only briefly and not returned to, nor fully explicated, such as the notion of the Moon as an intermediary between Night and Day, or Te Kūwatawata's significance as guardian of Poutere-rangi, the entrance to Rarohenga, who must be satisfied if passage to and from there is to be allowed. In particular the ideas contained within the creative works are largely left to stand as they are, although in my defence these are the germinating seeds for further research, likely my doctoral thesis, and I wish to engage them in more detail than I am able to here. I do not believe this to be necessarily inconsistent with the theoretical and methodological foundations of the thesis, but it may be inconsistent with the demands of the academy. In the final stages of writing the thesis I grappled with the question, when is a thought ever completed or finished? In my case, never, it seems; thoughts lead seamlessly on or leap abruptly to other thoughts, or become increasingly attenuated, trailing off with no definitive conclusion. Some thoughts refuse to be dispensed with, looming over interior landscapes to dominate there, while others remain elusive, apprehendable yet not comprehensible. The best and most apt description for thought I have encountered lies in William Golding's phantasmagorical description of mirages that materialise before the shipwrecked boys in his *Lord of the Flies*:

Strange things happened at midday. The glittering sea rose up, moved

apart in planes of blatant impossibility; the coral reef and the few stunted palms that clung to the more elevated parts would float up into the sky, would quiver, be plucked apart, run like raindrops on a wire or be repeated as in an odd succession of mirrors. Sometimes land loomed where there was no land and flicked out like a bubble as the children watched... At midday the illusions merged into the sky and there the sun gazed down like an angry eye.²⁸²

In a way the thesis may constitute a collection of miragic thoughts that refuse to take on solid form but, stubbornly, will not dissipate either. If retreat to the Night was a possibility for Hine-kohurangi, it is not one open to a thesis or its writer. Although it is uncomfortable to the point of distress to present what in many places feels a half-formed thing much of which I remain uncertain about, I have endeavoured to, as Mika suggests we should, allow things to appear in their own right, fleeting or inconstant though they may be. It may be that this result is a natural consequence of whaka aro as method as I have described it, and the discomfort I feel comes from an apprehensiveness as to its success here. More mirages!

I must, though, further acknowledge the possibility of methodological limitations, a risk inherent in the development of any new or emerging methodology, and particularly so where, as I have sought to do, thinking is the method yet non-cognitive modalities are brought to bear on the research process. I feel I am on solid ground theoretically; Cooper and Mika's respective work in particular, along with 'generations' of kaupapa Māori

²⁸² William, Golding, *Lord of the Flies*. Penguin, 1987, 81-81.

theorising and discourse generally, clearly calls for the kind of work I attempt here in which the epistemic potential of Māori oral tradition is taken seriously, as is thought for its own sake. Whaka aro as method is one I will continue to develop and refine, and is an invaluable reconfiguration of thinking as method that is consistent with a Māori metaphysics in which thought is not necessarily rational, cognitive, or directed, and which allows things to remain obscure. If Māori Studies is not to fall into decadence, in which applied work is all that can be done, then it must allow for speculative and tentative thought untethered from demands for utility, certainty, and clarity. If whaka aro is method in its own right, then its fruits are worth pursuing for their own sake.

But was it a mistake to include the creative works- should that fruit have remained on the tree? Should I have engaged with the literature more to better demonstrate my grasp of it, or undertaken a more linear form of analysis to allow more conventionally sophisticated insights to develop? Should I have emphasised more or different conclusions? In short, were the elements of the work intended to satisfy academic demands self-consciously performative enough to pass muster? These are not idle questions, but they are questions I cannot, from this vantage point, answer; all that is left is to acknowledge them. One of my hapū is named Patu Kōraha, which I have heard given as ‘to strike or bludgeon the wilderness’; perhaps that is all, in attempting to forge a new methodological path, I have achieved here. I wanted to use a Māori method framed within theory developed by Māori philosophers that would reverse the ‘left and right’ of Māori oral traditions as viewed in the academy; rather than view them as objects of culture, I held a deep conviction they could be objects of knowledge. *New* knowledge and theory, not inherited or reclaimed or newly-applied; in this case, fresh knowledge with regards to the Enlightenment valorisation of light

and dark. I wanted to reinvigorate and contribute to a Māori epistemology in which our oral traditions might be brought to bear on the West without privileging Western modes of thought. I can affirm the epistemic wilderness Cooper describes as just such a place from which to attempt this reinvigoration, regardless of the success of my own efforts; even a failed attempt to clear a path may nevertheless suggest ways forward. It is my hope that any shortcomings to be found here will prove instructive to those who may also wish to forge new paths of their own.

Just as I can, here at the taumata, look back at the path taken so far, so too can I discern a little of the path ahead. Future pathways are implied in Vanishing Point; how is it that we can come to know things about the world? How do we 'make sense' of things, in every sense of the word? I am interested in the relationships between seeing, light, and knowledge. In Western thought the preeminent sensory modality is sight. Light, the condition which makes sight possible, is metaphorically aligned with reason, and thus sight and reason lead to knowledge. The admixture of empiricist and rationalist tendencies reaffirms a physicalist Western sensorium that conforms to the positivist ontology upon which it is founded. I suspect a Māori sensorium to be very different, based not on a Māori world-view, but occurring within a Māori *world*, spiritual and metaphysical as well as physical. Māori cosmologies describe Te Whē, or *sound*, as the first percept, which occurs in the primal Night. Rongo means not only to hear, but to taste, touch, smell, or otherwise *perceive* phenomena. These activities do not require the light and indeed, rongo in all its forms may be heightened by its absence.

I am also interested in mātauranga and how it is acquired. If seeing is knowing in Western thought, how might mātauranga be reconfigured to resist the fixing effect Mika warns of? What do Māori oral traditions suggest about the nature and origins of various forms of knowledge? And what of other forms of knowing such as māramatanga and mōhiotanga? These questions are particularly relevant to Night and Day in the context of the academic production of knowledge and ways of knowing, and I suspect mātauranga is a term in dire need of reconfiguration to locate it within the epistemic wilderness as freedom from which it may operate to destabilise Western epistemic norms.

Chapter 6. He Kōrero Tāwera

*With their contemplation of Being, Māori knew the importance of a tentative approach towards any perceived presence of things, even though those things were greatly valued.*²⁸³

If I had been asked not so long ago why I, or anyone, writes, I probably would have answered ‘to communicate what I think’. I have learned however, in the process of writing the thesis, that I write largely to find out *what* I think. However, as I ask in the previous chapter, where does thinking end? Thus the concluding chapter of the thesis is framed in terms of ‘tāwera’, to be unresolved, suspended, left hanging. I nevertheless make a few general statements that bring together key elements of the thesis, before commenting on each chapter. Finally, I make a few concluding remarks to formally mark the end of this thesis, if not the thinking behind it.

If the Enlightenment suggests a permanent state of light has been achieved or should be maintained, Māori oral traditions say otherwise. The iterative process by which Light was introduced to the world signals the need to ameliorate its effects; unmitigated, Light can be deadly, whether it is that of the atom bomb, the dawn rays that strike the Pōnatūri, or the colonising glare of reason. Whiro as Darkness suggests that Light must be contested, but not in any Manichean sense; rather, as the necessary complement to Light, Whiro moderates it,

²⁸³ Carl Mika, (2013). Reclaiming mystery: A Māori philosophy of Being, in light of Novalis’ ontology (Thesis, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)). University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand, 345.

maintaining an equilibrium within which a state of mauri tau is achieved. For those of us in the academy who want to 'do' Māori metaphysics, Whiro asserts the need to contest Light as reason, certainty, and clarity without necessarily rejecting it. Light as reason or knowledge can be useful to us in the academy, but cannot alone produce Māori knowledge in the epistemic wilderness. Non-cognitive, embodied and other forms of thinking, knowing and perceiving are essential components of a, or at least my own, Māori research process. Whaka aro as method can bring together various modes of thought and perception to result in new theorisation drawn from Māori oral tradition that critically engages Western epistemic norms without privileging them. In short, whaka aro may facilitate a movement from Light to Darkness as 'the obscurity of Māori metaphysics'.

Hine-Nui-te-Pō tells us that such a movement is inevitable. As Gordon contends, disciplines that foreclose the question of their scope must fall into decay; this constitutes a slow death. Paradoxically, Hine-Nui-te-Pō suggests that if such decay is to be avoided in the discipline of Māori studies, a return to the obscurity of Māori metaphysics, in which Māori forms of thought can produce knowledge that conforms to Māori epistemic standards, is necessary. Just as Hine-Nui-te-Pō may also signal the dawn, a rejection of Western epistemic norms may result in new theorising in the academy. Equally, Hine-Nui-te-Pō also suggests that, in some cases, we may need to withdraw entirely from the Light; Rarohenga may function symbolically as the 'home' of things in the world that resist reduction to objects of scrutiny, or Māori knowledge and ways of knowing that cannot be made to fit within the constraints of the academy.

The encounters between Darkness and Light described in Māori oral tradition reveal the profound importance of the horizon. The close proximity to the Sun of Whiro-Mercury and Hine-Nui-te-Pō-Venus suggests we should locate Māori Studies along the horizon that lies between Māori and Western epistemologies; their variability as celestial objects implies the importance of mutability in approach. The Whiro and Hine-Nui-te-Pō traditions that deal with Tāne and Māui suggest that encounters between Darkness and Light take place at particular points along the horizon. If, as Cooper argues we should, we are to disengage from Western thought whilst simultaneously critically engaging with it, Māori epistemic adventures in the academy must too locate themselves at certain points of inflection. Just as the vagina of Hine-Nui-te-Pō acts as threshold between realms, and Te Rangi-Haupapa closes them off, such points of engagement may constitute incursions or denials. Further theorisation is required to identify where these encounters should take place, although, as I have tried to show here, the methods by which knowledge is produced, and the epistemic demands of the academy in relation to certainty and clarity, are two such points.

The recurrent motif found in oral traditions of blocking out the light offers one way in which Māori Studies as discipline can resist the demands made by the academy. In doing so, we may, at least for a time, maintain the conditions of Night within the whare of Māori oral tradition in order to allow distinctively Māori knowledge to be produced. Such knowledge may resemble Western forms of knowledge, but is not limited to these forms. Hine-kohurangi as an entity who mediates between being and the fixing effect of Light is of particular relevance in theorising other ways in which reason, certainty and clarity might be resisted, alternately concealing, sheltering, causing confusion, and, sometimes, allowing a return to the Night. Hine-kohurangi suggests that some things cannot be brought into the

Light to be seen and known in any complete form, a suggestion with obvious implications for Māori academic research. Hine-kohurangi may embody the opacity of Māori metaphysics and as such, asserts the value and importance of opacity in academic endeavours. Translucency may be one way in which Māori knowledge might be theorised; struck by light, Hine-kohurangi scatters it, revealing form but preserving the mystery and interiority of things in the world.

Vanishing Point functions in a circular fashion to establish some of the background thinking that went on during the course of the research process, and to suggest future research possibilities. These possibilities are predicated on my view that a distinctively Māori 'ontological immersion' in the world has epistemological implications that must be explored from within a Māori metaphysics.

Chapter 1 established the rationale for thesis and the theory and methodology that inform the research process. Oral traditions are treated as possessing the capacity for the generation of new thought in the present moment. Innovative forms of Māori philosophising have been called for and the thesis is an attempt to respond to those calls. Whaka aro as the casting of attention rehabilitates the notion of thinking as method in a manner consistent with the reclamation of the epistemic wilderness in a move to freedom from the constraints of the academy. Whaka aro therefore encompasses non-volitional thought in which things may draw attention to themselves, recognising the agency of non-human entities in their disclosures to us. Whaka aro as methodology also allows non-cognitive means of perception which can result in intuitive leaps that may defy logical explanation as one is drawn from one utterance on to other utterances. If we are to

decolonise epistemology then such approaches are necessary, and even flawed attempts may nevertheless prove useful if they aid others' efforts. The contribution the thesis makes is therefore twofold; it engages with oral traditions in a spirit of epistemic seriousness that is woefully absent elsewhere in the academy, and suggests a methodology for the production of new knowledge drawn from these traditions.

Chapter 2 suggests that the predominant readings of Māori oral traditions in the academy do not allow for their full epistemic potential to be engaged. In essence, the approach I have taken goes beyond deriving ahistorical values and principles, or knowledge that is assessed against Western epistemic norms, to ask how oral traditions can produce other forms of knowledge relevant to our current circumstances. Such an approach is essential if we are to reinvigorate Māori epistemic adventures, and it is this approach I have striven to undertake.

The cosmologies described in Chapter 3 suggest that Night is primordial in Māori thought. Things begin and end and begin again in darkness, including new life, the new moon, and the new year. Te Ao Marama as the realm of being emerges from Te Pō, but Te Pō as the realm of becoming may constantly stand in behind Te Ao Marama, continually generating the essences of being that paradoxically are already and always present in the world.

The discussion of Whiro and Hine-Nui-te-Pō shows that even beings explicitly associated with Darkness and the Night remain ambiguous. Whiro is not an enemy of the Light but its necessary complement, suggestive of the notion of balance. Hine-Nui-te-Pō suggests that, while the movement from darkness to light is emphasised in Māori cosmologies, movement from the day back to the night must also occur. Consideration of their interactions with

Tāne suggests that horizontality may be a key feature of these encounters, during which the boundaries between Night and Day, and Death and Life, are transcended, closed off, or otherwise negotiated at particular points. The Manichean prism through which Whiro and Tāne have been viewed by Best and those he has influenced casts a false light; Whiro is not evil, and nor is darkness or even death. Rarohenga is a domain not of gloom or fear but of welfare and all that is good. Darkness and the Night are necessary complements to Light and the Day, but may not be absolute.

The arrangement of the sun by Tāne described in Chapter 4 demonstrates the harmful effects of the Light. Although some amount of Light is desirable, consistent with the complementary dualism Te Mātorohanga describes, the iterative processes by which Light is amended signal the need to carefully manage its effects. Te Ao Marama is not solely the world of light; it is the proper arrangement of Night and Day, which results in a state of mauri tau. This suggests that Te Ao Marama is consisted of an equilibrium that must be actively maintained, and further re-frames the interactions of Tāne and Whiro away from the notion of conflict to that of balance. The Enlightenment represents an attempt to fix the Day in place, disrupting this balance which causes all life to suffer.

Hine-kohurangi suggests a response to the light that allows obscurity to remain intact, although at the cost of a withdrawal to the Night. Light may constitute knowledge, but this too has the potential to harm and must be carefully managed. Such knowledge may be limited to the surface or outward appearance of things, whether it strikes true or is refracted or diffused through opaque objects that become translucent in response. This suggests the limitations of academic forms of knowledge and knowing, and challenges their

demands for certainty and clarity. Ignoring these demands may be essential if we are to free Māori philosophising from Western norms to allow the pursuit of distinctly Māori epistemic endeavours.

Chapter 5 reflects on the research process and its limitations. Risk is inherent when attempting to develop new theory and methodology, and I hope any flaw to be found lies in execution and not conception. Further research directions are suggested, with mātauranga and a Māori sensorium of particular interest.

Ko te Titi o te Rua, which follows this chapter, suggests that at the present moment we are witnessing the setting or implosion of the Enlightenment Sun; never have the deficiencies in Western thought as evidenced by the failures of liberal democracy and capitalism been more apparent. The destruction of the conditions of the world upon which we depend signifies the madness that results from attempts to fix the Sun in place, and represents the final reduction ad absurdum of the hierarchical dichotomies that form the Western worldview. How will we navigate the horizon beyond which one age of the world becomes another? What midwifery will ease the birthing pangs of that transition? Hubris was ever the downfall of the protagonists of the Greco-Roman traditions upon which much Western thought has been founded, which suggests an urgent need for epistemic modesty and a rejection of the belief that all things can be known and made subservient to the gaze of reason.

Māori oral traditions caution us against the effects of unmitigated Light. The Enlightenment, then, from the perspective of these traditions, is the torment of un-ameliorated Light; it

broils the heavens and the earth and causes the distressed wailing of the inhabitants of these realms. The rhythmic movements between Night and Day are arrested by the terrible and artificial permanence of the fixing of the overhead sun in an Enlightenment cosmogony. The glare of the Enlightenment is the insanity of lack of sleep and the conditions in which sleep is best obtained, which proves deadly in short order. It is the lack of *dreams*. It is the denial of the Night and all that is of the Night, most especially those aspects of the mauri nourished in and by the Night. It is the hideous fixing certainty that dooms one to despair; all is known or knowable with a terrible certitude, reduced as the disembodied heart is weighed upon the scale. There are no shadows in which to take respite from the glare; there is no Hine-Nui-te-Pō to safeguard our spiritual welfare, which surely she must do even before we enter her domain. The poverty of physicalist ontologies, in which being is reduced to matter, foregrounds a contempt for the numinous such that being must ultimately be denied.

Māori oral traditions that speak of Darkness and Light offer up a means of responding to Enlightenment demands for certainty and clarity, those demands resulting in knowledges that may constitute the blinding and deadly glare of the atom bomb, which rends the fabric of the universe but cannot sew it back up again. In destruction may lie the seeds of creation, but they will not be found in the fields left fallow by their exposure to the irradiating gaze of unmitigated Light. Encounters between Darkness and Light suggest a necessary and complementary dualism without which all things would be mateless, decrepit, and ultimately lifeless. Light is necessary just as Darkness is, but we must not strive to remain always in the light. For those of us in the academy who wish to reclaim the epistemic

wilderness as freedom, a withdrawal from the Day may be necessary for a time; therefore, I call for a Return to the Night.

Ko te Titi o te Rua: Beyond the Event Horizon²⁸⁴

CHORUS: Why do you cry out thus, unless at some vision of horror?

CASSANDRA: The house reeks of death and dripping blood.

CHORUS: How so? 'Tis but the odour of the altar sacrifice.

CASSANDRA: The stench is like a breath from the tomb.

- Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*²⁸⁵

Amidst the collapse of the former Soviet Union, would-be oracle Francis Fukuyama famously declared that capitalism and Western democracy represent the 'end of history'²⁸⁶. Fukuyama proclaims that:

The triumph of the West, of the Western idea, is evident..in the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism...But this phenomenon extends beyond high politics and it can be seen also in the ineluctable spread of consumerist Western culture in such diverse contexts as the peasants' markets...throughout China, ... Japanese department stores, and the rock music enjoyed alike in Prague, Rangoon, and Tehran.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁴ Jessica Maclean. "Ko te Titi o te Rua: Beyond the Event Horizon". *Tupuranga* (2020). *Tupuranga* is a new journal for Indigenous writing, to whom I am grateful for first publishing this piece.

²⁸⁵ Adams, Richard Adams, *Watership Down*. London: Rex Collings (1972), 15.

²⁸⁶ Francis Fukuyama, "The end of history?" *The national interest* 16 (1989): 3-18.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 3.

Fukuyama goes on to suggest that we have reached “the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalisation of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government”.²⁸⁸ The arrogance of this proclamation is both breath-taking and completely unsurprising; it is typical of the overweening pride of Enlightenment thinking that (justified by Science and Reason) placed European Man at the top of the great chain of being. In short, Fukuyama agrees that the telos of the colonial project is complete subjugation of all Others. As laughable as it seems, he believes this was achieved in the late 1980s.

As it turns out, History still has a trick or two up Her sleeve. The current global pandemic has made painfully obvious the deficiencies of Western capitalism and ‘liberal democracy.’

One only has to look at Britain and the United States to catch a glimpse of what lies in our future, should we fail to radically transform our national consciousness. Of course, Fukuyama has an Answer to this too, his own reading of the entrails. The collapse of ‘liberal’ Western civilisation is due not to the consequences of its ideological and practical failures such as rampant inequality and the pending climate apocalypse; it is, apparently, because of identity politics and the assertion of rights based on particular identity characteristics.²⁸⁹ So much for failed prophets.

/ a kukupa alights on my head

oi kukupa

don’t you know that’s tapu?? //

²⁸⁸ Ibid. 4.

²⁸⁹ Francis Fukuyama, *Identity: Contemporary identity politics and the struggle for recognition*. Profile books, 2018, 3.

behold ye
I saw a fist-sized cloud
gather itself on the horizon
emerging from it
a bearded star

The end of history may be nigh, but not in the sense Fukuyama intends. And as for prophets?
We should look a little closer to home:

Tiwha tiwha te pō,
Ko te Pakerewha,
Ko Arikirangi tēnei rā te haere nei.
*“Dark, dark is the night,
There is the Pakerewha
There is Arikirangi to come.”*

Te Toiroa, Ngāti Maru elder, 1766.²⁹⁰

These words, spoken through Te Toiroa, foretold two things: the coming of the Pākehā to these shores; and the prophet Te Kooti Arikirangi. Splayed in the form of a lizard, Te Toiroa conveyed messages of life and death. Here the night is not merely present, but conspicuous in its presence. The night is a thing that must be touched, tasted, smelt and heard; eyes serve

²⁹⁰ Judith Binney, *Redemption Songs: A Life of Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki*. Bridget Williams Books, 2012, 11.

no purpose in the absence of light. How was Te Toiroa able to delineate this dark night's contours such that knowledge of the future could be made out? What voices spoke to and through him?

As our recent ancestors were on the brink of apocalypse, so too are we. Climate change, social collapse, and human suffering have proven conclusively that the end of the end of history is here. We exist in a nexus of possible futures, and there is evidence from the quantum realm to suggest that conscious choice will be the deciding factor.

All possibilities exist in a quantum superposition of states, and can only be described in probabilistic terms; we can only say to what degree something *might* happen, not what *will* happen. What is it that determines which possible state becomes the 'real', observed state?

Schrödinger's Cat is a thought experiment that demonstrates the role observation plays in collapsing the wave function: until we *see*, until we *know*, what has happened to the cat in the box, it exists in two states; it is alive and dead. More recent work has suggested that different observers obtain conflicting measurements relating to the properties of entangled photons²⁹¹. To continue Erwin Schrödinger's analogy (and greatly simplify the findings), one observer found the cat to be alive while the other found it dead. The implications of this are profound: at its most fundamental level, the physical universe may present itself differently

²⁹¹ Bong Kok-Wei, Aníbal Utreras-Alarcón, Farzad Ghafari, Yeong-Cherng Liang, Nora Tischler, Eric G. Cavalcanti, Geoff J. Pryde, and Howard M. Wiseman. "A strong no-go theorem on the Wigner's friend paradox." *Nature Physics* 16, no. 12 (2020): 1199-1205.

and in incompatible ways to different observers. Do we merely find what we seek, or do we actively create it?

here is Ngāpakitu!

here is Tauaira!

here is Ngaru Pae-Whenua

light too

moves in waves

There may, however, be a simpler way to collapse the waveform. The laws of the universe are such that time emerges in tandem with space, forming the dimensions of physical experience. This suggests that time is a function of the physical realm we inhabit. Prophecy and foresight are therefore simply a matter of consciousness transcending space-time to the realms of wairua and the domains of atua. But what elevates conjecture from mere and idle speculation to the insights Toiroa gleaned?

not piercing the veil

but allowing *it*

to pierce *you*

and oh! pierced i am

gripped in the pincers

of past and future

why must the present labour,

giving birth

to itself?

/ pīwakawaka dancing furiously

on the window-sill

will you come inside? //

As our recent ancestors were on the brink of apocalypse, so too are we. Climate change, social collapse, and human suffering have proven conclusively that the end of the end of history is here. We exist in a nexus of possible futures, but in the macro world of hard determinism, only one will come to pass. A great and unbreakable causal chain links one past to one future, and free will is a delusion. If we can but understand the original conditions of things, our knowledge of the laws of the universe will allow us to predict with certainty all things that will come to pass.

/ pīwakawaka dancing furiously

on the window-sill

you will come inside //

Scientific and rational thought then, with its roots in Enlightenment thinking, can be conceived of in terms of light, and further; celestial light. Cold and impersonal, it arises in the void from the conversion of raw matter into energy, and though its light may reach us, it has no warmth nor sound for us.

There exist other forms of light, much closer to home. Who has not spent hours, entranced, as a fire creates heat and light for sustenance and pleasure? But this too is just a star writ small, consuming and destroying that which it feeds upon, however delightful its countenance. And because it is inconstant, its glimmering light can deceive; grins flicker into grimaces, while laughter writhes into something altogether more sinister.

If we must conceive of knowledge as light at all, consider the moon. She is content to absorb and reflect the light around her, never ceasing to exist whether she is illuminated or not. But why might she perpetually keep one side of her face from us? It is not modesty that compels her to contemplate the vast and cold reaches of space from the one side, while the other waxes and wanes as she basks, to varying degrees, in light. One of Rona's most important tasks give rise to her full name – Rona Whakamautai, Controller of the Tides, daughter of Tangaroa; she embodies the rhythms of sea, sky, and women. Remember too, all the blind Māori goddesses who assisted Tāne and Māui as they sought various types of knowledge on behalf of humankind. Mahuika, Murirangawhenua, and Whaitiri all provided the necessary instructions for the acquisition of these mātauranga. For gods and demi-gods, some knowledge comes from light, and some from its absence.

For mere mortals, better the clean and ephemeral glimmers that Hīnātore provides. Born of Wainui and Tangotango, she is sister to the Sun, Moon, and Stars, that celestial family ever dwelling in a state of amity. She came to inhabit the glow-worm, certain phosphorescent minerals, and the pale blue fires that sometimes limn the shore. Hīnātore may briefly illuminate some concept or thing but she does not tarry long. Does she ever feel lonely, gazing up at her kin?

before there was fire

Hina took pity on the world:

e Papa

I'll not leave you alone in the dark

Understanding often comes in the form of glimpses of insight, rather than the full glare of reason; paradoxically, too much light is blinding, and *too* much light is deadly. Why else do we go mad without sleep? Dionysus and Pan understood: sometimes, one must lay down the burdens of thought and civilisation, and resume our animal (or at least, more natural) existence for a time, to dance, to throw oneself about, to fuck, to *feel*.

/ matuku booming in the marsh

whēkau and piopio

laughing in the dark //

The 'Western idea' is a sun that has burned brightly and quickly. Only centuries old, it has consumed the raw matter of ancient lores and other ill-gotten gains, and begun to collapse in on itself. But what is the weight of this dying star? Will it go nova, leaving trace elements of itself behind, to return to the stellar nurseries from which new stars, new ideas, and new worlds might be born? Or will the West's mass be sufficient to initiate the series of actions and reactions that result in the formation of a black hole, consuming all the world within its reach? At the event horizon, there is a complete breakdown of universal laws; we cannot predict what an observer might experience there.

Fukuyama's idea of the West therefore represents an ontological black hole in which other ways of Being are annihilated; how else to describe the hubris and violence of a system of thought that dares declare *nonexistent* that which it cannot measure or understand? It is only capable of producing light at the expense of matter, before collapsing under the weight of its own certainty to form a zone of irreality in which the laws of nature break down.

What can exist there? Chaos and
 primordiality primordiality chaos and
 there? exist can what down, what break which the laws of nature break
 in irreality to form a zone of irreality in collapsing under the weight of its own certainty to form a zone of irreality in
 before, before which little can escape. It is only capable of producing light at the expense of matter, before
 from the west therefore represents an ontological black hole, forming from an epistemic horizon from

Fukuyama's Western idea therefore represents an ontological black hole in which other ways of Being are annihilated; how else to describe the hubris of a system of thought that dares declare *non-existent* that which it cannot measure or understand? But even the inexorable pull of a black hole allows some matter to escape, as it transcends the laws of the universe and escapes elsewhere. This universe has a hard limit on the speed of light; anything that exceeds it of necessity must leave this space-time behind. Does it enter some other universe, appearing there as ghosts and apparitions? Or does it *create* some new universe, providing the impetus for its own cycles of creation, a new Te Kore, a new Te Pō, a new Te Ao Marama?

ah seafoam spray

dancing at the edge of infinity

The end of the Enlightenment is upon us, but the Night need not remain a terrain of fear and uncertainty. For Māori, the Night is not mere absence, but presence of a different kind. If the Night is that which cannot be known or seen, stuffed full of potential, might it not represent the superposition of all outcomes, from which any might be produced? I can imagine nothing more dreary and antithetical to life than absolute certainty, stasis, and decline. If entropy is a fundamental property of the universe, then how can things evolve and spring into life?

Te Po-nui (the great night)

Te Po-roa (the long night)

Te Po-uriuri (the deep night)

Te Po-kerekere (the intense night)

Te Po-tiwhatiwha (the dark night)

Te Po-te-kitea (the night in which nothing is seen)

Te Po-tangotango (the intensely dark night)

Te Po-whawha (the night of feeling)

Te Po-namunamu-ki-taiao (the night of seeking the passage to the world)

Te Po-tahuri-atu (the night of restless turning)

Te Po-tahuri-mai-ki-taiao (the night of turning towards the revealed world).²⁹²

²⁹² Amadonna Jakeman, „Hei Poai Pakeha koutou i muri nei. You Shall Be Pakeha Boys. The Impact of Te Tangi O Kawiti on Ngati Hine Resistance to the Crown in the Treaty Claims, Mandate and Settlement Processes”. PhD diss., Auckland University of Technology, 2019, 33.

For Māori, the Night is revealed as growing in spatial and temporal extent. In the complete absence of light are feeling and intensity, which lead to seeking and yearning. Finally, the Night turns towards the world as it is revealed.

i dont pretend that

i *know* anything about cosmogony

but,

knowing is surely

the least of our faculties

is it better to see

or to grasp?

It is a profound act of ignorance and arrogance to conflate the end of an age with the end of the world itself. The remains of many formerly great empires litter the sands and ocean beds and hills and jungles and extant languages and cultures, if we but knew where to look. Every age has its Ozymandias, some tyrant or saviour whom time will reduce to the anonymity of prehistory. Darwin's curse is that we are unable to view ourselves in the proper context: that of an empire which will rise and fall as all empires rise and fall. Not for us the pinnacle of evolution, not for us the apogee of civilisation. What of our monuments will still stand millennia hence? Will they be physical or psychic, material or those encoded in names and customs and songs? Lilith knows, and Thor, and Frith. Or will we be known by our middens, our scarring of the land, our abject self-excision from the world?

/ i slit my throat
with occam's razor
rococo flourishes spurt, irrelevantly,
through clenched fingers //

We leave an us-shaped hole in the universe and fill it with trash, hoping to negate the void.
What future will we choose? What principles will guide us into those futures?

hold fast to the whirlwind path
fix your vision to the heavens
make no attempt to quell the maelstrom
call up and ride the shoreward wave

But if energy and matter are equivalent, why do we grieve the transition? Death is nothing more or less than energy leaving matter behind at the crest of a wave; one to return, in the most literal sense possible, to the realm of Papatūānuku, one to return to...where?

/ kūaka cries a lament
for her unborn children
but who has seen the nest of one? //

Where does a whole age of the world go when it dies? Does it too stride west beyond the horizon, leaving scant trace behind as Night succeeds it? Who will mourn its passing?

/ who to attend the tūpapaku

who to conduct the rites

who to dig the grave

prepare the obsidian flakes

procure the mussel shells

hei whakahae au

every dog must have its day

even such a wretched one as this //

It is worth remembering that Māori days begin at night; there are no days of the week, there are nights of the moon. Puanga and Matariki may rise numerous times before the correct moon phase is entered into, and only then does the new year begin. There is regional diversity in these traditions because different hapū occupied different land and seascapes, offering different vantage points to particular stars. Thus the new year is not as fixed as the Gregorian calendar would have us believe (and even then, there is slippage; how many have a birthday only every four years?). It appears that if laws of nature exist, they can only be local. And if Time itself is slippery, at times grinding to a halt, while elsewhere rushing forth into the future from the past, perhaps the end of an age will not be as we think.

/ pepetuna

ascends the toetoe

and transforms //

If we cannot *know* the future, we must understand uncertainty as hope, as wiggle room for the universe, as space for things beyond our understanding and imagination, as possibility and potential. What elements might form as consciousness-caused collapse ripples out, accreting reality to itself, gaining in form and extent? After all, from the conception the increase, from the increase the thought, and so on, until we turn towards the revealed world: *goodbye, Spring of the World of Light; this one is going home and will not return this way again.*²⁹³

i stand at this juncture
knowing my ancestors were
no strangers
to Brave New Worlds

²⁹³ Webber, M., & O'Connor, K. (2019). A Fire in the Belly of Hineāmaru: Using Whakapapa as a Pedagogical Tool in Education. *Genealogy*, 3(3), 41.

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