Ko Rūaumoko e ngunguru nei ‘Rūaumoko [the earthquake god] rumbles’ is a line from a Ngāti Porou haka ‘war dance’. The rumbling of Rūaumoko is a metaphor for an uri ‘descendant’ of Ngāti Porou challenging accepted kōrero ‘discourse’ that shapes our interpretation of tribal narratives and traditional arts. At the heart of my wero ‘challenge’ is the uncritical acceptance of early translations of a Māori text that led to a number of misinterpretations by Roger Neich. I undertake detailed critical textual analysis to demonstrate how crucial such analysis is for ethno-aesthetic insight into what Neich (2001: 123) has called “traditional Māori concepts of art”.1

A comparative textual method is employed to critique S. Percy Smith’s and Elsdon Best’s translations of the Mataora narrative,2 from the Hawkes Bay and Wairarapa tribal areas, about the origin of tattoo, weaving and carving to demonstrate the necessity of revisiting Māori texts in order to uncover the narrative’s huna ‘hidden’ meaning. Smith published a two-volume work called The Lore of the Whare Wananga in 1913 and 1915 based on the transcripts of Te Matorohanga and Nepia Pohuhu recorded by Hoani Te Whatahoro Jury in the 1860s (Simmons 2007). The Mataora narrative appears in volume one of The Lore of the Whare Wananga with an original Māori text and Smith’s translation. Best published his version of the Mataora narrative in Maori Religion and Mythology Part I in 1924. I have included Best’s translation in my analysis because he recorded a revised version of the Mataora narrative that appears to indicate the Te Matorohanga text as the source, despite his exclusion of some significant lines and reconfiguration of some passages (Best 1995: 226-30).

Specifically, my purpose is to correct Neich’s assumption that hōpara makaurangi is a term for figurative painting and to demonstrate that painting existed beyond the world of humans. In so doing, my further aim is to emphasise the need to critically analyse original texts in te reo Māori ‘the Māori language’ and their translations to determine their accuracy since misinterpretation can lead to the perpetuation of flawed knowledge. For example, Neich, in Painted Histories, his important and original publication on Māori figurative painting, contends that:

this myth [the Mataora narrative] seems to provide some explanation for other decorative designs related to painting. It is also valuable for introducing the term
'hopara-makaurangi’ for figurative painting on houses, and ‘kowaiwai’, which seems to be an archaic form for the term ‘kowhawhai. (Neich 1994: 20)

Comparative textual analysis not only demonstrates that Smith’s translation of the Mataora narrative is flawed on several counts, but also that Smith was misguided in equating hōpara-makaurangi with the act/process of painting. In my analysis, hōpara makaurangi does not mean “painting” but rather a ‘form of painting’ comprised of cursive shapes or spirals. I not only reject Smith’s translation but also Neich’s translation of hōpara-makaurangi as figurative painting.

Even though Neich’s has had recourse to other translations, these too fail to support his identification of hōpara makaurangi with figurative painting. For example, he translates the following ([Best] 1926: 242-43): “‘Kō nga whakairo o nga whare he kowaiwai, ara he hopara makaurangi tetahi whakaahua, he mea tuhi ki te horu, ki te uku ma, he ngarehu te hoa’” as “‘The decorations of the houses are painted designs, that is to say, certain forms are a hopara makaurangi, a design painted with red ochre, with white clay and with charcoal outlines’” (Neich 1994: 20). A more precise translation would be: ‘Kōwaiwai (or kōwhaiwhai, a non-figurative form of design composed of koru, kape and rauru) constitute (the) designs of (the) houses, that is, hōpara makaurangi is one form (or permutation), painted with red ochre, with white clay and delineated with charcoal.’

In another attempt at translation Neich presents the following ([Best] 1926: 243): “‘E hara i te whare whakairo, he hopara makaurangi te tarai o taua whare’” as “‘That is not the carved house, a hopara makaurangi is the decoration of the house’” (Neich 1994: 20). A more considered translation would read: ‘It is not a carved house (because) hōpara makaurangi is the process of bedecking that house’. In this instance, Neich is correct in assuming that whakairo unqualified substitutes for whakairo rakau but misses the point that ‘the house’ is also ‘a house’ when rendered in the negative. There is also nothing substantively wrong with the use of ‘decoration’ in either the first or second translation, although I would contend that the connotations of that term serve to devalue Māori art and pattern as meaningless and insignificant—as in the phrase “mere decoration”.

It is critical to emphasise that kōwaiwai, kawaiwai and kōwhaiwhai all refer to a (form or style of) design that prioritises non-figurative pattern (glossed as ‘painted scroll ornamentation’ in Williams 1971: 152). Hence, “‘he hopara makaurangi tetahi whakaahua’” in the Māori passage quoted by Neich above, clearly states that hōpara makaurangi is one of the whakaahua forms (permutations) in the non-figurative design range of kōwhaiwhai. In other words, hōpara makaurangi is a non-figurative rather than a figurative design.
TE TAUIRA TUATAHI: THE FIRST PATTERN.

In *The Lore of the Whare Wananga*, the narrator Te Matorohanga told of how it was Mataora who brought the art of *moko* ‘tattoo’ to *Te Ao-tū-roa* ‘the world of humankind, the material realm’ from *Rarohenga* ‘the world of spirits, the immaterial realm’ (Smith 1913: 67-76, 182-193).

The Mataora narrative is significant on several counts. Firstly, it places the arts of humankind within the realm of *atua* ‘deities’, that is, the realm of Whakaru–au-moko and Hine-nui-te-po. Secondly, the *tohunga tā moko* ‘tattooist’, Uetonga, is linked to the *whakapapa* ‘genealogy’ of deities through marriage to the granddaughter of Whakaru-au-moko.

Whakaru-au-moko = Hine-nui-te-po  
Hine-oi = Pu-tanga  
Manu-tonga = Ue-tonga  
Niwareka = Mataora (Smith 1913: 67, 187)

Thirdly, *tā moko* ‘tattoo’ is rendered sacred through this direct connection with deity and the supernatural.

The Mataora narrative also describes the gifting of the art of weaving in the form of a cloak called *Te Rangi-haupapa* by Uetonga to Mataora as an affirmation of his acceptance of a tattoo from the underworld to replace the painted form of the world of humans.

Te tauira tuatahi o *‘Te Rangi-haupapa” na Niwareka ano i mahi; i takoto ki a Hine-rau-wharangi, tamahine a Hinetitama. E kiia ana tenei kahu, ko Rena….

The original patterns [*sic*] of *Te Rangi-haupapa* was made by Niwareka from one belonging to Hine-rau-wharangi, a daughter of Hinetitama. It is said the garment was named Rena…. (Smith 1913: 73, 190)

Hine-nui-te-po in her original guise as Hinetitama had a daughter with her father Tane-mahuta. Hine-rau-wharangi, the daughter of this union, was credited with the creation of the original garment that provided the *tauira* ‘pattern’ for the cloak created by Niwareka. Thus, both the art of weaving and facial tattoo are offered as *koha* ‘precious gifts’ from beyond the world of ordinary human beings.

The unique nature of the art of *tā moko* is further heightened by the contrast between *tā moko*, tattooing using the skin puncturing process, and *moko*, *kawaiwai*, *hōpara-makaurangi* or *tuhi* as the act of painting and a process for delineating pattern (terms used by Uetonga) or *hōpara-makaurangi* (the term...
used by Mataora). For Uetonga, *hōpara-makaurangi* is the design found in buildings; for Mataora, it is the design used for tattoo. A further distinction between woodcarving is made in the debate between Mataora and Uetonga. While Mataora calls the painting of his tattoo *whakairo*, Uetonga associates the term with *tāniko* borders and woodcarving.

The pain associated with *moko-whakangao* is an integral part of the process as *whakangao* implies the cutting of grooves in the skin.³ The process necessitated singing of *waiata* ‘song’ to cope with the pain. Hence Mataora sings his *waiata* to Niwareka whom he has pursued to the underworld after mistreating her in the world of humankind.

Niwareka e ngaro nei, kei whea koe?
Kai whakaputa mai Niwareka, Niwareka!
Nau au i kukume iho mai ki raro nei,
Niwareka! Niwareka! e kai nei te aroha,
Niwareka! Niwareka! here pu rawa koe i au.
Niwareka! Niwareka! waiho tawa i te ao,
Niwareka! Niwareka! wehea i te po i a tawa,
Niwareka! Niwareka! whakaoti rangi e i. (Smith 1913: 71)

Mataora’s *waiata* is a lament for Niwareka who fled to the underworld. He laments her ‘loss’ *ngaro* while seeking her whereabouts. He beseeches her to appear, she who has dragged him below. He speaks of his love and his need for her support and forgiveness. The critical passages are *waiho tawa i te ao* ‘let us remain in the world (of humans)’ and *wehea i tepōi a tawa* ‘let us be separated from the world (of spirits)’ where *ao* and *pō* are contrasted as loci for beneficial existence.

On returning to Te Ao-tu-roa, Mataora continues the art of tattoo in the world of humankind. But the introduction of the process of woodcarving was accredited to Nuku-te-aio and Rua-i-te-pupuke.

*Ko nga moko ona, ko nga poniania o te ihu, me nga pihore, me nga ngu, me nga tiwhana; ka mutu mai nga moko i riro mai i a Mataora o Rarohenga mai. Na runga nei i whakatutuki nga moko, he mea whakairo ki runga te tekoteko e Nuku-te-aio raua ko Rua-i-te-pupuke, i whakaputa te whakairo ki te ao. (Smith 1913: 75)*

Neich put forward the proposition that it is possible to detect a shift in the construction of Māori narratives to encompass contemporary practice in the arts at the time the narratives were recorded. The argument has some merit.

According to the myths of origin, both carving and tattooing were not of this world, since the culture heroes either had to climb into the heaven or descend
to the underworld in order to learn them. On the contrary, painting whether on the body or on house, was essentially an art of this world and required no special initiation, except in the myth of Whiro’s search for the art of carving, where painting has a celestial origin, although clearly a second-rate substitute for the preferred carving. This mythical situation reflected the historical situation in the later half of the nineteenth century where untrained people could practise the art of figurative painting relatively free from the rules of tapu. (Neich 1994: 21)

However, Neich’s association of this shift in narrative construction with a negative evaluation of figurative painting or a shift in the prioritisation of one art form over another needs to be re-assessed. Equally Neich’s assumption that “painting, whether on the body or on the house, was essentially an art of this world” needs to be reconsidered in light of the analysis of the Mataora narrative below where it is clearly demonstrated that painting existed in the world beyond humans, that is, in Rarohenga.

A more culturally relevant interpretation would suggest that the comparative evaluation of painting in this 19th century Māori narrative explaining the origin of tattoo is not about the negative aspect of painting, or its inferiority, but is about the tapu ‘sacred’ nature of tā moko and an overtly ritualised process. In addition, the Mataora narrative acknowledges that painting has its rightful place in the art of the house but painting the face is not as permanent as tattoo. That is, painting of the person is practiced in the underworld together with the painting and carving of houses or, in other words, all the arts associated with the whare nui ‘prestigious house’ and with the body exist in the underworld. Anyone can use paint as a medium for adornment but the right to tā moko must be earned through deeds of valour. It was a qualification of honour and achievement. Tā moko was also a mark of genealogical pre-eminence. In this respect, the Mataora narrative emphasises character building through perseverance in the acquisition of knowledge through a contestation over mana ‘status’: the mana of the material and spiritual realms, tattoo and painting, and supernatural and human being.

THE MATAORA NARRATIVE TEXT, TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

It will be not only be informative, but necessary, to reconsider the Mataora narrative of the origin of tā moko that forms the basis for some of Neich’s Māori art terminology and to set a framework for the implication of the terms used by Te Matorohanga in the Mataora narrative for Māori art and tribal carving in particular. Rather than quoting Percy Smith’s full translation (see Neich 1994: 19), I present in turn portions of the original Māori text, Smith’s translation of that text (Smith 1913: 67-76, 186-7), Best’s English version, and my own translation of the Māori text. Each portion of text is numbered sequentially
to allow for cross-referencing of the questionable terms in Smith and Best’s English versions. Following my translation, I undertake a comparative textual/linguistic analysis of Smith and Best translations relative to my own.

It should be noted that in the texts under analysis macrons are used inconsistently. In quoting my sources, I have reproduced macrons as they appear in the original sources; otherwise I follow present scholarly usage.

1 Māori text

*titiro atu ia [Mataora] e heke ana te toto;*

Smith translation:
and saw the blood descending from the cuts in the face.

Best translation:
and the blood of that person was flowing freely,

Author’s translation:
he saw the blood descending;

*Textual analysis:*
Smith offers a liberal translation in this line, ‘the cuts of the face’ do not occur in the Māori text although they are implied. In a similar manner Best’s translation dramatises the event beyond the literal.

2 Māori text

*Ka karanga atu ia, ‘kei te hē ta koutou na tā moko! Kaore e pena ana ta runga tā moko.*

Smith translation:
He called out, ‘Your system of tattooing the face is all wrong! It is not done in that manner up above.’

Best translation:
hence he called out: ‘Your mode of tattooing is wrong; it is not done so in the upper world’.

Author’s translation:
He called out, ‘Your tattoo is wrong! Tattoo is not like that above.’
Textual analysis
Like the previous passage ‘the face’ is not in the Māori text but it is implied. The use of tā annexed to moko to indicate the process of tattoo in which tā as a transitive verb means not only to carve or fashion but also to tattoo, and moko is the outcome of the process. That is, moko is the tattoo produced or more specifically a style of design, which was dominantly cursive in nature at the time the narrative was recorded. Hence, tā in the latter sense and ta as a definitive particle used with pronouns, nouns and proper names to indicate possession are critical to the understanding of the Māori text. While Best’s translation is closer to the Māori text he, like Smith, errs in his allusion to the ‘mode’ (‘system’ in Smith) of tattoo. Best’s translation of runga as the ‘upper world’ is a valid extension of the concept for runga in this instance. In this passage, tā moko as a term for tattoo is introduced as a contextual term in the debate between Mataora and Uetonga.

3 Māori text
Ka ki atu a Ue-tonga, ‘Ko ta raro nei tā moko tenei; kei te hē ano a runga. Ko tena ta moko ki raro nei ka kiia he kawaiwai.’

Smith translation:
Ue-tonga said, ‘This is the custom below here; that above is quite wrong. The system is called by us kawaiwai (i.e; painted).’

Best translation:
Ue-tonga replied: ‘This is the way we tattoo in the lower world. Your method is wrong.

Author’s translation:
Uetonga replied, ‘Down here this is tattoo; once more it is wrong above. That design down here is called kawaiwai.’

Textual analysis:
The assumption made by Smith that kawaiwai (Māori text) or kōwaiwai (Smith translation) means ‘painted’ is misplaced in light of the critical differentiation that is made between tā moko and ta moko in this passage. As indicated above, tā moko not only sets the context for the debate, but is also used as a statement of fact that tā moko is the name for tattoo in the underworld in which tā indicates the process of rendering and moko describes the outcome—a distinctive cursive design. In the second sentence the change to ta moko alters dramatically the meaning of this line, and with it, the translation of kawaiwai. If the omission of the macron in this case is not an
editorial error then the line is referring to a quality that is intrinsic to moko, that is, it belongs to or is a characteristic of moko, or in this instance, a pattern on the face. In this sense, both the meaning of moko and kawaiwai must be viewed in relation to each other. Therefore, moko should be translated as the pattern associated with tattoo while kawaiwai is the style of pattern. That is, it is inherently cursive in nature. This point is reinforced in later passages through the use of the term höpara-makaurangi. Recall that Williams (1971) defines höpara makaurangi as ‘a painted rafter design’. The source for this interpretation is line 5 of the Mataora narrative below. He also includes the meaning of höpara as ‘embellishing rafters of a house, covering the surface with spirals’ while makaurangi is listed as a noun meaning ‘spiral lines’ or a transitive verb meaning ‘adorn with spirals’ (Williams 1971: 59, 169).

Like tä moko, höpara-makaurangi is a composite of an intransitive verb and a noun. It encapsulates the process of covering a surface with spirals. This is evident in the emphasis used throughout the narrative to equate painting with tuhi, as painted designs, and subsequently, the preparatory delineation of pattern.

In this passage, an important emphasis is placed on the exclusive association of tä moko with the underworld. A switch in the debate is introduced with ta moko, from one of process to one of composition or design. This is reinforced later in the narrative where tattoo is called moko-whakangao and moko-tangata (Smith 1913: 74).

While Smith speaks of “custom”, Best alludes to “way” when the Māori text literally refers to ‘that belonging to here below (the under-world by implication) this is tattoo’. As well as omitting any reference to runga, Best omits the final sentence referring to kawaiwai.

4 Māori text

Ka ki atu a Mataora, ‘He hopara-makaurangi ki runga.’

Smith translation:
Mataora in reply said, ‘Hopara-makaurangi is the name above.’

Best translation:
Said Mataora: ‘Our method is the hopara makaurangi’.

Author’s translation:
Mataora retorted, ‘It is höpara-makaurangi above.’
Textual analysis:
There is nothing wrong with Smith’s translation, except there is no term for “name” in the Māori text. However, as will become obvious in the next passage, Smith assumes that hōpara-makaurangi is synonymous with tä moko. In Best’s translation, ‘our method’ does not appear in the Māori text and hōpara makaurangi is not contextualised.

5 Māori text
Ka ki atu a Ue-tonga, ‘Ko tena moko, kia ara te whare ka kiia he hopara-makaurangi tena tuhi; ki te tukua te moko ki runga i te tangata ka kiia he tuhi tena moko.’

Smith translation:
Ue-tonga then said, ‘That kind of moko (or face-tattooing) is used in house building, and then it is called hopara-makaurangi, or painting. If the moko is done on a man it is called tuhi, or painting.’

Best translation:
‘That mode of tattooing’, said Uetonga, ‘is so termed when applied to house decoration, [Reference to hōpara makaurangi has been omitted] but when devices are merely marked on a person it is known as tuhi’.

Author’s translation:
Uetonga responded, ‘That [style of] design is apparent when the house is erected [then] it is called hōpara-makaurangi that [form of] painting, if the pattern is delineated [using pigment] on a person it is called painting that [form of] design.

Textual analysis:
In this passage tä and ta have been omitted as prefixes to moko. The intention of this passage is clear. While Mataora calls his moko (style of design) hōpara-makaurangi, thereby implying that the designs are composed of spirals, Uetonga assigns these designs to the house. This is reinforced by the association of hōpara-makaurangi with the painting process tēnā tuhi at the end of the first sentence. Therefore pattern and process are succinctly distinguished.

In this passage there is an important shift introduced in the final sentence. A return to process is indicated by tukua. Williams lists one of the meanings of tuku, a transitive verb, as to ‘apply pigment’. (Williams 1971: 451). Explicit in the use of tukua is the application of pigment to delineate the moko design painted on a person as a preparatory process preceding the skin piercing process.
Both Smith and Best have erred in their translation of *moko* as ‘face tattooing’ in the first line of the passage because *moko* in this instance is the outcome of the process not the process itself. While Best omits the reference to *hōpara-makaurangi*, Smith qualifies the latter as ‘or painting’. However, the Māori text qualifies *hōpara-makaurangi* as *tēnā tuhi* not *he tuhi rānei*. That is, *hōpara-makaurangi* is ‘that [form of] painting’ not ‘or painting’ as Smith would have it. Although Best omits the reference to *hōpara makaurangi*, his use of ‘devices’ and ‘marked’ demonstrate an understanding of *tuhi* as process.

6 Māori text

*Ka ki atu a Mataora, ‘He whakairo ki a matou nei.’*

Smith translation:
Mataora replied, ‘That is called carving with us.’

Best translation:
[Sentence has been omitted].

Author’s translation:
Mataora replied, ‘It is *whakairo* to us.’

Textual analysis:
There is an element of ambiguity in this statement by Mataora because one cannot be sure whether he is responding to painting in the house or on the person. However, since Mataora has previously contextualised *hōpara-makaurangi* as the pattern applied to the face, in contrast to the underworld pattern called *kawaiwai*, it may be assumed that he is referring to the painting of a person’s face. Mataora calls the application of pigment to delineate the *moko* design painted on a person *whakairo*, a two dimensional process. Thus, *whakairo*, in the sense used by Mataora, is the process used to delineate his style of tattoo design. Like Smith’s previous error in the translation of *kawaiwai* as ‘painted’, he again errs in translating *whakairō* as ‘carving’.

The objective of the narrative is to reinforce the idea that tattoo, carving and weaving are retrieved from a supernatural realm. Consequently, carving does not exist in the world from which Mataora has come. It is not very difficult to deduce from this that *whakairo* as used in the statement by Mataora cannot be carving. It is not until Uetonga responds that the term carving can be used, but it can only be applied relative to specific art disciplines like wood carving and weaving. Therefore *whakairo* does not exist as an unqualified term for carving in this narrative. It is not until later that *whakairo* is contextualised specifically in relation to the various art forms that Mataora takes back to the
world of humankind. When Te Ku-watawata asked Mataora about the taonga that he had with him he explained, 'Te rua o nga taonga he moko-whakatara (he moko whakairo rakau tenei) he moko-whakangao (he moko-tangata tenei), he whakairo-paepae-roa’.

In this Mataora is differentiating carving on wood called moko-whakatara or moko whakairo rākau, tattoo called moko-whakangao or moko-tangata, and tāniko called whakairo-paepae-roa.

In this passage, there is finally a distinction established between the processes of moko transfer in the two worlds. It is called tā moko in the world of Uetonga (refer to passage 3) and whakairo in the world of Mataora.

7 Māori text
Ka rere mai te ringa o Ue-tonga ki te miri i te kanohi o Mataora – kua ma nga moko! Ka katakata te iwi ra;

Smith translation:
Ue-tonga placed his hand on Mataora’s face and rubbed it – and all the moko came off! The people all burst out laughing;

Best translation:
Then Uetonga put forth his hand and wiped the painted devices from the face of Mataora. All the folk laughed to see the tattooing effaced,

Author’s translation:
Uetonga stretched out his hand to wipe the face of Mataora—the designs had been erased! Those people laughed;

Textual analysis:
Apart from over stating the response of the spectators, Smith’s translation is reasonably accurate. This passage is used to demonstrate the impermanence of the designs of Mataora. There is also an intention to humiliate Mataora by emphasising his lack of knowledge. Best on the other hand overstates the laughing passage.

8 Māori text
Ka karanga atu a Ue-tonga, ‘E runga! E runga! Kei te hé tonu ki te whakairo.’ Na, kua ma; ‘He tuhi tena. Ko te whakairo ki a matou nei kei nga wahine tetahi peka o tena ingoa’.

Smith translation:
Ue-tonga called out, ‘O ye above! O ye people of above! You are quite
wrong in calling it carving. Behold the face is quite clean from rubbing, that is only painting. What we call carving (whakairo, also used for ornamentation of other kinds) is that practised by women’ (in ornamental borders of their mats).

Best translation:
and Uetonga remarked: ‘O the upper world! Ever is its adornment a farce, behold how the tattooing is effaced; it is merely a marking. Know then that there are several methods of whakairo (adornment); there is the female branch,

Author’s translation:
Uetonga called out, ‘[You] above! [You] above! Whakairo is still wrong’. Since, it has been erased: ‘that is painting. According to us here whakairo is that name for a certain branch [of work] that belongs to women’.

Textual analysis:
Smith once again errs in his translation of whakairo as ‘carving’ in this passage. The statement by Uetonga is used merely to make the point that whakairo is an inappropriate term for designs that can be erased (at least in Rarohenga). The two protagonists are using the term in a contrasting sense. Mataora is using the term for two-dimensional design transfer while Uetonga is using the term for three-dimensional forms created by women. In contrast Best demonstrates an alternative understanding of whakairo as ‘adornment’.
This passage is aimed at the critical notion that whakairo is more appropriately applied to three-dimensional work.

9 Māori text
Ka whakaatu mai a Ue-tonga i tona kakahu e mau ana te taniko, ka karanga atu, ‘Ko te peka tenei ki nga wahine; ko te peka ki nga tane’ (ka tango ia tona maipi, ka karanga atu ki a Mataora) ‘koia nei te whakairo, he mea whakairo ki runga ki te rakau; ki te tae koe ki taku whare ka kite koe i te whakairo. Ko tena moko i a koe na, he tuhi’.

Smith translation:
Ue-tonga then showed the garment on which the taniko was apparent, at the same time saying, ‘This is the woman’s branch; whilst the man’s branch is this (showing the carved head of his wooden maipi, or halbert [sic]). This is carving done on wood. If you go to my house you will see what real carving is. As for that moko on you it is only painting’.
Best translation:
‘the embroidering of cloaks; and the male branch, the carving on wood;
demonstration of maipi has been omitted. Reference to the house has been omitted] that on your face is simply a marked pattern.’

Author’s translation:
When Uetonga showed his cloak, which contained täniko, he called out,
‘This is the branch [of work] that belongs to women; the branch belonging to men’ (when he grabbed his maipi (taiaha) he called out to Mataora)
‘here is whakairo, it is whakairo on wood: if you go to my house you will see whakairo. That [system of] design on you [over there] is painting’.

Textual analysis:
There is nothing inherently wrong with Smith’s translation apart from his mention of ‘the carved head of his wooden’ maipi being shown to Mataora, which is not in the Māori text. However, the head is implied because a maipi is a taiaha, that is, a war staff with a carved protruding tongue and head carved with pattern while the handle remains plain. As indicated previously moko is used variably throughout the text. Thus tā moko alludes to the process by which designs are transferred by puncturing the skin. The use of moko unqualified suggests that the inherent nature of the designs implied by the reiteration of this term throughout the text is a specific reference to the cursive patterns that are intimately associated with tā moko.

Best’s translation maintains the essence of the narrative in spite of its truncation. In this passage, and the previous one, Uetonga emphasises that Mataora is still wrong. In so doing he reinforces the point that whakairo is a three dimensional process associated with the making of cloaks by women and the carving of wood by men. He concludes the debate by emphasising that moko, the designs on Mataora are tuhi ‘painting (or preparatory pattern delineation)’.

It is quite possible that Best discovered the contradictions in Smith’s translation and selected the passages that appeared to remove the problem. Smith’s translation of line 4 through 6 of the Māori text suggests that hōpara-makaurangi was the name of tattooing in the upper world, the world of Mataora. Best has sought to overcome this anomaly by selectively editing out the problematic passages (highlighted in Best’s version). Despite his strategic editing, Best also has problems in spite of his familiarity with the variable use of the term moko, which he has translated as ‘mode’, ‘device’ and ‘pattern’. While he has translated tuhi as ‘marking’ and ‘marked’, the term painting would be more appropriate. Like Smith, Best has assumed that
hōpara-makaurangi is the equivalent of tā moko rather than a specific style of pattern. Later Best wrote, “The upper world invented wood carving; it was first performed by Rua-i-te-pupuke and Nuku-te-aio, who so embellished the first house” (Best 1995: 230). Best’s version needs to be considered within the context of the Māori text, Smith’s translation and the author’s translation.

10 Māori text:
Ko nga moko ona, ko nga poniania o te ihu, me nga pihere, me nga ngu, me nga tiwhana; ka mutu mai nga moko i riro mai i a Mataora o Rarohenga mai. Na runga nei i whakatutuki nga moko, he mea whakairo ki runga ki te tekoteko e Nuku-te-aio raua ko Rua-i-te-pupuke, i whakaputa te whakairo ki te ao.

Smith translation:
His designs were the poniania of the nose, the pihere, the ngu and the tiwhana; this was the extent of the designs brought back from by Mataora from Rarohenga. It was above that the designs were carried to completion, in the case of whakairo (applied to) the tekoteko it was (because of) Nuku-te-aio and Rua-i-te-pupuke that the whakairo appeared to the world (of light).

Best text:
The tattooing patterns acquired by Mataora in Rarohenga [spirit world] were the poniania, piheru, ngu and tiwhana [Passage about the tattoo of Niwareka]. The upper world invented woodcarving; it was first performed by Rua-i-te-pupuke and Nuku-te-aio, who so embellished the first house.

Author’s liberal translation:
The designs that Mataora brought back from Rarohenga were limited to the poniania nose pattern, the pihere, the ngu and the tiwhana. It was not until he returned to this world that the design range was extended. As for the carving [of designs] on the gable figure it was Nuku-te-aio and Rua-i-te-pupuke who were responsible for their appearance in the world [of humankind].

Textual analysis
Even a liberal translation of the Māori text does not match Best’s English version. It is possible that he has inserted a passage from another narrative without specifying the source (White 1887: 4-6). This was not an uncommon strategy employed by early writers. Not only did they freely translate from
Māori to English, but often rewrote substantial Māori passages with liberal editorial additions. Herbert Williams reveals that extent of John White’s “unpardonable recklessness” (Williams 1971: XXXI). According to Williams, White freely appropriated from Grey’s writings after Te Rangikaheke, of Te Arawa, omitted words and passages from the original while adding his own (Williams 1971). Returning to the problem with Best’s translation, the Māori text implies that it was not only the art of tattoo but also the art of carving, tāniko ‘finger twining’, whatu ‘weaving’ and raranga ‘plaiting’ that were brought back from Rarohenga (Smith 1913: 75). Despite the liberties apparent in Best’s translation, and his tendency to see in the different appearance of the beings from the underworld as a sign of contact with another race, he nevertheless demonstrates an insight into tribal thinking that is absent from the writings of many early recorders of tribal narratives. His interpretation of the Mataora narrative is therefore informative:

But the most interesting thing about this ancient myth is the picture it presents of life in the underworld of spirits. It is not a dark or gloomy realm; it is a place of all things light and all things desirable. Evil is unknown there, it pertains only to the upper world. Such was an old time Maori belief, but unfortunately for anthropologists our Maori folk adopted the myths and teachings of Christianity, hence the ideas of the spirits of evil person going to the underworld and those of good ascending to the heavens, have crept into their statements. Such beliefs were unknown to the Maori in pre-missionary days. (Best 1995: 231)

Critically, the Mataora narrative sets up a series of interrelationships between the two worlds, the material and the spiritual. There is a contest between correct and incorrect knowledge, supernatural and human knowledge. There is also a contrast between permanent and impermanent designs, that is, designs from the spiritual realm and those from the realm of humankind. Finally, there is a contest between old and young, between spiritual being and human being, in which the wisdom and knowledge of the elder (spiritual being) is subject to contestation but prevails as superior. Explicit in these juxtapositions is the sacred nature of knowledge and creativity, knowledge that can only be gained through trial and tribulation. This is further substantiated by the final submission of Mataora who concedes to the seniority of Uetonga, allowing him to retain his mana. The mana of Uetonga is also endorsed through his genealogical pre-eminence, in which he marries Manu-tiongā, the daughter of Hineoi, who is the daughter of the union between Whakaru-au-Moko and Hine-nui-te-pō (Smith 1913: 67). In the White version Uetonga is a descendant of Manu-ongaonga who is a child of Rua-ai-moko (White 1887: 4-6). Ultimately, Uetonga wins the
debate and his wisdom is passed on to Mataora. Later in the narrative, this concession by Mataora is sealed with the gifting of “Te Rangi-hau-papa”, a cloak woven by Niwareka fashioned after the original called Rena by Hine-rau-wharangi, the daughter of Hine-titama, and a tātua (belt) called “Te Ruruku-o-te-Rangi”. Therefore, the significant arts are an inheritance of the spiritual or immaterial realm. Mataora acknowledges this gift when he reaches the Pou-tere-rangi ‘the house that gives entry back to the world of humankind’. It will be instructive to repeat the process of comparative text analysis to gain an understanding of this critical episode. Again the Māori text precedes the Smith translation and this is followed by my translation and textual analysis (Smith 1913: 74, 191).

Māori text
Kati, ka maro te tira o Mataora raua ko Niwareka ki taiao. Ka tae ki roto ki Pou-tere-rangi, i reira a Te Kuwatawata me ona hoa e noho mai ana. Ka ui atu a Ku-watawata, ‘Mataora! He aha anake nga taonga o raro i a koe?’ Ko Mataora, ‘Ko nga mahi o runga nei kei te po e takaahu ana. Ko nga mahi o raro kei te Ao-turama e taka ana. Kotia te po ki runga nei, kotia te Ao-marama ki raro. Te rua o nga taonga he moko-whakatara (he moko whakairo rakau tenei) he moko-whakangao (he moko-tangata tenei), he whakairo-paepae-roa; me te whanau a Tiwaiwaka raua ko Patatai’.

Smith translation
Mataora, Niwareka and their company, now went towards the upper-world. When they reached Pou-tere-rangi [guard house of Hades] they found Te Kuwatawata [guardian of the entrance to Hades] there. He asked them, ‘Mataora! What are those properties beneath you?’ The latter replied, ‘The works of the world above are those done in the night; those of the underworld are done in the Ao-turama. Night has been separated off to the upper-world and daylight to the under-world. The two properties are the moko whakatara ‘wood carving’, moko-whakanyao [sic] ‘face tattooing’, and whakairo-paepae-roa ‘ornamental pattern on the border of kaitaka mats’; also the family of Ti-waiwaka and Patatai, who are travelling with us’.

Author’s translation:
Enough, the party of Mataora and Niwareka set out for the natural world. [They] arrived at the interior of Pou-tere-rangi, where Te Kuwata and his friends were residing. Ku-watawata asked, ‘Mataora! What specifically are those treasures beneath you’. Mataora [replied], ‘The works above are developed in ignorance. The works below are
developed with enlightenment. Let the ignorance above be interrupted, let the enlightenment below be interrupted. The two treasures are moko-whakatara (this is a pattern template for wood carving), moko-whakangao (this is a pattern template for people), this is a whakairo-paepae-roa; and the family of Fantail and Land rail.

Textual analysis:
As demonstrated previously, Smith continues to misinterpret the variable meaning of moko within the Māori text. Consequently, he incorrectly translates moko tangata as ‘face tattoo’.

Smith has failed to grasp the subtle shifts in the narrative from literal to metaphorical. In the context of the narrative ao as a noun meaning daytime, world, or bright, is qualified by an intransitive verb tūrama meaning to light or illuminate, and by the adjective mārama, signifying light not dark, clear and easy to understand. Therefore, Ao-tūrama and Ao-mārama can be read literally as the ‘World of light’ or metaphorically as the ‘World of knowledge’, terms which are normally associated with the world of humans. When placed in a complementary relationship with pō in this narrative, there is a semantic shift in the meaning of Ao mārama. It doubles as a metaphor for the enlightened values and precious gifts that are part of the contribution that the spiritual world of pō offers to humans to elevate their existence through ethical behaviour and creative enterprise. The emphasis in the contrast between pō and Ao-mārama in the passage above is used by Mataora to emphasise his understanding of the consequences of receiving the treasures from the spiritual realm of the underworld. It is anticipated that his return to the world of humankind will result in a change in his behaviour towards Niwareka, his spirit world wife.

Wife beating is not condoned in the spiritual world therefore it should not be practiced in the world of humankind. This becomes a subtext that is annexed to the gaining of the arts and knowledge from the spiritual realm. It hardly seems necessary to emphasise that the word “Hades” used by Smith to describe Pou-tere-rangi colours his perception of this important narrative that stresses the necessity for spiritual intervention in humankind’s relationship with their deity or their superhuman mentors. In a similar vein, Niwareka, as a spiritual entity, perplexed Best. His contention that “Niwareka, a being of the spirit world, ascends to this world and marries a man of the earth, hence both possess earthly bodies” merely reinforces the penchant of the West for rational tribal narratives (Best 1995: 231). The critical point in this narrative is spiritual intervention not historical veracity or biological logic. That is, a tribal worldview is presented in which a spiritual dimension impacted on all
spheres of tribal interaction with their universe. It was a worldview that was multi-layered and multi-dimensional. It was a worldview of space and time that conceptualised movement as a transition through vertical and lateral planes simultaneously with each transition through and beyond these planes qualified by intersecting indices that quantified the resolution of any transition.

Entry into a pātaka taonga ‘storehouse of precious objects’ offers one example of this multi-dimensional concept. The transition between the inside and the outside of this significant architectural structure is prefaced by a conceptualisation of the roto ‘inside’ as tapu relative to the waho ‘outside’ as noa ‘safe’. Expressed alternatively the inside of the pātaka is conceptualised as Te Pō (the realm of night, darkness, the underworld) while the outside is Te Ao Mārama (the world of day, light and the upper world). Therefore the relationship that exists for the prospective entrant is not only expressed as inside and outside, but also above and below. This relationship is further conditioned by the inside being located spatially ki mua ‘to the front’ of the entrant relative to outside which is ki muri ‘behind’. When entering the internal space of the pātaka taonga, the person literally makes a transition into future time (ki te wā o mua), the time of the ancestors, leaving behind the past time (te wā ki muri). In this case the physical transition across the threshold is quantified by multiple metaphysical indices of inside and outside, above and below, front and back in terms of space and time simultaneously. The transition between inside and outside in this example is infused with ritual to highlight the intimate connection between the material and spiritual world.

\textit{WHAKAWHITI KŌRERO : CONCLUSION}

The Mataora narrative sets up a series of interventions between two worlds, the material and the spiritual, and correspondingly between correct and incorrect knowledge, between permanent and impermanent designs, between old and young. Explicit in these interventions is the tapu nature of knowledge and creativity; knowledge that can only be gained through trial and tribulation. This is further substantiated by the final submission of a younger protagonist who concedes to an elder who maintains his mana. Ultimately, the elder wins the debate and his wisdom is passed on to the younger. In this respect, knowledge and wisdom are assigned to a higher order of existence and are the prerogative of the aged.

My aim in this comparative textual analysis of the Mataora narrative is two-fold. In the first instance, the narrative is about matauranga and the acquisition of knowledge through debate and sacrifice. In the second, the textual analysis demonstrates the necessity to critique translations of tribal lineage narratives by both Māori and Pākehā writers. The issue at stake is
flawed translation, not who did the translation, since uncritical acceptance of translations can lead to uninformed knowledge. In accepting Smith’s translation, Neich’s contention that the Mataora narrative “is also valuable for introducing the term hopara-makaurangi for figurative painting on houses” is misguided in its association of hōpara-makaurangi with figurative painting on houses (Neich 1994: 20). As the textual analysis revealed, hōpara-makaurangi is used by the protagonists, Uetonga and Mataora, according to their respective understanding of the term relative to runga and raro or Te Ao Mārama and Rarohenga. Although their views are disparate the essence in meaning is similar. That is, hōpara-makaurangi is a design in which the spiral is prominent. I contend that the hōpara-makaurangi comprises spiral designs or at least curvilinear designs because of the contexts in which the term is used. For Mataora, it is the painted equivalent of tattoo in the underworld, and for Uetonga it is the designs painted in a house. Nowhere in the original Māori text is there any mention of figurative painting.

Finally, there is another critical agenda in this lineage narrative; knowledge is contextual or relative. As Te Matorohanga emphasised in 1865, “There was no one universal teaching in the Whare-wānanga. Each tribe had its own priests, its own college, and its own standards” (Smith 1913: 84).

NOTES

1. A prerequisite of this approach is a “deep understanding of the Māori language” (Neich 2001: 123).

2. In The Lore of the Whare Wananga the Mataora episode is referred to as “Mataora’s visit to Hades. The origin of tattooing”. My use of the “Mataora narrative” not only truncates the original title but also omits the culturally inappropriate word “Hades”. At the same time “narrative” offers a more culturally relevant substitute for “myth” or “legend”.

3. The emphasis given to the technique of carving the skin, te tā o te kiri, clearly demonstrates how narratives are re-constructed to incorporate the contemporary tā moko process. That is, the tā moko process expounded in the narrative is one that was in vogue in the 18th century and is projected back in time to the arrival of Māori in Aotearoa. This does not in any way devalue the narrative but merely reinforces its “re-construction” to encompass changes in practice through time.

4. A selected version in Māori and translated by White also exists. However, this final episode is absent. Much of White’s narrative concentrates on the interrelationship between Mataora and Niwareka although a whakataukī ‘proverb’ is included acknowledging the art of tattoo as an inheritance from Uetonga—“Na Mata-ora i ako Te mahi a Ue-tonga Te Mahi Ta moko. Me tenei ano hoki, - Nga Nganga a Mata-ora Nga mahi a Ue-tonga.”
REFERENCES


ABSTRACT

This article employs a comparative textual method to critique S. Percy Smith and Elsdon Best’s translations of the Mataora narrative to demonstrate how these writers have misinterpreted tā moko, ta moko and moko, and ultimately hōpara makaurangi. In the process Smith and Roger Neich’s translations of hōpara makaurangi are refuted. A further aim is to highlight the need for critical analysis of texts in *Te Reo Māori ‘the Māori language’* and their translations to ensure the perpetuation of “correct” knowledge. Importantly, the article concludes that knowledge is contextual and relative.

*Keywords: Māori, tā moko, hōpara makaurangi, kōwaiwai, whakairo.*