CHAPTER III

NEW PROPHETS FOR A NEW CULTURE

In Witi Ihimaera’s novel *The Matriarch* we are face to face with that classic conflict—one race against another, and here the setting is New Zealand. Underlying it all of course is the conflict for land and economic resources. The conflict may have started a few centuries ago, but the consequences are still being worked out. These causes and consequences are the major theme in the novel under study. In an article titled ‘Why I Write’ Ihimaera says that there are two cultural maps in New Zealand, the Maori and the Pakeha and the latter dominate to such an extent as to nearly extinguish the former’s identity. “For instance, ask who discovered New Zealand and you will be told Abel Tasman. But the answer as given by Maori history, is Kupe.” This fundamental difference in perspective is emphasized by Ihimaera at the end of Chapter I in the novel. He points to the irony in the teaching of history to school children all over New Zealand. They are told of the glorious day, seventh October 1769, when at two in the afternoon the masthead shouted “Land Ahoy!” and the *Endeavour* anchored off the mouth of the Turanganui River. Captain James Cook had discovered New Zealand.
With considerable amusement, the school children are informed that the
Maori beheld a strange white bird, a floating island and they thought that
some multicoloured Gods had arrived. But what the school children are not
told is that Cook's first landing was marked by the killing of a Maori called
Te Maro, and another five were murdered in the bay simply because they put
up resistance when molested. "The glorious birth of a nation has the taste of
bitter almonds when one remembers that six Maoris died so that a flag could
be raised and that the Endeavour had lain in Poverty Bay for only two days
and fourteen hours" (36-37). Ihimaera writes in order to make the Maori
aware of their heritage, and to enable them to take that side of their
personality seriously. "My way is with the pen; others of my people use more
forceful methods... My concern is for the roots of our culture, the culture we
carry within ourselves and which makes us truly Maori." This attempt to
convey Maori heritage through his writing is not easy, he admits. Such a
writer has a dual responsibility—to make the new generation Maori and the
Pakeha understand. In addition to this he says he is a writer first and Maori
second. The artist employs his skills with a purpose. The message he has
embraces both Maori and Pakeha. "The particular strengths that I see in
Maori literature are those which spring from the earth and are composed of
the elements. We say, 'Don't destroy this and our heritage'; but we also say,
'Don't destroy this in you too.'" (WLWE Vol. 16 1977)

Several Maori and Australian aboriginal writers have made significant
contributions to literature and among them are Patricia Grace, Keri Hulme,
Colin Johnson, Noonuccal and Jack Davis. While all of them try to recover
and reclaim their original identity that has been submerged by centuries of white domination, they employ methods and techniques used by Western writers in the postmodernist tradition, in addition to using some indigenous forms. Joanne Tompkins, in the article 'It All Depends On What Story You Hear' says that, "Most important in the context of these writers is their interest in history. To indigenous post colonial literature, history becomes a central political concern because history denies colonized peoples both a past and a viable present. It becomes apparent, in comparing indigenous post colonial works which exhibit postmodern characteristics, that post modernism is as political in nature as postcolonial literature: both contest the authority traditionally vested in univocal white history" (MFS 1990:36:3-4).

A character in the *The Matriarch*, the journalist, voices this concern when he says, "It was as if the memory of all that had happened was being sealed away as if the occasion had never existed. Perhaps it didn't. I just don't know any longer. All truth is fiction really, for the teller tells it as he sees it, and it might be different from some other teller. This is why histories often vary, depending on whether you are the conqueror or not" (403).

There is always an official version and other variants and sometimes opposing versions too. These novels help us to see that some histories are not written at all, and can be done so only in a work of fiction. How does one separate fact from fiction in history if no history can ever hope to document all facts as lived and experienced by so many different people? Ihimaera's novel writes many histories, the personal life of the protagonist Tamatae, the family history, which in turn is linked to tribal history which goes back to the
mythical past. These histories are fused with the history of New Zealand itself. The ability to see history as so many layers that can be integrated is Ihimaera's achievement in *The Matriarch*. He makes this clear in the Prologue to the novel where he says that he must make a journey into the past, into the jungles of family and tribal history. "I have made it even more of a jungle by mingling fiction with fact, like saprophytic vines twining the trunks of already dead trees. I think the matriarch herself would have approved of this. After all, she was the one who turned my own life into fiction from fact" (1).

A proper understanding of the importance of lineage and kinship rules under the traditional Maori system is essential if we have to see the links between family, tribe, myth and history in *The Matriarch*. David Lewis and Werner Forman have described various aspects of Maori myth and behaviour in their book *The Maori, Heirs of Tane* (1982). The overall structuring principle of traditional Maori society is the extended family or *whanau*. Parents, children, grandparents, uncles, cousins, all dwell in a close-set cluster of little houses. Cousins and siblings are equally 'brothers and sisters' and aunts and uncles are considered 'mothers and fathers'. The family meet as a group to discuss and decide important matters, though the final word of authority rests with the *kaumatua*, the male head of the family. He also acts as its spokesman in the wider forum of the clan meeting. The place of the individual in the system depends on two things: first, his seniority, both his personal seniority and that of his descent line, and secondly, upon the generation to which he belongs. The privilege of the elder or *taukana* is
strictly followed from one generation to another. Descent could be traced from
the female line as well and disputes were not uncommon. In the novel, the
matriarch is constantly referring to her rights bestowed by lineage and gives
Tamatae the same rights as he is the eldest son. Tamatae has to reckon with
the jealousy of his cousins because of his privileged position.

The priest is regarded as the human receptacle of a god, the *waka
atua*, literally the god's canoe. On important occasions he becomes possessed
by the holy spirit. Even among the priests there are grades, and the highest
among them have years of esoteric training. Sorcery and black magic are
considered inferior. The lyrical description of the building of the temple or
the canoe in the novel often makes use of the idea of the sacred and the
profane.

The concept of *mana* is difficult to define. Both the matriarch and
Tamatae have it. "It was a spiritual potency of divine origin conferred upon a
human being. It was something very much more than merely status, power,
prestige or self-confidence. High priests possessed it in large measure, and
this was of great moment to their tribes, because the *mana* of chiefs flowed
down to their followers. In this sense the tribe itself could be said to have
*mana*" (Lewis and Forman 1982:47). Many of the episodes in the novel deal
with the way in which Tamatae protects his *mana*.

*Mana* is not inviolable. It could be depleted or lost by the incorrect
performance of ceremonies or by mistakes made in *karakia* or the sacred
chants. Even more disastrous is the violation of *tapu*, the holiness or sanctity
of place or person. Then the power bestowed by the gods drains away, leaving
the hapless mortal bereft of his spiritual potency. The gods themselves have 
*mana*. When a missionary, the Reverend Chapman tried to convert the priest 
of the Arawa Tribe, the priest demonstrated his power by turning a dry leaf 
green. When the supposedly superior god of the white man failed to match 
this achievement, the old priest remained unconvinced and continued in the 
faith of his forefathers.

It is practically impossible to distinguish between Maori myth and 
religion. Myths of creation, myths about the first voyagers to Aotearoa and 
myths pertaining to tribal ancestors are closely interwoven. David Lewis 
requested to be taught the art of navigation used by the Pacific peoples, and 
using these skills he sailed from Hawaii to New Zealand in a canoe. This 
experiment gives historical validity to the stories of migration that are an 
important part of tribal lore. What can we call them then? Myths, legends, 
history? The Maori believe them to be a record of their history. Long 
sections of the novel are devoted to a retelling of these myths by the 
matriarch. The Pakeha who first came in contact with these peoples, 
considered them so primitive and ignorant that these stories were dismissed 
as false beliefs. This makes it evident that the labels we employ are 
arbitrary, and entirely dependent on the perspective we take.

Maori religion is animistic. All living beings as well as natural 
phenomena possess *mauri*. This term is sometimes translated as soul, but it 
ceases to exist at death. Therefore, Lewis and Forman think that ‘active life 
principle’ would be a better translation. Everything possesses *mauri*, the sky, 
sun moon, stars, animals and men and even stones and rivers.
Personifications of natural phenomena is another aspect, and often they are thought of as ‘maids’ or the offspring of goddesses. For example, Hine-rau-wharangi represents the growth of plants, Hine-whaitiri thunder, Hine-ahiahia the evening and so on. In the novel, when Tamatae goes to Venice, Hine Te Ariki, the maid who dwells in the waters, figures in an important dream episode. What is remarkable is that the Maori do not represent their gods as a graven image. Even the stone figures near the kumara plantations are considered to be the resting places of the gods and they are never worshipped as idols. The human form abounds in Maori art and is used to decorate doorways, canoes and meeting houses that are considered sacred. Such figures often represent the ancestors. “Nothing brings out better the non-material essence of Maori religion than the complete absence of imposing places of worship. Neither, as we have seen, did this highly artistic people have any penchant for carving graven images of their gods. Things spiritual, te kanae runga, were so much a part of day-to-day life and of such inherent dignity, they did not need to be glorified through art” (Lewis and Forman 1982:44). The soul of the departed is believed to pass into the Night, into Te Po. It is thought to journey northwards toward Hawaiki. It crosses the stream called the Water of the Underworld, traverses the Twilight Sands and other waters to the Great Ocean of Kiwa. The funeral ceremony called tangi is both a religious ceremony and a social event where the eldest in the family establishes his position. The tangi that Tamatae attends is an important moment in his life for he has to see that his step-brother, (whom he does not accept as brother), does not precede him and obtain mana.
The Matriarch has been described as historiographic metafiction. The novel has no plot in the conventional sense but is a pastiche of events, a technique that is typical of postmodern fiction. The narrator in the novel, Tamatae Mahana closely resembles the author, and the matriarch of the title is Artemis Riripeti Mahana, who sees her role as an important one in the historic struggle between Maori and Pakeha. As her very name suggests she is a product of two cultures. She imparts this love of the land to her grandson Tamatae, making him understand that this struggle is the most important part of his inheritance. The other main actors in this historic struggle are two ancestors of their line, Te Kooti a religious prophet and 'rebel' and Wi Pere, a nineteenth century Maori parliamentarian. These two had been leaders in the struggle to keep Maori land under Maori control and this forms an important part of family history, history of the tribe and the history of the nation. The narrative moves back and forth across a great sweep of time and the technique swings from reportage and documentation to imagined mystical experience.

The narrator protagonist of the novel, Tamatae, feels a deep urge to go back to the happenings of his childhood in order to understand his own strivings, his own psyche. The overwhelming influence during his childhood years was his grandmother, Artemis Riripeti Mahana, the matriarch. He needs to know more about her and her grandfather Wi Pere who was a great moulding influence on her. Tamatae is drawn into the history of his tribe and the relationship between the Maori and the colonizing race. He understands that there are far reaching cultural changes and areas of persistent conflict.
Much of the past has been lost, especially the Maori past. There is an urgent need to recover and represent whatever can be gleaned from the memory of the elders, and from other people who witnessed some of the historic happenings. A great part of the novel is therefore just remembering, and this becomes compulsive for Tamatae. Not only must he reconstruct his own past but he must record the memories of others that will help him to see history from a Maori perspective. “The worst thing is that the more I remember, the more I keep on remembering. And some of the moments I remember just add to the puzzle. It’s quite frightening. I keep recalling things that perhaps I shouldn’t. Unlocking doors. And each door leads to another and another and another. It’s like a nightmare” (125).

Ihimaera, like Rushdie, sees the seemingly innocuous connection between memory and history. Time plays around with memory and if history is for the most part memory, how reliable is it? “Even so I have tried to divine the truth from the pattern, the facts from the flawed recollections” (1287). There is this inevitable process of fictionalizing and mythicizing, and sometimes an uneasy feeling that everything is surrealistic. Ihimaera tackles different layers of reality and meaning by using various techniques of narration, the journalistic interview, the dream, trance-like states of perception and so on.

Ihimaera includes many major and minor events in history. These are not presented in chronological order but intermingled with family history and tribal history. The narrative moves in the jerky manner of memory itself. It is useful, however, to outline the historical events in the novel. One of the
important events in history that sets off a chain of violent events is The Treaty of Waitangi which was signed between the British government and some Maori chiefs in 1840. Though it appeared to ensure the rights of the Maori, in practice, every kind of Maori right was subverted. The Maori quickly realized that they had been deprived of their inheritance and the Hauhau movement gained momentum, resulting in a lot of bloodshed in 1865. The next major event is the Te Kooti ‘Rebellion’ or ‘Retaliation’, (depending on whether you take the Pakeha or Maori perspective) which occurred in 1868. Ihimaera shows how the label itself can reveal the difference between the conqueror’s perspective and the subaltern perspective. While the Pakeha view Te Kooti as a criminal and rebel responsible for the massacre, the Maori consider Te Kooti a prophet, who led his people to freedom. He established the Ringatu religion. His followers built many temples or meeting places and one of the most important ceremonial houses is Rongopai, established in 1887. Ihimaera describes this in detail. Another important person in the history of Maori struggle is Tamatae’s ancestor, Wi Pere. The campaign for the restoration of land to the Maori was taken up by Wi Pere in Parliament in 1884 and his speeches and other documents are included in the novel. The Royal Commission of 1920 recognized the injustice done to the Maori. There was a large tribal gathering or hui in Wellington where the Maori chiefs met the Prime Minister. This event is the focal point in the narrative, around which all other memories revolve.

Before all this, Artemia, the matriarch helps us to see how important it is to know Maori myth, for it is myth that gives them their cultural identity
and it is myth that establishes their ancestral right to the land as the first and original settlers. It serves the subaltern purpose very effectively. Maori history is recounted and taught to Tamatae when he is a child, by his grandmother, the matriarch. It goes back to the mythical origins of man. This narrative strategy helps to establish Maori land rights from time immemorial, and no one can have the right to refute it. The use of myth therefore has this double purpose, that of taking Tamatae and the new generation Maori to their cultural roots and secondly to establish their inalienable rights to the land. The second has economic and political repercussions. The Prologue of the novel presents the matriarch with the child Tamatae, seated on the highest terrace of Ramaoa pa, the hill fort above the village. The terraces on the hillside were like the wondrous Stairway to Heaven. The very presence of the matriarch electrifies the air, and her rhythmic cadences as she narrates the myths of origin make the listener feel the thrill and excitement of listening to a secret revelation. “Ah, mokopuna, but your life began even before you were born in Waituhi... Listen, and I will tell you of your creation and your beginning. Listen. Listen.” And like a sacred chant she intones the story of creation. In the beginning was Te Kore the Void. From this nothingness came Te Po the Night. After a timeless time Te Po began to change, and changed twelve times, from the Great Night it gradually changed to the Night Streaked with Light, the Night of Hesitant Exploration and so on. Finally came the Night That Borders Day. At the twelfth changing came Te Ao Marama, the World of Light and all the Maori rituals celebrate its coming. And then the other foundations of the universe came into being, the great expanse of sky and
sea, the depths and the heights and the legendary Hawaiki, the home of the 
gods, the Maori Olympus. From Te Kore and Te Po arose the first gods and 
the primal parents, Rangi the sky father and Papa the Earth Mother. Their 
children were the other gods, gods of the forest, the ocean, the earthquake 
and so on. At first they had to live in darkness for Rangi and Papa were in a 
tight embrace and no light could come in. Then the God of the forest pushed 
upward against his father and with great grieving the two were separated."
The Earth and Sky are your parents, mokopuna. The sky is high, sacred and 
male while the earth is low but fruitful, profane and female. Thus was the 
first setting apart of the roles of male and female” says the matriarch. The 
story of how Tane, the God of Forests created the first woman, and how he 
mated with his daughter Hine Titama who fled to the underworld in shame 
to become Hine nui te Po is also narrated. The myths of creation outline the 
primal oppositions, like Levi-Strauss’s binary oppositions, between earth 
and sky, high and low, male and female, sacred and profane. They also 
introduce the oppositions in kinship, father and son, father and daughter, 
and in the story of Mui, between man and god, mortality and immortality. 
The matriarch narrates the story of Mui, who was half man and half god. It 
was he who had a magical jawbone which he used as a fishing hook to pull 
up the great big fish which became the Aotearoa, the land of the Maori. “We 
are the tangata whenua, the people of the land” reiterates the matriarch. She 
tells him of how Kupe and other ancient voyagers settled the various parts of 
the land and it is interesting to see how Maori names are used together with 
the colonizer’s names for places. Changing place names and introducing 
Christian names for people is the colonizer’s way of obliterating the race’s
history and a person's identity, replacing it with something else. This alters the power equations and even takes away ancestral rights. Therefore the mythological background that forms part of the Prologue is essential to give the reader the Maori perspective of history.

Sitting on the highest terrace of Ramaroa pa, the matriarch makes the child survey the land around, and in great detail describes the boundaries of the tribal lands. She narrates how his tribal ancestor came on the sacred canoe, Takitimu and settled there. This is her birthright, and his too. "Commit this to memory" she admonishes the child. "E mokopuna, we ruled here for over a thousand years. This was our land. This was our life. It is your life and land now. It has been yours even before you took your first breath. It came to you beyond the time of men and gods to the very beginning of Night and the Void. We had eternity in us. Then the Pakeha came"(6). The closing lines of the Prologue encapsulates Maori rights and makes it known in the simplest, most natural way that the Pakeha is the intruder, the usurper. The mythological framework is important for a proper understanding of the novel. Like mokopuna listening to the exhortations of his grandmother, Ihimaera hopes that the new generation Maori will listen to the ancient call of myth.

This lesson is reiterated again and again in the novel. In Chapter IV for instance, the matriarch tells Tamatae that he is descended from many tribes and she then goes on to tell him of his tribal ancestry on his grandfathers side and her side. The Maori are taught to recite the genealogy of the tribe as if it were a sacred chant, for therein lies the social code of rights as well. "And
because it is your land you must get to know it as it knows itself, and you
must love it even more than it loves itself" (95).

We soon realize that the history of New Zealand is the history of the
ownership of land. From the conqueror's perspective it is seen as the history
of colonization. It is but natural that the conqueror takes possession of the
land. From the Maori perspective, it is the history of dispossession. The usual
pattern is seen, acquisition through war, Land Acts and purchase
agreements. The Pakeha come in gradually, first as whaler and trader and
then as tree-feller and evangelist, and then in increasing numbers, settler
and farmer. Added to this the Pakeha men marry native women and the
inevitable mixing of blood and the mixing of culture takes place. Purity of
race and culture becomes a thing of the past. Tamatae realizes that his own
tribal genealogy has a Pakeha in the line. The matriarch's great grandfather
was Thomas Halbert. He and his brother James came to Poverty Bay as
young men in 1832 and decided to settle down there. Thomas took as many
as six Maori wives, one of them being Ririria. It was she who gave him a son
who was called Wi Pere whom Thomas acknowledged as his eldest son and
heir. The matriarch's great grand-uncle was the first to own land in Gisborne
district, the block known as Pouparae. Ihimaera gives us the date and year
and the details of the land deal. On the eighteenth of December 1839, a
thousand and four acres were acquired by him in exchange for an assortment
of things like 40 shirts, 36 axes, 32 plane irons, 60 blankets, 400 pounds of
gun powder, 500 pounds of tobacco, 40 spades, 22 pairs of scissors and other
such items (46). Such details may not find a place in the official history text
book, but all the same it gives us a very interesting insight into the nature of trade and the transfer of land, the like of which may never happen again. It tells the Maori reader how his ancestors lost their land. Of similar importance are the details of the activities of the missionaries.

The first missionary visit to Poverty Bay occurred in 1834. In three years, more than half the Maori had been converted. Ihimaera is explicit about the consequences. The baptism not only gave them a change of identity but it also effected a shift in their loyalties. The Maori became the loyal servants of the Pakeha. "So the missionaries gathered in Maori souls. They also gathered in land" (72). The Reverend Archdeacon Henry Williams advised the Maori to sign the Treaty of Waitangi in 1860. It was then that chief Te Kemara realized that all his land, all his inheritance was gone. With the signing, the Reverend Williams was able to legitimize his occupancy of fifty thousand acres. Once again Ihimaera is forthright in his condemnation. The Treaty had no status in domestic or international law and the Pakeha signed it knowing it was worthless. The loss of land has continued in various disguises.

The reader is forced to ask the question whether this is history or art. The Maori's answer would be that every aspect of an ancestor's life is tribal history. The Pakeha might dismiss this as poor art for it does not follow the first requisite that a good novel should entertain. This is protest barely disguised. The conflict of perspectives and values is hard to ignore. This is really subaltern history disguised as fiction, and perhaps it is only in this way that it seeks to legitimize itself. Ihimaera also describes the land wars
between the Maori tribes which were sometimes more brutal and savage. The victim's meat was eaten with great relish. Ihimaera's narration includes an account of the devastating raids of one of the tribal leaders, Hongi. He burned five hundred villages and took several thousand prisoner. Such details give the history a more balanced perspective, a feeling of fairness in the depiction of Maori and Pakeha.

The important historical events in the novel are the land wars between the Maori and the Pakeha, the Hauhau movement and the Te Kooti Retaliation. It must be noted that the Pakeha refer to the latter as the Matawhero Massacre. During this time of struggle there were, of course, Maori loyalists and such tribes or men that were loyal to the whites were rewarded with a portion of the land taken from the rebellious tribes.

Three different techniques of narration are used to give three different perspectives. We have the documentary style in the section called 'The Matawhero Retaliation / Close-up'. It is as if the eye of the camera moves from spot to spot at crucial moments on those fateful days, Friday 6th November 1868 11 a.m. to Tuesday 10th November 6 a.m. The scene at first focuses on Major Biggs and Reverend Williams and shows Biggs's contempt for the intelligence reports, his pride and pompousness leading to the death of so many. An attack is expected on the towns but Te Kooti conducts it more like the Maori utu, taking vengeance first on those that have harmed the Maori most. The documentation goes on from moment to moment. For example the narration for the events on Monday 10th November starts with the events that happened at 12.01 a.m. when the attack commences. At 4.30
a.m. the sailors on board the schooner notice a fire but it arouses no suspicion. At 2.20 a.m. Robert Atkins who rides past Major Biggs’s house at Matawhero sees a light in one of the rooms, and so it goes on right up to 6 a.m. The method of dividing the narrative by highlighting the time and date before every paragraph imparts urgency and vividness to the narrative. We are shown what the victims are saying or doing at the moment of attack. At times our sympathy inclines toward the victim. This would be the Pakeha version.

Toward the end of the novel, in Act IV, we have Wi Pere’s account of the Te Kooti Raids. He tells us that Te Kooti had become a great terror in the region and organized raids to take away horses, pigs, cattle and women. The other tribal chiefs were afraid to attack as this would have meant the death of their women. So Wi Pere intervened with a group of a hundred men and was able to force an entry into Te Kooti’s pa and take away prisoners. The Church Committee imposed a penalty on Te Kooti for all the trouble he had caused and this he disregarded with contempt. As the Hauhau caused more bloodshed, Wi Pere was asked to mediate and convince Te Kooti to abandon his violent ways. Te Kooti dismissed him with the declaration that he was in the hands of God. The whole account is a first person narrative and is purported to be the self defence of Wi Pere in the face of criticism that he had helped the Hauhau. The novel states that this report was published by the Gisborne Times, 16th February, 1916 and is included as such. Ihimaera, however, has a disconcerting comment prefixed to the whole narrative: “Quickly now, without any authorial prompting from myself, tell it all in your
own words. But one stage direction, just one -- while you are telling it, think of yourself as the Maori with his own hands around his neck" (301). It is as if Ihimaera is being the medium.

The most significant version of the Te Kooti Retaliation is that of the matriarch. The second section of the novel is titled 'The Song of Te Kooti' and the matriarch sings it like a sacred chant, a karanga. Significantly, the matriarch teaches him this important part of Maori history, sitting in the place of healing—the sacred Rongopai. Raising her hands in worship, she says, "Glory To Thy Holy Name" as she sings the song of Te Kooti. She tells her mokopuna that he must learn to hate and learn to forgive in this their struggle with the Pakeha. "For what happened to Te Kooti is what has happened to all of us and will continue to happen unless we fight on and hold to the truth" (133).

The solemn narration by the matriarch is done in biblical language and Te Kooti is seen as the Moses of the Maori, leading his people to Canaan. Jehovah chose him at birth to lead His children of Israel, the Maori, out of the land of the Pakeha, out of slavery to Egypt. He was falsely imprisoned during the Hauhau wars and exiled to Wharekauri, and when he escaped he was hunted down like an animal. Only then he took up arms against the Pharaoh and Egypt. The Lord was with the child from the beginning, and his holiness shone forth when he read the scriptures and the psalms of David. Te Kooti was baptized and consecrated to Jehovah's purpose. He wished to be trained as a mission teacher but the pharaoh grew exceedingly jealous of the holiness shining forth from him and Bishop Williams denied the request.
"Glory to Thy Holy Name. The Pakeha hardened their hearts against him and would not see good even when a vision was given unto them. They saw only their own evil, accusing the boy of their own sin, the sin of pride and arrogance. They persuaded his parents likewise, and the parents imprisoned him in a kumara pit and left him to die. But lo and behold, he escaped when the Lord sent an angel in the form of a man. Te Kooti was close to death. The angel said to him, 'Arise! Let us go forth!' A path then opened in the covering to the pit. And Te Kooti came forth"(134). There is a surprising correspondence between this and Matigari's imprisonment and escape, with the difference that Ngugi demythicizes the incident at the end.

As Te Kooti grew into manhood he lived and worked for the Pharaoh in Egypt, stayed in the Pharaoh's palace and like the prodigal son fell into ungodly ways. When the Hauhau started, the Maori were divided in their loyalties. Te Kooti was in the thrall of Egypt and fought on their side but his eyes were opened when he was unjustly arrested in the house of Bishop W. Williams. He was sent into exile for more than two years. But Jehovah was merciful and revealed to Te Kooti that he had been chosen. The spirit of God spoke to him and said, "Be not afraid, for your cry has come unto God, and he has given heed to your crying. Harken; I will strengthen you and make known to you the words I spoke to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob... Now, therefore, speak my words, and make them known to my people: speak my words and mine only"(136). Thus Te Kooti the man becomes Te Kooti the prophet. The spirit moves him and he holds services twice a day and the Ringatu Church is born.
The identification of the Maori and the tribe of Israel is complete. Ihimaera shows mastery of the biblical style and many significant parallels are included. When at the end of a two year prison term they had not been released from Wharekauri, Te Kooti has a vision in which he sees a ship anchored at the Chatham Islands and he is directed to take that ship and return to the Maori nation and lead his people out of bondage. The narrative point of view now shifts to that of the author who gives statistical details, dates and other such information, lending authenticity to the tale. The description of how the group enters the ship and overpowers the captain and other details is given by Michael Mullooly, the guard. By such tactics, Ihimaera would have us believe that this is no mythicizing, but the truth. Ihimaera includes an extract from the report by G.S. Cooper who says that 'the gang of barbarous fanatics' showed extraordinary moderation when they had their former masters bound at their feet. But, says Ihimaera, the Maori themselves were shown no mercy. On 15 July, 1868, Te Kooti led his people inland on the long journey to seek the land of Canaan. There were two hundred and ninety-seven people that day who started a religious movement that was to have a strong influence on the Maori.

The narrative continues in the biblical style. As he led his people, Te Kooti called the hill on the southern side Mount Moriah, and the two reefs the Tablets of the New Law. He touched the reefs with Aaron's Rod and the New Revelation sprang from the earth. The Lord placed his mantle of protection on the Prophet. Three times they were attacked on their journey to Urewera and three times they were saved. The prophet told Major Biggs that
they only wanted to proceed to their destination in peace. Te Kooti even sent letters entreating the government not to kill them. The initial journey is likened to the wanderings of the tribes of Israel in the wilderness. When attacks are prevented due to inclement weather, it is deemed god's protection. If there are losses, they set up a lamentation. The attack on the Ngatapa fortress is described with great pathos. Only the old and the wounded remain while the others escape down the steep cliff using flax ladders. The prisoners are lined up naked on the edge of the cliff and shot. The prophet leads the lamentation of the people for the martyrs of the Maori nation and Ihimaera himself bids them farewell in the manner of a tangi.

It was in 1883 that Te Kooti was pardoned and this angered many Pakeha. The prophet now asked his followers to disperse and take the Lord's teachings to the people while he went to live under the protection of the Maori king. The matriarch says the lord cast a protective mantle over the prophet and his teachings spread throughout the land and people began to flock to him. Seated in Rongopai, the matriarch exhorts Tamatae to read the Maori Bible and memorize the scriptures. She then reminds him of the sign that attended his birth and she tells him that there was a similar sign at her birth. Now the mantle of leadership falls on him and he must respond to the call of his mana.

The reader's response to this biblical version of the Maori struggle can indeed vary from skepticism and rejection to one of belief and fervour. The Maori who have joined the Ringatu church would definitely consider it true and those fired by patriotism and pride in their Maori heritage would be
moved. The Pakeha reader who is a skeptic even where Christianity is concerned, has little need to deliberate. He sees Te Kooti as a master strategist capable of using the Pakeha religion against the Pakeha himself. This is an instance of appropriation not just of language and art form but of religion itself. One is reminded of Wi Pere’s injunction to the matriarch: to fight the Pakeha you must be like the Pakeha. The irony is further heightened when we realize that Ihimaera is now using his Western education to inspire the Maori and indict the Pakeha.

The Pakeha reader who is a believer finds himself in a quandary. Can he accept the Christian Bible and reject Te Kooti’s version of it? Is not the creation of Israel as a nation dependent on a similar myth? Are we to take the Christian version as a revelation of a higher truth and reject the Maori version as a political strategy? It is interesting to see Nietzsche’s views on Christianity. He says that Christian morality is a slave morality. The slave revolt in morality “begins when ressentiment itself becomes creative and gives birth to values: the ressentiment of creatures to whom the real reaction, that of deed is denied.” This leads to a reversal of values. The rich, godless, evil, violent and sensual are unified into a single concept ‘the world’, which is used as a term of reproach. It has fashioned out of impotence an imaginary state of affairs in which the powerful have become powerless and the powerless have come to dominate (Holingdale 1973:188). Reinhold Niebuhr in his book *Beyond Tragedy* calls this the transvaluation of values which occurs when there is an overturning of hierarchies in society. Christianity itself may be seen as a development which gave the deprived people the
satisfaction of an imaginary revenge even if it be in the afterlife. "The whole of biblical thought is charged with anti-aristocratic ideas, with hopes and predictions that in God's sight the estimates that history places upon human achievement will be overturned" (1937:199).

The questions for the literary critic then, are these: Is Christian myth to be considered part of religion and therefore true? Would the nonbeliever consider it a set of false beliefs? Can both be described using the word 'myth'? Similarly, is Maori Ringatu religion a prophecy, a revelation or false belief? Is it a parody of the Christian myth or a weak imitation put up by a political strategist who knows the power of myth? These are questions not only for the literary critic but the sociologist and political theorist as well. The significance of Te Kooti's achievement can be seen if we consider the sense of loss that the Africans feel. Wole Soyinka talks about the dominance of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria. African religions are so utterly neglected that there is no place of worship of African deities. He had to start a campaign to obtain a place at Ife. The sense of outrage can be understood when Soyinka says, "religions do exist, such as on this continent, that can boast of never having launched a war, any form of jihad or crusade, for the furtherance of their beliefs. Yet those beliefs have proved themselves bedrocks of endurance and survival informing communities as far away as the Caribbean and the Americas. Is there not a lesson here for our universe in this?" (Soyinka 1993:239).

What Te Kooti has achieved is truly remarkable but it is not without parallel in modern times. The Black Muslim Movement in America shows a
What Te Kooti has achieved is truly remarkable but it is not without parallel in modern times. The Black Muslim Movement in America shows a similar pattern. The biography of Malcolm X shows how truth, myth and fiction can be brewed together to form a potent force that can rouse millions and change their lives. The teachings of the prophet Elijah Muhammad showed the Blacks how history had been 'whitened'. It helped them to understand the truth about their own condition but to do that they needed to be given a new myth to believe in. Elijah Muhammad taught that the first humans, Original Man, were a black people. An evil scientist named Yakub rebelled against Allah and produced the Caucasian strain. Then by a series of genetic mutations the White races were created. The White man is by nature evil, a devil who will be soon destroyed. They prophesied the Battle of Armageddon and the followers were told that they must look forward to the day when the word would be given. God is black. The original race is the Black race. Black is the prime colour and colours cannot be mixed to produce black. Black people must give up slave names and adopt new ones. In 1930, the first American Temple of Islam was established and soon there were many others across the country. Malcom X was one of their greatest orators who wielded enormous power. He was assassinated in 1965. Elijah Muhammad died in 1975. (Encyclopaedia of Man, Myth and Magic, Vol.I:279-280).

The process of myth transformation is well explained by Levi-Strauss. In Structural Anthropology 2 (1978) he talks about how myths travel from one place to another. They have to cross the 'linguistic and cultural threshold'
respect a sort of principle of conservation of mythical material, by which any myth could always come from another myth" (1978:256). The transformation may be quantitative, that is, details or elaborations of incident may be added or a new twist given to the myth. It may also suffer diminishing of such details. Successive transformations can exhaust a myth. Yet it does not disappear. “Two paths still remain open: that of fictional elaboration, and that of reactivitation with a view to legitimizing history. This history in turn may be of two types: retrospective, to found a traditional order on a distant past; or prospective, to make the past the beginning of a future which is starting to take shape” (268). Levi-Strauss’s explanation fits the processes in The Matriarch. There is this continuity between mythology, tradition and what we must call politics.

Te Kooti’s transformation of myth serves both the historical and political purpose of the subaltern. In life it will function like an ideology, restoring the group identity, restoring a tradition, motivating the group to believe and act in a particular manner, hope and dream in a particular manner. This establishes the bonds of coherence in the modern tribe of the Maori (as against the Pakeha), stressing the similarities and blurring the differences of old tribal rivalry. The new point of opposition and contrast (perhaps not always inimical) will be the Pakeha. The transformation can be seen as a conceptual one for the Maori. The Maori religion has no prophets, no concept of incarnation. The Maori believed in Gods and spirits. They were nature gods and personifications of ancestors. An animistic religion has no need for prophets. The gods are just as nature is. The concept of mauri, mana
and tapu have already been explained. So Te Kooti seems to have taken that aspect of Christian myth that seemed to fit the historical condition in which the Maori found themselves—that of the oppressed, similar to the condition of Moses and his people in the land of the Pharaoh. There in not much emphasis on the incarnation, Christ's teachings or His sacrifice and resurrection, at least in the Song of Te Kooti as narrated by the matriarch. Therefore Levi-Strauss's views on transformations in myth seem to fit. This is not to belittle the faith of the followers of Ringatu. The irony here is that Te Kooti uses the religion of the Pakeha to arouse his people against the Pakeha. This can be seen as an instance of appropriation for the subaltern purpose. Te Kooti also seems to understand that it must appear distinctly Maori for his purpose is to restore the Maori to his culture. All this is symbolized in the building of the new church, Rongopai. Here Western art and Maori art are harmonized and it is considered a place of healing. The subaltern purpose is not one of total rejection of the Pakeha, but to win a new dignity and equality and this is achieved by the Ringatu.

Elements that can be called mythical / mystical / occult abound in the novel and are often deliberately juxtaposed with the rational and factual. Act III of the novel is titled 'The Tyme of The Spider'. This centres around the happenings at the hui in Wellington and as in the case of the Matawhero Retaliation, we are given multiple perspectives. We have the journalist's description. Being a Pakeha he does not quite understand the Maori language and is yet able to sense the excitement and the tensions at the meeting. We expect his viewpoint to be a rationalist one and when he tells
Tamatae that he could feel the electric presence of the matriarch and that there was a kind of a psychic tussle between the Maori elders, we are inclined to accept it as true. “You Maori must know quite a bit about psychology” he says. Since Tamatae was a mere child at the time of the hui he seeks out people who were present at the Wellington gathering and interviews them, recording what they have to say on tape. These interviews are represented as such and what is interesting is that we realize how limited each view is and how often at variance. These are supposed to be eyewitness accounts. Yet they seem to agree that the events on that day at the hui were unusual.

The matriarch leads her tribe to the gathering. She knows the dual nature of her struggle. She must fight for her right to speak on the marae for it was a male privilege. She must fight for the rights of the Maori over the Pakeha. She has had training in both traditions and is astute and powerful. Her entry is dramatic for she leads her tribe in the song about their genealogy, invokes the power of the sacred adze of the Takitimu and thereafter no male elder can refuse her entry on her terms. She stands up to speak on the marae, knowing well that she is violating the tapu and she is assailed by negative psychic forces. She wills her grandson to stand beside her on the marae and join in the song of creation. His male presence rescues her. She is insulted and refused permission to speak, and in a weird coincidence, the sun seems to go out. The journalist, of course, tells us it was an eclipse, but the effect on the others is dramatic. The narration from here
takes on the child’s perspective and he seems to be regurgitating some lost childhood memories.

One of the tribal elders, Timoti, who had a long-standing quarrel with the matriarch is angered by her presumption and confronts her on the marae and the two seem to be engulfed in a life or death struggle, using psychic will power. Ihimaera works out a remarkable passage, unusual in its technique and powerful in its impact. The point of view alternates between Tamatae (who now talks more like the omniscient author), and the journalist. The author has the privilege of knowing the occult forces at work more completely while the journalist can only give some remembered impressions. The alternating points of view create the tension between the mythical and the rational explanation of what happened on the marae that day.

The ‘spider episode’ if we might call it that, is somehow indefinable. When we consider that the Maori knew how to use occult forces, it seems believable. But the rationalist point of view is difficult to abandon. Is this Ihimaera’s mythicizing and fictionalizing at its best or worst? Or should one not quarrel with the plausibility of the world of the novel but merely accept it as the author has made it? The journalist tells us how Timoti and the matriarch confront one another, the former suddenly falling. The matriarch spreads her black veil over Timoti and gives the journalist the impression that she is ministering to him yet he can sense that some ‘powerful and unexpected psychical force’ or ‘some mortal struggle’ is going on. Tamatae would have us believe that Timoti wishes to draw away her breath by invoking Tane, while the matriarch invokes Hine nui te Po, the goddess of
death. As they are locked in psychic battle, Tiana intervenes realizing the gravity of the situation. When the matriarch turns her gaze on her and also the child Tama, her now spider-like gaze is willing to encompass both of them in death. "And the child suddenly stepped to one side and reaching up, shattered the dark crystals of its eyes so that they fell like mirror shards around him. The spider screamed as the child leapt into its eyes and pulled the matriarch out and into the world of light. The spider convulsed once, twice, thrice, in paroxysms of pain. Then it became still" (266). Is this a figurative way of saying that the matriarch had to be rescued from the spell she herself had created? Is it to be taken literally? Ihimaera has the technique of placing the rational beside the occult, leaving it to the reader to draw conclusions.

The forces of vengeance have not been pacified and Timoti will not be intimidated by a woman. After the meeting, the dignitaries and tribal elders go in for the Maori banquet and Ihimaera gives us a delightful description of the preparations for the hangi. It is here that Timoti tries one more desperate manoeuvre to defeat the matriarch, this time directing the attack on the one who saved her on the marae, the grandchild. Tamatae is taken by an aunt to another table and is not under the immediate protection of the matriarch. Seizing this opportunity, he approaches from behind and attempts to place both his hands on Tamatae's head. This would deprive him of his mana and tapu. It is the gesture of the enemy, that appears to have psychic and social consequences. The matriarch, alert to the danger, calls across the hall to aunt Hirinia to guard the child. Several people hear the call, others do not, being
engrossed in the general hubbub. Some hear the matriarch chant, looking up at the ceiling, others do not. The general bustle turns to confusion as the webs across the ceiling burst, letting hundreds of spiders descend. The matriarch seems to draw a line and they descend to the spot where Timoti stands, completely covering him in moments, paralyzing him, killing him with their poison. The matriarch wins with the help of some occult powers. What happened subsequently, is described through the journalist's perspective, how the child himself was taken to the tent in an unconscious state, and how at the end of it, the matriarch prayed, and called the members of the clan together. "We are the children of Israel. Deliver us, oh god, from Pharaoh." It is this capacity of the Maori to call upon the ancient Maori gods when necessary, and then with equal faith and fervour, to call upon the God who protects the tribe of Israel, that is both paradoxical and interesting. The Maori mind sees no dichotomy in such things.

Ihimaera seems to anticipate the reader's question. Were there no witnesses? To get an answer, we need to jump from Chapter twelve to sixteen where a number of interviews are presented as such. One of those interviewed says he would not want to cross the matriarch's path for he had seen her gazing at the ceiling of the hall and a great cloud of black dust drifted slowly form the ceiling, as the spiders descended. Another, who was at the same table with her, saw her eyes suddenly widen and when she cried out in Maori, it was as if there was a thunderbolt in his head. "She had a power that can only be described as supernatural. People these days don't seem to understand that word..." The most interesting witness is the girl
called Agnes Mereana Waipare who was serving at the table where Tamatae sat. She suddenly heard a chanting in her head and felt dizzy and had to put the food down. Suddenly the spiders were on her too and she could feel only evil and death. She was in a mental hospital for a long time after that experience and says that only her faith in Jesus and the church saved her. 

The fourth witness is a tribal historian, Tamihana Florsheim Ellis. Though a Maori, his account is rational and he does not attribute the incident to any magic. He lets us know that the elders wanted the webs removed and it was Reverend Williams who had said that they were in God’s care and let them remain. Twice before, in 1919 and 1936 they had ripped open, but the hall had been empty. This is followed by the description of the journalist, Alan Gordon Hitchings. He says he was right there. He heard the soft guttural chant, like an invocation. The matriarch drew a line between the webs and the spiders landed where the elder stood. “It was she, Artemis, who caused them to do this. I swear it” (352). While the journalist’s account leaves us intrigued, aunt Hiriana’s account leaves us totally puzzled. She dismisses the whole incident as a freakish coincidence and does not like people thinking of her mother as a witch. She would like Tamatae to believe that Artemis was a god fearing woman.

Is all this art, fiction or history? Ihimaera confounds the critic for he does contrary things. He mythologizes and de-mythologizes a little later, he constructs the incident and then deconstructs it. He seems to record history one moment and then deconstruct even the history. If several witnesses of one event cannot produce a factual account that agrees on the important
details, can the historian be sure that what he presents is correct or that another perspective is wrong? It is only when we begin to doubt the authenticity of any record that we are willing to doubt the record of history as seen by the Pakeha. We also come to realize how unreliable memory or even observation can be. The limitation of any perspective is what comes through. We realize also that the mythicizing process is ever at work in real life even more than in fiction. More than once Tamatae says, "I have tried to divine the truth from the pattern, the facts from the flawed recollections. It has been so difficult for, once the legend is established the recollections began to align themselves with that rather than with reality" (289). We see this process at work also in Ngugi's novel Matigari. Rushdie's statement that "reality is a matter of perspective" is relevant here.

Ihimaera tells us that there was a centre for the training of priests which was rigorous, involving mind control and such exercises. However, it becomes a little difficult to believe that just because of his mana, Tamatae is able to duplicate the performance of the matriarch. On one occasion, when grandfather Ihaka attempts to give the rights of the eldest to another boy Tora claiming that he was Te Ariki's eldest son, Artemis had just holds out her hands, squeezing her palms together and the boy falls down as if someone had tried to strangle him. Tamatae performs a similar feat on the marae to defeat the machinations of the grandfather. Quite often these accounts are not convincing.

The matriarch seems to be able to induce a mystical experience in the child Tamatae. Though the prose itself is lyrical and beautiful and evocative,
it is again an obvious effort on the author’s part to make us believe that Tamatae is a special child. On one occasion she tells the child that his life began many thousands of years before he was born in Waituhi. She has been telling him of the time of Te Kore and the twelve changings of Te Po. There is a sudden calm, it is as if they can hear the earth breathing and the forces of creation surging through it. All of a sudden, a veil lifts and the matriarch and the child are transported into a timeless Void. The earth itself seems to glow with the life forces. “The child saw into the essence of things. He saw the gleaming sap ascending the trees, and the sap and the dark red blood coursing his transparent body were one and the same. He saw into the geological structures of the earth, and the diamond sparkling structure of the mountains were one and the same as the gleaming cellular structure of his body. He saw the movement of light and wind and cloud, and they were one and the same as his own life force.” Then he felt as if he were spiraling out into the cosmos to witness the processes of creation itself and then he knew he was in Te Kore. “He thought he was going to die, for the feeling he had was like he thought death must be. He could not cry because he had no tears to weep. He could not call out in fear because he had no voice. He could not reach out because he had no form”(109). And from Te Kore he had to journey back through the twelve changings and he heard the chants and saw the very sights intoned to him, he heard the karanga and felt many hands anointing him and whispering benediction. He felt himself returning through the tribes of man, generation after generation and then he heard the voice of the matriarch. “E mokopuna, listen. The mana and the tapu still remain, in the
and in Waituhi . . . it is not something to be seen with the eye, e mokopuna, but with the heart and soul and intellect”(110).

This trance like state is experienced three times by Tamatae in the novel. The first is narrated from the omniscient author point of view. The second time it happens during the confrontation between grandfather Ihaka and Tamatae, the spiraling feeling coming spontaneously and the third time it is during the narration of the story of Takitimu, the sacred canoe that brought his tribe to Aotearoa. Each time the description of the timeless feeling is indeed evocative and beautiful. The symbols of myth help him to discover a pattern and meaning in his experiences. The transcendental experience of the mystic cannot be verbalized except through images and symbols and they are most often drawn from the myth systems of the culture in which the mystic lives. The myth therefore is the medium through which the transcendental is sought to be communicated, or the medium through which it seeks to communicate itself. It may be futile to argue about the ‘truth’ of Tamatae’s experience. We can only accept the fictional world as the author has created it and try to see if the experience is in keeping with the other constructs of that fictional world. Anyone who has read about spiritual experiences of yogis in India or the methods by which the ‘chakras’ can be activated or the experiences of advanced practitioners of Buddhist or Zen meditation will see that the experience described is not altogether improbable. The terms used or the symbols used in each culture are different. Paul Brunton’s books A Search in Secret India and A Search in Secret Egypt show how such skills were widely known and practiced by ancient peoples.
The literary critic, however, finds that he is walking the borderline between religion, mysticism, myth and fiction and just one step to the left or right (even if we take into account the political burden on those words) might put him in conflicting positions. Once again we realize that it is a matter of perspective. Using Tamatae's voice, Ihimaera tells us that though the Maori were considered barbaric by the Pakeha, their concepts of time and space and their speculations about creation and the gods are similar to those of the Greeks. "For instance, the myth of the separation of Rangi and Papa by their offspring reminds us of the Greek myth of Uranus and Gaea. The god Tutakangaahu cut the sinews which linked Papa and Rangi and Tanemahuta wrenched them apart and kept them eternally separated. In the Hesiodic fable, Cronus separated the heavenly pair by mutilating his oppressive father Uranus. Remember this context as I tell you about Takitimu"(252).

The story of Takitimu is history, legend and myth. It is now accepted by historian and archeologist that the Polynesians and Melanesians were expert navigators who sailed across the Pacific island chain to reach Australia and New Zealand. The story of the seven sacred canoes is full of specific details of names of canoes, priests and the type of cargo they carried. Even the oars had specific names. The voyage of the seven canoes was planned after Hoaki, who had sailed south in search of the land found by Kupe (who had sailed even earlier) returned to Hawaiki, much to the amazement of the people. The romance of the new land captivated the people's imagination. It was Tamatae ariki nui who gave the order to his tribe to build a giant canoe
called Takitimu to sail to the southern land. It was to carry only sacred personages and relics. It was a sacred task to build the canoe and special rituals were performed to protect it and render it holy. The dangerous and the marvelous always evokes fear and the supernatural and the magical are invoked for protection. Perhaps it is at this point that history is mythicized by the people.

In the most lyrical prose, Tamatae/Ihimaera tells us of the building of the Takitimu. What impresses us about the Maori is their reverence for life, an attitude that is sadly lacking in modern life. There is also a strict demarcation between the sacred and the profane, and any violation of the rules regarding the sacred is severely punished. In the building of the canoe, the first task for the priests is to identify the sacred tree whose wood will serve as the timber for the canoe. This brings us to the myth of the sacred adzes. The priests pray for many days asking the gods to guide them to the tree. Then, carrying the sacred adzes that are credited with mystic and miraculous powers, they go into the dark forest and after a days journey, rest for the night. The morning sun sends a beam of light that strikes the adze and goes forth to encircle a giant tree. This is the sign for the priests. The ritual song for the tree is sung: “You have stood so long with us. You have been a companion. You have been a friend. This is not your death but, rather, this is the beginning of your life. Farewell. Pass into life.” As the priests chant, they lift the adze and bring it down slowly, in a symbolic stroke, not touching the tree at all, yet the tree is cut as if by a laser beam moving swiftly and cleanly through the trunk. More karakia is sung and the task of
shaping begins. Six ornamental paddles are made, each having a sacred name. Festivity, ritual and song accomplish the task of making the canoe and the rules regarding tapu are strictly followed. The priests look for more signs in the sky and at the auspicious hour the cargo of the gods is prepared. These are not just carvings of wood as the more mundane would imagine, but symbols of psychic forces of such power that on the sea, the fleet is accompanied by fiery birds in the sky, and in the sea the whales and sea monsters, the taniwha, and the flying fish accompany the craft. The voyage that is expected to take nine days takes eleven, for the fleet is caught in a storm. When the situation looks calamitous, the high priest Ruawharo knows that only the sacred adze will save them. As he raises the sacred adze aloft, “it began to gleam with supernatural power, then with both hands he brought the cutting edge down onto the sea in front of the holy ark. And suddenly, with that symbolic stroke, there was fire burning on the water, burning away the waves, the line of the cut moving swiftly and cleanly away, away in the direction of the south”(264).

What is remarkable about the narration is the merging of Maori and biblical myth. From the beginning, the Takitimu is called the holy ark reminding us of the story of Noah, and the fire blazing the way for the canoe, reminds us of the events in the life of Moses, the Holy Ghost appearing as fire on the bush. A similar parting of the waters helps the tribe of Moses to pass. “And should any person abuse the tapu then, lo, the penalty was death, just as surely as it had been death in biblical times for any person who touched the Ark of the Covenant” (255). The use of biblical style for the
passages that describe Maori myth help the reader to see the connections. The closing episode of the story of Takitimu tells us how the canoe touches many points on the island, implanting the mauri or life giving force, lighting sacred fires for the new shrines and settlements. At the end only Tahu potiki and a few other holy ones are left in the ark and they prepare for the final resting place of the ark. After the farewell rites, the others are asked to proceed with the warning not to turn back. One disobeys, and he sees the greenstone adze rise and shine with a supernatural light, the cutting edge facing the mountainside. A huge tidal wave lifts the ark and as the side of the mountain opens to reveal a greenstone altar, the ark disappears into it. There is a site believed to be very sacred, where spiritual energies are strong. The matriarch constantly uses myth to ingrain in Tamatae’s mind the fact that the Maori have a right to the land from the time of Takitimu. “The spiritual and the physical are one and the same, grandson, and when you walk the land, you are in the company of the gods” (292).

Another myth related to the Takitimu is the one concerning the kumara seed. One of the seven canoes carried the seed to be planted in the new land. The expeditions for settling the lands to the south were planned meticulously. The Maori clearly understood that it was not just the transportation of people, but the transplanting of a culture. So the priests and the holy men who boarded the canoes were trained to repeat all the religious and tribal lore, trained to perform all rites and ceremonies and trained in the occult sciences. No error in transmission was tolerated. Besides this, seeds of plants, implements and other essentials were also
carried. The canoe that carried the kumara seed, the Horouta, was companion to the Takitimu and was partially wrecked near the mouth of the Ohiwa river and the kumara seed lost. The matriarch tells Tamatae, how his ancestor Pourangahua went back to Hawaiki to bring more seed in time for the planting season. His uncle there gave him not only the seed but two giant birds which would carry him to the southern land. He was instructed not to fly near Mount Hikurangi and not to pluck its feathers. He had to feed them and then send them home. He disobeyed both injunctions and the poor birds died on the way back. This may not be as fantastic as it seems at first when we consider that the albatross and other migratory birds may have been used for navigational purposes.

The significance of these myths become clear when the matriarch tells Tamatae that she is now consigning him on his longest voyage. She is doing to him what Moses's mother did when she placed him in a wicker basket and consigned him to the Nile. The daughter of the Pharaoh discovered him and brought him up in the palace where he grew to manhood. He could then plan the escape for his people. Now Tamatae too is grown up and it was time for him to tell the Pakeha to let his people go. His ancestors Wi Pere and Te Kooti had done the same. The wisdom which had been passed down to her she had passed on to him and he must continue the voyage to freedom. The words of the matriarch are important for three reasons. First, they establish the continuity, relevance and importance of the inheritance, of myth and culture as well as land. Secondly, it shows how the Maori can synthesize Maori and biblical myth to suit their historical condition. Thirdly, it
counterpoints one myth against another. It would be illogical to reject one myth and accept the other. All this helps Tamatae to understand that like Moses, he must go into the land of the Pharaoh, the Pakeha, and then using his knowledge and position, win freedom for his people. His voyage has just begun.

One of the important achievements of Ihimaera is to make us see Maori myth as tribal history. By including Wi Pere and Te Kooti in her narration, the matriarch has integrated the modern with the traditional and has updated tribal history. The Maori take pride in maintaining continuity by training each generation in the recitation of the tribal genealogy which often traces twenty to thirty generations. With the coming of the Pakeha, many such traditions will die out and Ihimaera wants to both inform and warn young Maori of what will happen to their identity and heritage if the slow decay of their traditions is allowed. Will Tamatae be able to carry it forward? The attempt to carry the narrative forward gets hopelessly tangled in the Pakeha tradition as the Venice episode shows us. Wi Pere found a place in the tribal history, and more and more inter-marriages between the Pakeha and Maori complicate the issue. Ihimaera, through Tamatae, is groping towards a world view that integrates myth systems in a common humanity.

The hybrid nature of the new culture is inescapable. Ihimaera shows that the Maori people understand and accept this and nowhere is it more plainly seen than in the sacred meeting place constructed by the family of Wi Pere and the followers of Te Kooti. Wi Pere’s son Moanaroa Pere was the architect and Pa Ruru was the priest. The story of the sacred log brought
from Purapura Kapet to Rongopai is told and retold among the people and has become a myth. The huge log was as light as a feather until someone violated the tapu and suddenly the log was immovable. Only when the guilty men had left the group were the others able to handle the log again for it once again became as light as a feather. “In many ways it is quite medieval, bringing with it echoes of the great Anglo-Saxon poem “The Dream of The Rood” in which the Cross of Christ narrates its own intimate story of how it was carried by the Lord . . . And they made the house into a likeness unto themselves, the iwi, and their dreams” (185). Rongopai, the shrine of peace, has an architecture that is essentially Maori, and in a way it is a revival of Maori art and architecture. Yet it blends in the Pakeha influence in a most harmonious way. It fuses Christianity and Maoritanga in a complementary relationship. Here the past and the present are harmonized. There are many stories of people having mystical experiences and miraculous healings. It contains wooden carvings denoting the ancestors and it also has paintings in the modern style, including one of Wi Pere. On one of the panels, a male ancestor wears in his hair, not the royal huia feather but a Scotch thistle, again, the symbol of the prophet. “Rongopai was a fantasy as well as a real world. It conjured up an Eden where the spirit and the flesh were integrated, where the creatures of light and creature of darkness lived coincidentally with man in one, single universe. There were no barriers between the past and the present, the living and the dead, and the spirit and the flesh, for all were contained in that eternal continuum known as the Creation. And Rongopai itself was the healing place . . .” (192-193). It is interesting to note how Rongopai and Eden merge in the Maori concept of the ideal harmonious
condition. This concept of creation as an ever-changing continuum is something that the Pakeha too needs to think about. Ihimaera clearly shows that just as the Maori have learnt much from the Pakeha, so too the Pakeha can learn from the Maori. When the Rongopai was renovated people from all faiths, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Christian and non-Christian came to offer their services, and it has indeed become a place of reconciliation and healing.

The Matriarch has at the core the story of Tamatae's extended family, from the matriarch and Wi Pere, the various aunts and uncles to the cousins Sammy and Charles, and the rival Toroa. To understand the matriarch we need to know tribal history and Maori myth. To understand kinship conflicts we need to know Maori traditions and beliefs. To understand the Maori's love for the land we need to know how they came to be dispossessed. To understand the power struggles between Pakeha and Maori we need to know about the treaties and Commissions and various Land Acts. To understand the oppression suffered by the Maori, we need to listen to his version of history. To understand the burden of the heritage of struggle that Tamatae inherits, we need to know all of these.

If Ihimaera had written a novel mainly about the family, the reader, especially one situated outside the cultural context, would have had to look for the information about myth and culture in other books and documents, and perhaps adopt a new historicist approach to read the text. There is no room here for a full discussion of the theory but its important tenets are outlined by Peter Barry as follows:
1. They juxtapose literary and non-literary texts, reading the former in the light of the latter.

2. They try thereby to 'defamiliarise' the canonical literary text, detaching it from the accumulated weight of previous literary scholarship and seeing it as if new.

3. They focus attention (within the text and co-text) on issues of state power and how it is maintained, on patriarchal structures and their perpetuation, and on the process of colonization, with its accompanying 'mind-set'.

4. They make use, in doing so, of aspects of the post-structuralist outlook, especially Derrida's notion that every facet of reality is textualised, and Foucault's idea of social structure, as determined by dominant 'discursive practices'.” (Barry 1995:179)

New historicism as a critical approach was formulated by Stephen Greenblatt in his book Renaissance Self-Fashioning published in 1980, and Ihimaera's novel was published in 1986, and it is possible that Ihimaera was aware of its importance. The Matriarch adopts these methods as part of its narrative strategy. It provides the necessary information about the cultural and historical condition within the text. For example, he includes eleven speeches of Wi Pere in Parliament in chapters thirteen and fourteen (315-339). The novel includes details about the Land Wars, the establishment of the Maori Land Court, the East Coast Lands Titles Investigation Act, 1866, the Native Land Commission of 1873, Royal Commission of 1920 and so on
(238-244). The novel does focus on patriarchal structure and shows the matriarch in conflict with it as in the hui at Wellington. The novel also deals with the issues of colonization and the mind-set that it creates and attempts to deconstruct it. It attempts to destabilize the authenticity of the Pakeha version of history, demonstrates its prejudices and gives us the subaltern perspective. It is really an alternative history that is presented as fiction in *The Matriarch*. Before the advent of new-historicism, the literary text enjoyed a ‘privileged’ position, it was foregrounded, and all other information about the age was the ‘background’. New-historicism gives equal weightage to both the literary and non-literary text. It is the method based on the ‘parallel reading’ of texts. It is what Wilson and Dutton call reading literature ‘within the archival continuum’ for all other historical documents of the period are treated on par with the literary text (Barry 174). In his presentation of history, Ihimaera seems to paradoxically, both illustrate and undermine the theory of the new-historicists, because the relevant information is interred in the text. In other words, the co-text becomes the text itself. Though this narrative strategy helps Ihimaera to highlight the Maori cause, at times the burden of historical fact that is made part of fiction makes the reading of the novel a little tedious.

If Ihimaera has textualized many aspects of history, he is also aware of the relative nature of reality and the possibility of deconstructing both the text and the reality. This is increasingly felt when he deals with the hybrid nature of both experience and culture for the Maori of today. Nowhere is this more evident than in the closing chapters that give a surrealistic description
of Venice. Tamatae goes to Venice in order to learn more about his grandmother, who had been sent there to be educated. Venice seems to be an unreal world for it has so many resonances and reverberations that call up responses from the observer's psyche. Life is more like a continuum for Tama can conjure up the lives of Goethe, Bellini, Turner, Stravinsky and a host of others. The very sculptures of the winged lions, centaurs, golden stallions and the like help him to see the correspondences in the way myth works in any culture. So taken up is he with such thoughts and feelings that he is left with a feeling of disorientation. That night he has a strange dream, so realistic that it seems like a visionary experience. It seems as if all the tensions and anxieties in his subconscious are playing themselves out -- his preoccupation with the life and death of his beloved Artemis, her strange conviction that he had been created in her image, the perpetual tension between Artemis and his mother Tiana, and his preoccupation with death and unreality. So, in the dream, he follows a funeral barge across the river to a tomb where he feels the presence of Artemis, and a voice says, "the price must be paid". Then a long fish-shaped figure of the goddess Hine Te Ariki appears and it looks as if she wants to take him and Tiana away. This extraordinary passage seems to fuse dream, myth and reality.

There are other sections in the novel where the reader feels a sense of unease regarding the relationship between fiction and reality. Tamatae talks about the amazing phenomena witnessed during some events. Artemis, on her return voyage from Venice, appears to already possess such power, that the ship is accompanied by a school of whales. This is very much like the
Greek myth of Ariane. Again, in Chapter twenty-one, Tamatae describes the sighting of a huge sea-monster. On July, 1913, the officers of the SS Mokoia report that they have tracked a taniwha off the East coast. It is said to be sixty to eighty feet long with large fins and a square head. It has a large growth, like a cock’s comb, where the head joined the body, and one such creature was portrayed in Rongopai. “Too fanciful, perhaps? But Listen: the crew of SS Rosamond also reported sighting the same sea-monster, this time observing it between Tologa Bay and Gisborne where it appeared to be heading. A school of porpoises was said to be in attendance upon it” (431).

The holy men of the Maori await its arrival near the cliffs and as it approached, the waters were lit up with its phosphorescence. At the appointed place, the dolphins stand on their tails in a circle. The great creature raises its head and body and it is piteous to see the cancerous growth that seems to be rooted in its brain. A great gash has been inflicted on its eye by a propeller and its skin appears blotched by the polluted waters. This is Ruamano, the taniwha that had led Takitimu to Aotearoa. The priests know that it has come to bid farewell and die and they minister to it and sing ceremonial songs. Saluting each point on the compass, saluting the earth, man and the gods, the great beast dies and the porpoises set up a great thrashing, pushing it back into the sea.

The long communion between man and the gods has come to an end. There is epidemic, disease and defeat for the Maori soon after. The next year, 1914, the Great War begins. Ihimaera seems to be using the symbols of myth to convey the deep sense of loss of spirituality, not only for the Maori
but for mankind. Levi-Strauss points out that development creates the opposition between nature and culture. It is through nature that man may establish contact with ancestors, spirits and the gods. This is the notion of 'supernature' which is undeniably above culture, as nature itself is below it. (1978:320)

Levi-Strauss's method of analyzing a narrative using the principle of binary oppositions is an effective technique to bring order to the novel's structure. In trying to intermash several stories and purposes, Ihimaera uses a splicing technique that at times seems random and chaotic. Perhaps the technique was intended to convey the random nature of life itself and the fragmentary way in which we perceive and understand it. Beneath this apparent chaos we can perceive a pattern. Maori myth explains the great opposing principles that make up the cosmos -- light and darkness, earth and sky, male and female, sacred and profane. By explaining these principles, the Maori arrive at a harmonious world view, for these oppositions are part of a single whole. The contrasting sets have nothing in common with the Judaeo-Christian concept of opposing evil and good (David Lewis 1982:37). In real life however, the oppositions do create conflict, especially male-female, father-son, elder-younger and so on.

Kinship conflicts and rivalries are an important part of the novel. The "primal" conflict that gives rise to other conflicts in the novel is the one between Artemis and her husband Ihaka. It is basically the male-female conflict, as both of them have mana and are the elders of their tribes. To complicate this arrives the grandson Tamatae whom Artemis considers to be
born in her own image. Her special love for the child heightens this conflict. Artemis tries to give him mana and special powers and Ihaka tries to take it away from him. (The psychologist friend of Tamatae gives a Freudian interpretation of this triangular conflict.) Ihaka suddenly claims that another boy Toroa is the eldest son of Te Ariki, thereby depriving Tamatae of his mana. So bitter is the conflict that the grandfather develops an implacable hatred and Tamatae is warned by his grandmother to distrust him. The challenge to Tamatae's mana by Toroa receives extended treatment and is finally settled only when Tamatae demonstrates his extraordinary power by making him fall down without laying hands on him. All this may prove a little tedious for the non-Maori reader. The question of mana that gives the eldest son extra privileges (both psychic and material) has other consequences. Tamatae and his sisters have to face the envy and bitterness of the cousins, Sammy for instance. It sets up an unseen barrier between Tamatae and his younger brother, for he can never hope to be as intelligent and as important as his elder brother. There is great love between Tama and his mother Tiana but there is also an undertone of resentment because Tiana feels that Artemis has usurped her place in her son's heart.

At the basis of all this is the story of the separation of the earth-mother and sky-father, and the division between the sacred and the profane. Another myth that influences kinship is the story of the god Tane. He creates the first woman, but his subsequent act of marrying his daughter, makes incest both acceptable and unacceptable. This ambiguous attitude is seen among the Maori men, for when the whole family, especially the women, protest against
the unwanted attentions of an uncle toward his niece, Te Ariki the family elder maintains neutrality and will not use his authority to admonish the man. This makes Tamatae challenge his father, leading to a violent altercation between them and Tiana's intervention with the knife stops it. Again, in the clash of wills between Artemis and the elder on the marae the god Tane and the goddess Hine nui te Po are invoked and it is the goddess of death who wins for no one can escape her power. The primal conflict that underlies all this is the male-female conflict. Behavior patterns in Maori society are influenced by the myths they hold true.

Since opposition is inherent in life there is the need for a mediator. In Maori myth, this role is played by the demi-god Mui. He is well known throughout the Polynesian and Micronesian islands, yet is not worshipped as a god except in Tonga. “He belongs to a group of mythological beings whom the anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss, terms ‘mediators’, ambiguous characters who move between the polar opposites like heaven and earth, gods and men. It was because Mui fished up the Polynesian lands out of the ocean, slowed the sun’s daylight passage, brought fire to man and attempted to conquer death that he was known as the great mediator on mankind’s behalf—albeit a very tricky one” (Lewis and Forman eds. 1982:37).

When we look at the story of the mortals in the novel, the polar opposition is a racial one. The mediators are Wi Pere, Te Kooti, Artemis and Tamatae himself. Wi Pere uses his position as Member of Parliament to plead the Maori cause. Te Kooti uses persuasion, violence and religion for his purpose. Artemis challenges the Prime Minister himself on the marae and
keeps the struggle alive. She trains Tamatae as mediator and tells him that he must learn to both hate and forgive the Pakeha. Tamatae seeks to make both the Maori and the Pakeha understand the historical antecedents of the conflict, making explicit the anger of the Maori at the many unjust deals regarding land. Ihimaera/Tamatae uses the art of fiction to mediate.

The structure of the novel can be seen in terms of these oppositions and mediations. The style too seems to swing from one end to the other. We have the very matter-of-fact style of the newspaper report and the lyrical biblical style of the sections that narrate the myth. The perspective fluctuates between the reasonable and rational to the magical and mystical. There is this oscillatory movement in both theme and style.

It is interesting to adapt and adopt Levi-Strauss's method of structural analysis. We could take his analysis of the Asdiwal and Oedipus myth. Levi-Strauss draws a distinction between sequences and schemata. Sequences form the apparent content of the myth, the things that happen in chronological order. These can be organized on different planes or levels of abstraction in accordance with schemata, which exist simultaneously, just like a melody which is composed for several voices. The schemata can refer to the oppositions inherent in the situation or in the relationships. Levi-Strauss outlines geographical schema, sociological schema, techno-economic schema, global integration schema. An example of how Levi-Strauss schematizes the initial situation and relationships is given below:

\begin{align*}
\text{mother} & \quad \text{daughter} \\
\text{elder} & \quad \text{younger}
\end{align*}
In *The Matriarch* we can distinguish between five kinds of schema. All the sequences of events, descriptions, depictions and even Ihimaera’s exhortations, can be fitted under the appropriate schema. We have the mythical-cosmological, both Maori and Christian; mediators in mythology and mediators in race history; oppositions in tribe and in family; The Maori-Pakeha confrontation; the oppositions in style.
Maori and Christian myth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Earth (Papa)</th>
<th>Sky (Rangi)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>profane</td>
<td>sacred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>darkness</td>
<td>light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spirit world</td>
<td>under-world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goddess</td>
<td>male gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Canaan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharaoh</td>
<td>Moses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>master</td>
<td>slave</td>
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</tbody>
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Tribe and family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ihaka</td>
<td>Artemis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timoti</td>
<td>Artemis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elder</td>
<td>younger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ihaka</td>
<td>Tamatae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artemis</td>
<td>Tiana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamatae</td>
<td>Toroa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mediators in myth and history

Mui is godlike, creates the islands Mui is man-like in that he is mortal, lengthens the days and approaches plays tricks, goes fishing, brings fire the goddess of fire. to man, uses magic as means.

Wi Pere, had Pakeha father, thought Wi Pere had Maori mother and like a Pakeha, mediated with Te wives, felt like a Maori, spoke for Kooti for the Pakeha Maori and used the Parliament as means.

Artemis was educated in Venice, Artemis was leader of her tribe, knew Pakeha myth and accepted believed in Maori myth, synthesizing some of their ways. Christianity with it, used mana as means.

Te Kooti, knew the power of Te Kooti, tribal leader at heart, used Christianity and used it as a strategy the concept of utu, led his people in to create the Ringatu Church. the struggle using the Ringatu Church. Used religion as means.

Tamatae, western education and life Tamatae, retrieves Maori belief, style using fiction
### Style and Point of View

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lyrical / biblical</th>
<th>matter-of-fact, journalistic reporting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imagined history</td>
<td>historical documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mythical / mystical</td>
<td>rational / scientific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dream / fantasy</td>
<td>realism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion</td>
<td>fact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maori perspective</td>
<td>Pakeha perspective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This structural analysis helps to see how Ihimaera has manipulated the mass of historical and mythological information in the text. Another way in which Levi-Strauss sees structure is through the mythemes. There are certain patterns of behaviour or action that can be viewed as clusters.

The mythemes in *The Matriarch* can be isolated in this manner:

Ririria trains Wi Pere for his mission

Wi Pere trains Artemis for her mission

Artemis trains Tamatae for his mission

Te Kooti trains his followers
Wi Pere speaks in Parliament for the Maori

Artemis speaks on the marae for the Maori

Tamatae uses the art of fiction to speak to the Maori and Pakeha

Te Kooti preaches the new religion to inspire the Maori

Ihaka feels jealous of Tamatae for he comes between him and his wife

Tiana feels jealous of Artemis for she comes between her and her son

The younger generation feel jealous of Tamatae because he has the power of mana

Ihaka feels anger at the pride and power of Artemis

The male tribal elders feel anger when Artemis speaks on the marae

Tamatae feels anger against Ihaka for threatening his mana

Tamatae feels anger against Toroa for challenging his mana

Toroa feels anger when he is humiliated at the tangi and at his own wedding

Artemis was born with one eye open swimming in blood

Tamatae was born with one eye open swimming in blood

Bianca was born with one eye open swimming in blood
The taniwha and other fish accompany the Takitimu on its voyage.

The Taniwha and other fish accompany the ship when Artemis sails back from Venice.

Such a structural analysis has the limited value of helping us to perceive a pattern in the narration. It is however inadequate to analyze the thematic purpose of the novel.

What is Ihimaera’s achievement in the novel? Let us consider C.K. Stead’s assessment:

"On page 370 Ihimaera repeats Te Kooti’s cry: ‘We are still slaves in the land of the Pharaoh’. It is a strange cry to come from a man much honoured in his own country and now working as New Zealand Consul in New York: but whatever the facts, in the mind it may be so. And if that is the case, freedom can only be achieved in the mind. No external power can confer it. My own view is that the kind of picking over old wounds and ancient evils that this novel represents is not the way to go about freeing the mind. The past doesn’t have to be forgotten: but its rights and wrongs belong to those who lived them, not to us. There is an egotism of defeat, just as there is of victory. The sense of having been wronged can become, like alcohol, a way of life. The Irish seem to have lived from centuries off moral indignation -- is that what Ihimaera wants for his people? His proper task was the craft of fiction. He owed it to himself to write a more considered novel--one which used language more scrupulously. Everyone would be better served by a

There may be some truth in Stead's criticism, but that there are still many grievances waiting to be redressed is a fact. As late as October 1996, much of the land taken unjustly from the Maori tribes was returned. To quote from *The Times*:

"Maoris in 77m land deal: Wellington: New Zealand announced a 77.4 million settlement in land and cash with a South Island Maori tribe over claims dating back 150 years, but denied the deal, made eight days before a general election, was politically motivated.

Dong Graham, the Treaty Negotiations Minister, said that the government had agreed in principle with the Ngai Tahu to settle the tribe's claim to large tracts of South Island after negotiating for more than five years." (Saturday Oct. 5, 1996, page 15)

Another criticism leveled against the novel is that the protagonist Tamatae does practically nothing except establish his *mana*. Perhaps this is a wrong approach, for in searching for the truth about his ancestors, he has told us the history of the tribe, the myths of the tribe, and given the subaltern history. Stead says that though Ihimaera can be lyrical and sensitive, here we see 'the novelist as warrior' and the reader becomes an ally or an enemy. Ironically, this is partly the intention for it then forces the reader to reassess his position taking the alternate history into consideration. The overall intention is made clear in Chapter Eight of the novel in the section on Rongopai, the House of Healing. The novel succeeds in doing three
things: it makes the new generation Maori aware of their culture and heritage and gives them a new self-dignity; it makes the Pakeha have a new perspective of himself as well as the Maori; it makes other readers aware of the process of cultural change and conflict. We are made to see not just the clash of cultures but what emerges out of it. As Levi-Strauss points out, "the attempts at compromise are only likely to lead to two results: either the disorganization or collapse of the system of one of the groups, or an original synthesis, but one which then consists in the emergence of a third system which cannot be reduced to either of the two." What Ihimaera wishes to do is to warn the Maori of the first possibility and tell both the Maori and the Pakeha of the desirability of the second.