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Article

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HEIM, Otto Annotation

A cogent and informative article, investigating the importance of authorial revisions of previously published works by the Maori writer Witi Ihimaera, specifically *Whanau II* and *The Rope of Man*. Ihimaera's gradual assimilation into mainstream literature has seen the conferment of a knighthood in 2004, together with his own 'acceptance of his literary pioneer status' (p.311). For Heim (p.311), Ihimaera's book revisions were carried out as a means of 'unsettling the textual foundation that underpinned his celebrated emergence as the first Maori novelist'. Both later revisions of earlier novels are now set in the past, re-orienting the narrative discourse 'from subjective perception...towards objective history' (p.312).

Ihimaera's earlier novels concentrated on the theme of the territorial dispossession of the Maori 'shrouded in vagueness' (p.313), and harking back to a mythical past. In the new versions, historical circumstances are explained (p.313), with an orientation 'from resistance towards reconciliation'. For Heim, this reconciliation has resulted in paradoxes in Ihimaera's more recent work and especially in 'an apparently uncritical celebration of globalisation' (p.314). The element of resistance has gone; in its place Ihimaera's work now demonstrates 'both interracial and intergenerational reconciliation' (p.315). Heim questions the historical inaccuracies in the new texts and Ihimaera's perceived 'nonchalance towards details of global affairs' (p.316). There is no reference made to Ihimaera's career as an international diplomat and how this might have influenced his literary production – and indeed his revisions, especially given Heim's focus on the 'global' in Ihimaera's more recent work. There is also no mention made of the fact that the original *Whanau* was conceived not in New Zealand, but in London, and was strongly influenced by the film adaptation of Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*. Indeed, this may have aided Heim's argument for the globally inclusive universal resonances to be found in Ihimaera's writing.