

Rawiri Paratene's play about police harassment, **The Proper Channels?**

The simple answer, though no less valid for that, is that it's all good stuff. If Maori people can produce literature of a high standard then it should be made available. But it very rarely is. There have been breakthroughs: Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace have both had novels and collections of stories published successfully in orthodox editions; Hone Tuwhare, Alastair Campbell and Vernice Wineera Pere have seen editions of their poetry acclaimed; Rowley Habib's plays are a welcome feature on New Zealand television.

But for many other authors the only outlets have been specifically Maori publications such as **Te Ao Hou**, **Te Kaea** and **Koru** magazines, read primarily by other Maoris — and not many of them. This has been the loss not only of the artists concerned but of the wider New Zealand public, for whom the new Maori literary tradition has remained almost as hidden as the old one.

If any justification is needed, therefore, for the publication of a book devoted to Maori writing, it is enough that New Zealanders can now savour the very positive talents of hitherto unknown compatriots. Assessing individually the work of more than thirty writers would be impossible here. I have my favourites, of course: Here-taunga Pat Baker's swashbuckling, macho adventures set in pre-European Bay of Plenty make me want to go back to his novel **Behind the Tattooed Face**, while Keri Hulme's haunting story "The Kaumatua and the Broken Man" leaves me excited about her forthcoming novel **The Bone People**; the magic echoes of Rangi Faith's poems, like the robust wit of Henare Dewes and the loaded brevity of Mana Cracknell, are other personal high points.

### Accepting diversity

From another point of view picking favourites is not only invidious but irrelevant. **Into the World of Light** justifies itself as a political expression as well as a literary one. If we are still wondering what Maori writing is, and what makes it so special, we come closer to the answer by looking at the whole rather than at individuals, by accepting the diversity rather than seeking common themes. The Maori people are diverse, and probably what draws us together most strongly today is the need to respond to a world in which we still have insufficient influence.

Harking back to an old order; criticising the new one: both are Maori responses. Simply publishing an anthology of Maori writing which says "Here we are! Take notice!" is a response, and a more political one than examination of individual poems of stories can reveal. Actually, not many of these pieces are overtly political; not many

are about grandmothers at the pa either, or violence, drunkenness, folk magic or other supposedly Maori themes.

**Into the World of Light** is so named not for fanciful lyrical reasons. The title described a process, an emergence. From the occasional examples of verse and prose published by the Department of Maori Affairs in its magazine **Te Ao Hou** during the 1950s up to the publication of the present anthology there has been a vigorous and powerful emergence from a kind of gloom stretching back at least as far as the 1860s. **Into the World of Light** is not the last word: we're **into**, not yet **at**. But it's an optimistic sign, and demonstrable proof that the Maori have more to say than ends up printed on tea towels.

Acknowledgement: NZ Listener.



### Tu Tangata Cartoonist

Shane Parsene is an 18 year old Rarotongan. Shane attended Upper Hutt College where he specialised in caricature and cartooning as demonstrated by the work pictured. Shane is interested in working fulltime in this field but at the moment is working for the Justice Department in Upper Hutt.



## Young people 'busting out'

Prominent writer Witi Ihimaera was in Masterton, Friday May 7 speaking to senior pupils of Makoura College.

He spoke to the students as part of the month-long Takitimu Festival of Arts, held during May in conjunction with the Wairarapa Arts Centre.

Ihimaera discussed with the pupils some of the difficulties and influences he had had with his writings.

He shared memories of his life with them, explaining that his was not a success story, but a learning experience.

"Witi Ihimaera wasn't really born till 1970," he said of himself. "Everything for me has come very late."

### Scholarship

The 34-year-old is currently on a scholarship at Victoria University for one year, in which he hopes to write four books.

He felt that because his first three books were written in a single year, the quality of the literature had suffered.

"Now there are younger, more aggressive, street-level writers." In wanting to help them he compiled the most recent collection of stories in a book called 'Into the World of Light'.

### Workshop

The following day at the festival three other writers joined him, Patricia Grace, Bruce Stewart, and poet Apirana Taylor.

The four writers briefly discussed attitudes to work, then continued into a workshop reading and talking about poems and stories.

Founder of the Tapu Te Ranga marae in Wellington, Bruce Stewart spoke of the darkness that had kept many people in bondage. "A lot of young people are busting out that darkness.

"Just like a tree in the forest, they are reaching for the light. Creativity is light."

### Gathering up

That night during a Wine and Cheese evening the writers read some of their works and showed their wholehearted support for what the host committee was trying to do, in gathering all the Arts and Crafts of the Maori under one umbrella.

Both of the writers' sessions were chaired by patron of the Society of Maori Artists, Mr Wiremu Parker.

The festival committee are now discussing the possibility of extending an invitation to the Maori Writers and Artists to hold their annual Queen's Birthday conference in Masterton next year.

The conference, which is to be held in Gisborne this year, would be a logical follow-through to the festival, said the secretary of the Takitimu organising committee Rosa Tamepo.