

JOHN O'LEARY

CREATING A LANDSCAPE OF
SENTIMENT – GEORGE GREY AND
THE LEGEND OF HINEMOA

In July 1855 the *Dublin University Review* ("a literary and political journal") devoted 19 of its pages to a long article on "Polynesia". The article had been occasioned by the publication in London, a few weeks before, of George Grey's *Polynesian Mythology*, which, among educated circles at least, was causing a stir.

The *Review's* article was thorough. After dealing learnedly with the geology of the islands and atolls of the Pacific, it sketched the character of the Polynesian race that inhabited them, and then moved onto a consideration of Grey's book, which the *Review* stated it had read "with unabated interest from beginning to end". Several Maori legends were paraphrased for the *Review's* readers; in particular, a highly romantic story was retold in detail, in which a Maori maiden of high rank defied the wishes of her tribe and swam across a lake at night to join her lover on an island.

At the end of the story, the *Review* gave its enthusiastic verdict.

Who can read this simple tale without feeling how "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin?" The rude Maori with his war-club, and his stone-axe, his tattooed skin, and his matted cloak, full of revenge on

his enemies, reckless of life, fierce and savage even to cannibalism, slaying, killing, and eating a man, on slight provocation, or perhaps upon none at all, has yet a soul and a heart open to all the beauties of nature, and accessible to all the soft influences of love. Poetry and song are his delight – not only the war-chant, but the love-song; and his love is not solely the mere animal impulse, but as evinced by the above poem, full of sentiment, delicacy and grace, natural and artless, but refined and modest, and blending easily with music and flowers, cherished by soft sunsets and moonlit evenings of the summer, the natural efflorescence of the youthful soul among the Maoris as among ourselves. Which of us men would not have loved Hine-Moa, and felt for Tutanekei as for a friend and a brother? (*Dublin University Review*, 37)

Hinemoa had arrived, and she was a hit. In the next year, as Grey's book was reviewed in the learned journals of Europe, her story was told and retold with enthusiasm. In its monthly review of "English Literature", for example, an unidentified Leipzig periodical extolled *Polynesian Mythology*, focussing especially on the Hinemoa story, which it claimed was proof of "the way gentleness and grace can find their place even in the literature of such a savage people as the Maori" ("Englische Literatur", 158). In Göttingen, a little later, a scholarly reviewer described the Hinemoa story as "even more beautiful in its approach and details than the Greek tale of Hero and Leander" (*Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, 1638) and set it carefully apart from the other myths and legends in Grey's book, which it found primitive and degenerate.

"Sentiment", "delicacy", "gentleness", "grace" – such terms had not been used of Maori before. Indeed, thanks to incidents such as the killing of Marion du Fresne in 1772 and the massacre of the crew and passengers of the *Boyd* in 1809 (both of which incidents were widely reported in Europe), the usual images of Maori, at least in the first three decades of the 19th century, had been those of aggression, cruelty and – most disturbingly – cannibalism. So ferocious had Maori been deemed, in fact, that sailors at this time had sometimes refused to enter New Zealand harbours, for fear of what might happen to them.¹ New Zealand, for all its picturesqueness, was at least in part a landscape of horror – a region peopled by terrible beings who were frequently described as demonic, even Satanic.²

After the arrival of missionaries in the 1820's, images of Maori softened somewhat, and (at least among more liberal observers) it was admitted that Maori were capable of being civilized.³ Tender and delicate feelings, however, were not thought to reside in Maori breasts, for as savages Maori were considered incapable of refined sentiments. And then, in 1855, Grey had published *Polynesian Mythology*, and the world had read the legend of Hinemoa, and been astonished. Maori, it appeared, for all their savagery, were capable of tender and delicate feelings. New Zealand, it seemed, unexpectedly, might be a landscape not just of horror, or worthy missionary endeavour, but of sentiment – in particular, of romantic love.

Given this change in perception, it is interesting, I think, to look at how the Hinemoa legend changed as it moved from its initial written form in notes through manuscript to the English-language version printed in *Polynesian Mythology*. It is a strange, intriguing journey – one that tells us, I believe, a great deal about the mid-Victorian mind and its search for a landscape of sentiment.

Hinemoa (I) – the Mokoia island notes

The Hinemoa legend, as a subject of European writing, first appeared on Boxing Day 1849. Grey, who was travelling from Auckland to Taranaki, had stopped in the Rotorua region (then comparatively unknown to Europeans) to meet local chiefs, hear grievances and check on the progress of Christianization which, with interruptions, had been underway in the region since 1835.⁴ After spending Christmas Day with the Chapman missionary family at Te Ngae, on the eastern side of the lake, Grey and his party crossed over on December 26 to Mokoia island, a picturesque spot that had been the scene both of terrible massacre and early missionary effort. Houses and cultivations were inspected; in particular, the Waiariki hot springs were visited (Rotorua's hot springs were a source of great fascination for European travellers, and Grey had visited several in the preceding days). The governor and his party were making preparations to return to the mainland when a contrary wind sprang up, forcing a delay. George Cooper, who was Grey's private secretary and who wrote an account of Grey's journey, took up the story in his bi-lingual *Journal* (English text):

As it was, therefore, clear that we should not be able to leave Mokoia for some time, the Governor availed himself of the opportunity of obtaining on the spot the story above alluded to, which is called the legend of Hine Moa and Tutanekei, and which is here subjoined verbatim, as taken down from the dictation of an inhabitant of the island by his Excellency, as he sat upon a rock by the margin of the very Waiariki which was, many years ago, the scene of the story.

Having got into a shady place under the branches of a fine pohutukawa tree, the narrator thus began... (Cooper, 190)

The interesting thing about this account is how pretty it is, and how inaccurate. Pretty, in the sense that Cooper carefully sets up the bucolic scene, of the industrious, curious governor, and of his eager native informant who, beneath the Virgilian shade of a spreading pohutukawa, is about to tell a charming tale, a tale, moreover, which tells of an act of love and bravery which took place in that very picturesque spot. Inaccurate, because an examination of the notes that Grey took down that day reveals that the story "here subjoined verbatim" is by no means the original story Grey heard – as most scholars have assumed – but is in fact a carefully remoulded *version* of the

original notes, one that was consciously designed, I believe, for consumption by a Victorian audience.⁵

Grey's original Mokoia island notes – the ones he *really* jotted down that Boxing Day in 1849 – are to be found in a folio in the Grey Collection in the Auckland Public Library.⁶ Written at speed in a swift, almost telegraphic style (Grey was taking down dictation, after all), the notes give a potted version of the Hinemoa legend in which the basic elements of the story – the first meeting of the lovers, Tutanekai's playing of a musical instrument, Hinemoa's night swim, and so on – are sketched in briefly.

There is also, however, a great deal of anomalous, or strange matter. Tutanekai's illegitimacy, for one thing, is carefully underlined; in addition, there is a long, obscure passage at the beginning of the notes in which Tutanekai's stepfather and half-brothers are described as singing special karakia (incantations) and as offering Tutanekai a basket of cooked and uncooked food. The meaning of this passage is unclear; according to one expert, the basket of cooked and uncooked food may be a kind of ritual insult intended to undermine Tutanekai.⁷

Whatever its meaning, the passage emphasizes the depth of animosity existing between Tutanekai and his family (in part because Tutanekai's brothers had desired Hinemoa for themselves). It also reminds us that for Maori (specifically, Te Arawa) Tutanekai, and indeed Hinemoa, were and are real people – ancestors, in fact – with complex personal and family histories which extend long before and long after their famous love affair. This is a truth that most European readers, I believe, have lost sight of, in part because Grey was so successful in isolating Hinemoa and Tutanekai from their tribal, Maori context. The result, ultimately, has been that the two lovers have become, for Europeans, remote, fairytale characters – the equivalents of Guinevere and Lancelot, or rather (since the legend involves a heroic swim across a body of water) Hero and Leander.

Grey's Mokoia island notes differ from the familiar version of the Hinemoa legend we know in other ways, too. In the original notes, for instance, it is the sound of Tiki's torino (trumpet), not Tutanekai's koauau (flute), that Hinemoa hears wafting across the lake (Tiki, for readers not familiar with the Hinemoa legend, was a close friend of Tutanekai). Perhaps more significantly, it is Hinemoa, rather than Tutanekai, who is described as having initiated the relationship – she is said, literally, to have “touched” him, a word that, according to one source, is a euphemism for seduction.⁸ This suggestion of sexual confidence in Hinemoa is intriguing, for it suggests that the original Hinemoa of Maori oral tradition may not have been the modest, virtuous, relatively passive maiden we are familiar with today.

Hinemoa (II) – Grey's new version

Grey was clearly struck by the legend he had jotted down on Mokoia island. At the same time, though, he would have seen that it needed considerable expansion

and refinement before it could be presented to the Victorian reading public. Accordingly, sometime in 1850, probably after he had returned to Auckland, he seems to have sat down and written out a much fuller, longer version of the Hinemoa legend (again in Maori).⁹ It is this version, with one or two minor changes, that is “here subjoined verbatim” in Cooper's *Journal*, and which subsequently appeared in Grey's collection of Maori songs *Ko Nga Moteatea, Me Nga Hakirara o Nga Maori* (1853) (it also appeared in Grey's 1854 collection of Maori myths and legends, *Nga Mahinga a Nga Tupuna Maori*, with two long extra additions). As such, I believe, Grey's new version of the story marks a decisive step in the progress of the Hinemoa legend.

To create his new version of the Hinemoa legend, Grey appears to have worked in part from his own Mokoia island notes – whole phrases were incorporated unchanged into the new version, for example, and one or two anomalies, such as an indication of direction given by Grey's anonymous informant and translated into English, reappear.¹⁰ At the same time Grey was also, it seems, using notes on the Hinemoa legend provided by a third party, or notes he had made while conversing with a third party. We know this because the new version of the Hinemoa legend contains elements, such as traditional Maori rhetorical figures and Te Arawa tribal detail, that Grey, as a European, is unlikely to have known.¹¹ In addition, Grey appears on occasion to be using Maori words and phrases whose meaning he is unsure of, and which he carefully glosses in English (examples include “te kare a roto”, glossed as “the beloved or desired of my heart”, and “tauwharewharenga kowhatu”, glossed as “overhanging rocks”) (Grey 1850, 237/8). The identity of the third party who provided Grey with this material is not hard to guess: it was almost certainly Wiremu Maihi Te Rangikaheke, a Maori chief from the Rotorua region who was a friend of Grey's and who was working for him as a writer at this time.¹²

Important though his contribution undoubtedly was, Te Rangikaheke does not seem to have been directly involved in producing Grey's new version of the Hinemoa legend (he did, however, annotate it afterwards, presumably at Grey's request).¹³ Grey's new version, in fact, is a carefully Europeanized *re-working* of the story. This is seen, for example, in the tightly structured, flowing storyline Grey establishes, one which uses Maori elements (formulaic phrases, traditional imagery and lines of waiata, for instance), but which incorporates these into an essentially European-style narrative which focuses closely on the lovers' relationship and on little else. The contrast with the Mokoia island notes is rather marked; more generally, indeed, such a narrative style seems atypical of genuine Maori writing from the period. When Te Rangikaheke, for example, wrote his own account of the Hinemoa legend sometime after Grey published *Nga Moteatea*, he focussed on genealogical and geographical detail rather than the story line as such.¹⁴ Clearly, for Te Rangikaheke, tightly structured narrative in the Western manner was not a paramount concern, and indeed according to one expert in the field, most real Maori writing at this time generally lacks such a narrative style.¹⁵

If the narrative style of Grey's new version of the Hinemoa legend is essentially European, so too, I believe, is the handling of much of the content. Themes of interest

to a Victorian audience, for example, such as the romantic and the erotic, have been considerably expanded – great attention, for instance, is paid to the lovers' initial courtship, to their amorous flirtation, and to the scene in the hot pool where Tutanekai gropes after the naked, wet Hinemoa. In contrast, other themes, such as the familial and the ritual, have been toned down or entirely excised – Tutanekai's illegitimacy is alluded to only briefly, for instance, while no mention is made of the special incantations sung by Tutanekai's stepfather and half-brothers, or of the basket of cooked and uncooked food offered to him by them. Clearly Grey, as he scanned his Mokoia island notes, judged that such material would be of little interest to his Victorian audience, and might in fact (in the case of the references to Tutanekai's illegitimacy) be offensive to it.

Certain narrative details, moreover, have been altered in Grey's new version. It is Tutanekai's music that Hinemoa now hears wafting across Lake Rotorua, for example, not Tiki's. More significantly, it is Tutanekai, not Hinemoa, who begins the liaison (*he* is now said to have "touched" *her*) (Grey 1850, 229/4). Tutanekai, in other words, has been brought into the foreground of the action and has been made the active initiator of the relationship; Hinemoa, for her part, has become the passive recipient of his advances. It is a case, I think, of European (specifically Victorian) cultural norms exerting a decisive influence on the legend.

As an example of intercultural adaptation, Grey's new version is intriguing. On the one hand, it retells an authentic Maori legend, preserving many original features. On the other hand, it introduces an essentially European-style narrative, expands certain themes, tones down or omits others, and alters certain narrative details, in order to render the story acceptable, I believe, to a Victorian audience (Alpers' description of it as "a piece of tourist trash" seems to me, however, unduly harsh).¹⁶ Since the story was still in Maori at this point, and therefore unavailable to any but a few missionaries and scholars, this recasting of the legend is significant, suggesting as it does that Grey (and maybe Te Rangikaheke) wanted to present the world with a carefully remoulded, romanticized version of the Hinemoa story that would, nevertheless, be accepted as "genuine". In this respect, the treatment of the Hinemoa legend resembles the treatment received by many of the myths and legends in *Nga Mahinga a Nga Tupuna Maori* (the source text for *Polynesian Mythology*), where material from a variety of Maori sources is collated and remoulded for consumption by a Victorian audience.¹⁷

Hinemoa (III) – the English translation

Altered as the Hinemoa legend now was, one obstacle remained before it could gain worldwide acceptance – the fact that it was still in Maori. It had to be translated into English, and accordingly in Cooper's *Journal* an English-language version appears beside the Maori text.¹⁸ Who did this translation is unclear – possibly it was

Cooper, possibly it was the government official and translator C.O.B Davis, possibly it was Grey himself. Certainly Grey directs us to believe that he was as the translator when it came to the almost identical version published four years later in *Polynesian Mythology*.

What are the characteristics of this English translation? At the gross level, no huge changes have been made, presumably because, given the Europeanization of the source text (Grey's new version), none needed to be. What alterations there are, occur at the more detailed level of words and phrases. Sometimes, for example, sexually explicit terms are replaced by euphemisms (Tutanekai's mother Rangiuuru, for example, is described in the English text as having "run away" with her lover Tuwharetoa, whereas in the Maori version she is more straightforwardly described as having slept with him adulterously).

More common, however, is the expansion of the Maori text in the direction of the sentimental and the romantic. In the English translation, for instance, the sound of Tutanekai's and Tiki's music is "wafted by the gentle land breeze across the lake" (Cooper, 194); in the Maori version it is simply "carried by the shore wind to Owkata". During her swim, to take another example, Hinemoa is guided by the "soft measures from the instrument of Tutanekai" (Cooper, 200) according to the English translation; in the Maori text she is guided simply by the rangi (tune) of Tutanekai's flute.

"Gentle land breeze", "soft measures" – what we are seeing is a further sentimentalisation of the Hinemoa legend, the creation, in fact, of a landscape of sentiment. (It is interesting to note in this connection that a contemporary Wellington artist, Charles Decimus Barraud, produced an illustrated version of the Hinemoa legend at this time, one which gives this new emotional landscape charming pictorial form. In his illustrations, which are to be found in a folio in the British Museum, Lake Rotorua and its environs are all verdant vegetation and misty distances; for their part, the Maori who inhabit this inviting landscape are pensive and gentle, prey not to the fierce urges of war and cannibalism but to the tender passion of love.¹⁹ Barraud's illustrations were unfortunately never published, but they are the first in a long tradition of pictorial representations of the Hinemoa legend by artists such as Gottfried Lindauer, in which Hinemoa and her people are depicted as gentle, dreaming figures in a soft, lush landscape.²⁰)

The sentimentalisation at work in the English translation is compounded, I believe, by its pervasive archaicism, by which I mean its tendency to use language that is slightly or very old-fashioned. Hinemoa, for example, is a "maiden of rare beauty"; she "ever says to herself" and so on. This kind of phraseology recalls medieval romance, or rather, 19th century versions of medieval romance such as "The Lady of the Lake", "La Belle Dame sans Merci" and *Ivanhoe*. Other literary influences at work are Biblical – at several points in the English translation sentences appear that echo the rhythms and vocabulary of the King James version, for example at the end of the climactic scene in the hot pool, when Tutanekai throws a cloak (symbolic, for Maori, of protection and acceptance) over Hinemoa:

And he threw garments over her, and took her; and they proceeded to his house, and reposed there; and thenceforth, according to the ancient laws of the Maories, they were man and wife. (Cooper, 204)

The effect of this archaization, both "medieval" and Biblical, is to move the Hinemoa legend into a remote, exalted, somewhat unreal past, similar to that of medieval romance or classical mythology. Such a past, as Victorian writers well knew, was an ideal landscape for emotions such as romantic love, for which the contemporary industrial civilization of Victorian England seemed to have little room. It is hardly surprising that we find it being evoked here.

Conclusion

The legend of Hinemoa, as retold by Grey, was a huge success, answering as it did so many yearnings – for the exotic, for the primitive, for the romantic – which the mid-19th century European soul harboured in its complex, contradictory depths. The legend's impacts were many and profound – at the most practical, economic level it helped establish Lake Rotorua as a tourist destination, because tourists who visited the region came at least in part to see the landscape of the legend ("Hinemoa's pool" on Mokoia island was a much visited spot).²¹ At a less tangible but equally important level it helped create, I believe, a new landscape of sentiment – a new way of seeing Maori, and a new way of seeing New Zealand.

Notes

- 1 See Thomson, vol. 1, pp. 241-2 for an account of the terror inspired in European seamen by Maori during this period.
- 2 William Yate, for example, frequently described pagan Maori as demonic.
- 3 European observers who held this view included the Rev. Richard Taylor and George Grey.
- 4 For a full account of Grey's visit to the Rotorua region, see Stafford, pp. 324-30.
- 5 Simmons, for example, seems to believe that the story "here subjoined verbatim" represents Grey's original Mokoia island notes. See Simmons pp.180-1, 186.
- 6 In GNZMMSS 70, to be exact.
- 7 I am indebted for this opinion to Charles Royal of Te Wananga o Raukawa, Otaki. It is not possible to say exactly what is meant by the references to incantations and cooked and uncooked food as the passage is very obscure.
- 8 According to Te Rangikaheke, "te pa" (touching) means "he moe, he puremu" (sleeping with, having an affair with). Te Rangikaheke's explanation is to be found in his fascinating but unpublished commentary on Grey's *Nga Motetea*, in GNZMMSS 118 in the Grey Collection in the Auckland Public Library.

- 9 Grey's new version of the Hinemoa legend is to be found in the Grey Collection of the Auckland Public Library, in GNZMMSS 60.
- 10 See page 677 of GNZMMSS 70, where a directional phrase "ki reira" is translated into English "pointing to it". This phrase reoccurs on page 225 of GNZMMSS 60.
- 11 The name of Hinemoa's hapu (sub-tribe), for example, is supplied in Grey's new version.
- 12 For an excellent account of Te Rangikaheke's writing work for Grey, see Curnow.
- 13 Te Rangikaheke's annotations of Grey's new version of the Hinemoa legend focus mainly on geographical and genealogical detail. In particular, he is careful to underline Hinemoa's aristocratic background, which, it seems, Grey had not sufficiently emphasized in the Maori chief's opinion.
- 14 Te Rangikaheke's retelling of the Hinemoa legend is to be found in GNZMMSS 118.
- 15 See Jackson in Kawharu, p.40, for a discussion of the characteristics of genuine Maori writing of this period. According to Jackson, Maori writing at this time shows little European influence, notably in its lack of exact chronological dating, in its non-puritanical attitudes towards sex, and in its lack of European-style narrative forms.
- 16 See Alpers, p. xvi.
- 17 For fuller considerations of Grey's handling of his Maori material in *Nga Mahinga*, see Biggs, Simmons.
- 18 Cooper's *Journal* was also serialized in several newspapers at this time.
- 19 See "The Legend of Hinemoa" by Charles Decimus Barraud. The illustrations, which date from around 1851, are to be found in the British Museum, Add. MS 19954, Folio 84/5 (123-128).
- 20 See for example Lindauer's *Hinemoa* of 1907.
21. One European tourist who visited Mokoia island and saw "Hinemoa's pool" was the historian and essayist J.A. Froude. See *Oceana*, pp. 234-256.

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TONYA BLOWERS

TO THE IS-LAND: SELF AND PLACE IN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

That an individual's story might represent or mirror the nation's is a phenomenon that novelists and memoirists have been elaborating for some time. The central character of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Saleem Sinai, shares his birthday, August 15, 1947, with 'the very instant' that India gained independence: their fates are aligned and Saleem's individual story is allegorical of the nation's. Saleem laments, 'I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country' (Rushdie 1982, 3).

What is the relationship between an individual's story and a nation's story: to what extent are narratives of self and place inextricably linked? Using New Zealand writer Janet Frame's three volumes of autobiography as case study, I here trace examples of a sense of self that might be related to, or put in an illuminating juxtaposition with, the historically problematic sense of national identity of New Zealand. Indeed, the popularity of Frame's autobiographies in her own country, their positive international reception and Jane Campion's award-winning film interpretation can, to a degree, be put down to the collusion of Frame's 'puzzling' out of her identity with New Zealand's struggle for a national identity.¹ This, in turn, can be related to the more general phenomenon of the postcolonial and/or settler's ability and difficulty in carving out an 'independent' identity.