

I think this charge is something which only those Maori students who were going through school and university in the 1950s and 1960s would understand. We had no option. We had no alternative. Whether we liked it or not, we were given a clear instruction from our people. I can understand and identify with those whom others thought arrogant when they said 'We are doing this for our people. For the Maori people.' What I am often surprised about is that I have yet to hear a pakeha person say 'I am doing this for the pakeha people of New Zealand.' It has always been easier to be pakeha than Maori.

What can one say about Maori life and literature up until the 1960s? The Maori has been on this planet since the world began. He sought to codify his world, to understand it and live in harmony with it. He crossed Te Moana nui a Kiwa to islands fished up by Maui. He lived, loved, fought, gave birth, died and was reborn in another generation. Then a variable was introduced into Maori life with the coming of the pakeha to Aotearoa. The Maori signed a worthless treaty at Waitangi. He lost his land. He lost his gods. He fought back. Te Whiti O Rongomai. Te Kooti Rikirangi. Te Puea Herangi. The fighters continued to fight. But at the same time the Maori was also being subsumed into pakeha culture. If we look for the signs of this subsumption we can see its effect clearly in evidence when the Maori fought with pakeha New Zealanders in World War II. More and more New Zealand became the model for race relations.

At that time, the Maori people still lived predominantly in rural hearths. Following the Second World War they began the inevitable drift to the cities. Culturally, they were a rich and vital entity, self-sustaining and secure. For one thing, the language was still intact and localised enough for preservation and transmission of the culture itself. It was an oral literature and its idioms were relatively unknown and inaccessible to outsiders except anthropologists, sociologists and students of Maori history. It is for this reason of being invisible to the world of light that I have termed Maori culture and the oral literary tradition as being the largest underground movement ever known in New Zealand. On the latter, as far as I am concerned, it is time that Maori oral literature took its rightful place in university courses, not in Anthropology but in English. Indeed, there is an interesting exercise for some student in making a comparative analysis of the natural symbol and imagery in Maori literature and Anglo-Saxon.

The oral tradition of Maori literature remains, to all intents and purposes, intact, but its practice and practitioners are today few. Nor is it as understood as it perhaps should be—the *whaikorero*, the spoken and semi-recitative speeches dealing in highly symbolic