

were sitting at home and I asked him: 'What's this name, Ihimaera?' He told me it was our real name, our Maori name. 'Well, why are we known around here as "Smiler"?' My father's reply was: 'When your grandfather was younger, the missionaries couldn't pronounce his name "Ihimaera". So they gave him another name, "Smiler".'

I began to use Ihimaera from then on. It means Ishmael, and it was my great-grandfather's first name. Ishmael was of the desert people in the Old Testament and it seemed entirely appropriate for me—a wanderer in the desert. The more I dwelt on the 'why' of the name-change the more I began to see the way in which Maori life was under siege. But it wasn't until the mid 1960s that the urgency became apparent, became obvious. It happened this way.

By the 1960s, there had occurred a massive discontinuity in Maori life, occasioned by the virtual relocation of Maori people from their traditional homes to urban centres like Gisborne and, further afield, to Wellington or Auckland. It was as if a fault line had suddenly developed in our history—on one side was a people with some cultural assurance, on the other was a generation removed from its roots, who did not understand their language and who had not lived the culture. This occasioned a lot of discussion about the future of the Maori people, the land, the language, the culture, the political and economic disparities, the lack of power in the structure of government. But it was not until later in the sixties, when a group called Ngā Tamatoa was established, that we suddenly were made aware of the urgency of the situation. Now, many Maori people have tended to forget how major an impact Ngā Tamatoa had on the people. As Rowley Habib would say, it was as if we'd all been given sleeping pills, tranquillisers. Even the literature we were writing lacked strength and direction. It was illustrative, pictorial and of the kind sponsored by *Te Ao Hou*, the journal of the Department of Maori Affairs. It was what I have termed 'the pastoral tradition of written Maori literature' and, with very few exceptions, the work lacks anger or political thought. *Contemporary Maori Writing*, edited by Margaret Orbell, and published in 1970, is a case in point. So too are the books *Pounamu*, *pounamu*, *Tangi* and, to a certain extent, *Whanau*, in 1972, 1973 and 1974. They are tender, unabashedly lyrical evocations of a world that once was. But they are a serious mismatch with the reality of the times.

In fairness, one would be hard pressed in fact to name a book of New Zealand literature which would match well with the reality of New Zealand as it was in those times; nor, I think, did the authors of the stories in *Contemporary Maori Writing* ever have any other objective in mind than to provide glimpses of childhood; of a time in the 1940s and 1950s when the emotional values and *aroha* (love