

modes of expression which Māori used in writing for the newspapers, the ways in which they combined oral and written usage, and the effects of literacy on their writing and thinking.

Writing by Māori for the newspapers reveals the oral style in which they were versed and a capacity and inventiveness in composition which the pen, the times and printed publication required. In particular, the poetic mannerisms of the oral tradition, in which rhetoric and metaphor prevailed, are remarkable—and often puzzling. We may not think to go to newspapers in search of poetry but these otherwise prosaic, informative pages are indeed rich testimony to the high talk of Māori oral tradition. They contain some examples of what we can suppose are near facsimile texts of ancient times but their historical interest also lies in capturing modifications wrought by literacy. There are versions of old texts in strikingly new settings, literary genres embellished with oral conventions, and incorporation of knowledge revealed by Pākehā. The papers therefore exemplify how Māori used literacy and became acquainted with publishing; they represent their first writing for the public domain and their first experience as publishers. A long record of Māori intellectual engagement in print, they offer insight for scholarship on the shift from an oral to literate mentality.<sup>4</sup> How Māori thought about the extraordinary, often contentious, matters of the day, was in part a consequence of their literacy, because they were informed by what they read and, as they wrote, they learnt to arrange and describe observations and arguments in different ways.

Interest in Māori language, oral tradition and literacy is thus well served by the newspapers. But they are also witness to an aspect of New Zealand history that I will refer to tangentially, and that is informal exchanges between Māori and Pākehā. These play a smaller part in published histories of those years because grand fights attract more attention (and the newspapers are not without reports of those), but while they went on so did ordinary conversations. The papers document some of that dialogue, in letters between contributors, reports of speeches in meetings and, indirectly, in the use of Māori and European traditions. The interchange of two means, styles and cultures of composition offers a perhaps idealised, yet hopeful trope of successful human communication—or at least the endeavour to achieve it. The ease with which Māori amalgamated the oral and the written, and with which Pākehā employed Māori erudition and figures of speech, attests a regard for each other's discourse. No doubt at times that borrowing was tactical or contrived. The papers were after all highly engaged politically and writers opinionated. But on occasion when Māori and Pākehā use each other's poetry and thinking, we read something courteous, appreciative of difference, suggestive of a possible rapport.

Māori wrote for all the newspapers and used all genres—editorials, letters, articles, obituaries, reports of meetings and events, advertisements, notices. Occasionally they offered complete texts of the primary genres of their oral repertoire—genealogies, sayings, songs, incantations, and narratives—although it