

Paraire Huata (1946–2014): A Personal Appreciation

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Mehemea ka moemoea ahau, ko ahau anake, mehemea ka moemoea tatou, ka taea e tatou. (Te Puea Herangi)

Paraire Huata was a colleague. We worked together in the classroom, in planning and implementing programmes and in clinical situations. I can say that I knew him but cannot claim particular closeness or special friendship. He extended a very generous

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hand to me in times of adversity and asked my opinion at times, as he did with many others. I have no unique insight to share, no specialist knowledge of the man; I am simply one of many he worked with and whom he affected, and there are others who are affected more. I am moved to write about Paraire on the invitation of the editors of *Ata* and I am happy to be invited, but what follows is a personal account. Though I have tried to be accurate, checking things from time to time and consulting Paraire's writings as well as my memory, what follows may not accord with the observations of others. Others will have their memories (some of which have been expressed in a recent issue of the *NZAP Newsletter*). An internet search will bring up several pages of references, including some of his own writings, for those who wish to know more.

Here, I describe some of what I saw him do in the public domain and conclude with a reflection on the difficulty that any leader arising from among us might face.

Though he deliberately decided not to claim authorship, much of the credit must go to Paraire for the Pōwhiri Poutama model which combines the stages, rituals and underlying meanings embedded in the pōwhiri with a model he credits to Denise Messiter and Te Korowai Hauora o Hauraki. This model was initially developed for a women's programme around addiction issues called Poutama as it was based on a step-wise woven tukutuku pattern such as adorns the interior walls of a meeting house in the spaces between the carved ancestral posts.

Taught by his own Te Ngaru Learning Systems, and adapted by Paraire and others for use in education and treatment programmes and in organisational development, the Pōwhiri Poutama model embodies very deep notions. As Paraire himself put it:

Pōwhiri allows the notion of collectivism, the power of inclusion — Kotahitanga. It allows the movement of thought, word and deed in a cohesive and ordered way. Kia kotahi tātou. It subsumes the right of the individual to the responsibilities of doing for others. Hei kotahi!

Poutama provides direction and intent. It encourages concept as an inclusion tool, context of what is occurring provides reason and intent provides movement. Me kōrero tahi tātou, noho, moe, kai. It also speaks about Tāwhaki/Tāne and his journey to Rauroha to collect the kete. On his way up he discovered something new about himself and his journey. After collecting the kete he was challenged about his kaupapa at every level.

So here's another cultural imperative. All knowledge emanates from atua. On a marae in the pōwhiri, everything is about function not status. The only hierarchy that exists in traditional thinking is that of need. Everything is geared to service the determined need.

Since the vision for the Pōwhiri Poutama model came from a waiata that he wrote in response to a dream he had in 1977, Paraire's attitude to ownership was summed up by the quote from Te Puea Herangi which began this tribute: "If I dream, I am alone, If we dream, we can achieve together."

One of Paraire's visions on which I worked, and still work, was for a recognised qualification in the field of addictions counselling that would be suitable for, and would appeal to, Māori people. He designed Te Aka, a one-year extension of what he had been doing with Te Ngaru Learning Systems, and incorporating work developed by Claire Aitken and Takarangi Metekingi of Moana House in Dunedin, and Fraser Todd of the University of Otago's National Addictions Centre in Christchurch. This was followed by Te Rea, a second year of the course. He wrote it in the language of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and succeeded in having it placed on the Framework at Level 6. Together the two years are Te Taketake (NZQA, n.d.), now taught in Rotorua and in Waitati, near Dunedin, under the umbrella of the Moana House Training Institute. Consisting of eight three-day noho wānanga each year, the setting is classroom or marae-style, depending on the venue — Paraire definitely preferred the classroom — it provides accommodation and food, is surrounded by appropriate tikanga, and since 2008 has maintained a 75% Māori intake and an 88% completion rate, with the ethnic balance maintained through to completion. For a mainstream course (there is only one other at this level) this exceeds most educators' wildest dreams.

In 2010, Paraire delivered a paper at the NZAP conference in Christchurch called "Māori Psychotherapy — A Cultural Oxymoron". This is an extract from it:

You will hear a different language. You will see a group, a community. You will smell a different aroma, You will taste food for the mind and spirit. You will touch beyond the constraints of the physical realm. In fact you will be bombarded with a cacophony of sounds and images that may tell you that you are in a foreign land. Perhaps you are.... We start by quoting Te Arikinui Te Ātairangikaahu:

"For each is a lifestyle to a person of another creed and race, an ordinary person who, while engaged in the everyday problems of living and life, finds among his or her own a community of close interest. Each race is as a tribe. Each has its own ways. Each has an 'in-ness' that binds the tribe together and an 'other-ness' that slows the footsteps of a stranger who would enter and yet be accommodated."

On the common ground of eating together, sleeping together, talking together we may eventually contribute to a togetherness.

Paraire was an orator, in both languages, and he had equal facility in both. He credited his dad, Canon Wi Huata, with a lot, and often told stories about him and about his upbringing. Paraire's stories often worked on several levels. He would speak in a manner that demanded work on the part of the listener, and he could be deliberately both ambiguous and provocative. He was attentive to others and would respond to their needs, but rarely in the way they expected. Within the engaging paragraphs above are statements of difference. They are warnings. They are lines in the sand to be crossed with caution, yet they *can* be crossed. Having found some temporary togetherness, though, does not mean that the differences are erased. We are familiar with the distinction between empathy

and merger. We can hear and to some extent understand each other, yet communities and tribes continue to exist as separate identities. We meet and can experience something together for a while, and our differences remain. Paraire was an expert at living within a paradox. He meant it when he argued that Māori psychotherapy was an oxymoron, yet he responded when I asked him if he would be nominated for membership of the Psychotherapists Board of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Up to that point, the relationship between the Board and the profession was at least tense, and often openly hostile. When the Board began its work in 2007, many psychotherapists resisted regulation. Perhaps as many as a third of the NZAP membership in the Auckland region, and something over 20% nationally not only refused to register, but a significant subgroup formed a competing organisation — the Independently Registered Psychotherapy Practitioners (see Fay, 2011). At its height, one in five psychotherapists in the Northern Region attended its meetings. A high proportion of Māori members in particular expressed dismay at the Board's monoculturalism (see Morice & Woodward, 2011). To these developments the Board responded with threats of legal action. All attempts to bridge these gaps seemed to result in widening them.

This was the arena that Paraire entered in 2011. At that time I was president of the New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists (NZAP), and our relationship with the Board was taking up an awful lot of time. I thought that things might change if the Board membership changed, so there was a search for candidates with a high enough profile and sufficient mana to nominate. I was surprised that he agreed. I later asked why, but he just joked that he needed to keep an eye on me to see what I would do next. I didn't press it; I was very happy that he had agreed. Perhaps he took me seriously when I said he could be a force for understanding that would outlive us both. Along with many others I sincerely wished for a change in the weather, and thought that a kaumātua, a native speaker, a skilled orator who could be bothered with the Pākehā, and a man whose work was always focused by a wide perspective might achieve what we had not.

I do not know what went on at Board meetings. There were other changes — other people came and left the stage, the chair passed to another — we cannot tell, as the minutes are not in the public domain. From that time, however, relationships between the Board and the profession seemed to soften. The language of the Board became less strident, and less threatening. I stepped out of the arena myself as my term on the NZAP Council came to an end in 2012. When I next attended a meeting with the Board, in Christchurch in 2013 (Paraire was unable to attend due to ill-health), the atmosphere was unrecognisable. When I asked what the Board's attitude was to unregistered psychotherapists, the chair answered simply, and with a smile, that they were not in the Board's jurisdiction. Two years previously, the answer had been that they risked prosecution. The wind had indeed shifted.

I cannot tell to what extent this gentler, more humanistic approach was the consequence of Paraire's influence — I must leave that to another chronicler, and would not wish to underestimate the influence of other Board members — but I think he would have liked that response. He had no interest in prosecuting anyone.

He often expressed an interest in people becoming what they could become, and that was always more than they had dreamt. His impatience, and he could indeed be impatient,

was with people making themselves small. He was never a registered anything, preferring to let his credentials speak for themselves, and here he was, in a typically paradoxical way, bringing his talents to bear on the vexed process of state regulation.

Once when I had referred to a number of ancient kete hanging from the ceiling of a venue in which we were teaching together, Paraire described himself as a repository for such things: the imperfectly handcrafted creations of students and other admirers. Each needed to know that their taonga would please the master and find a place in his presence. Psychotherapists are familiar with the complexities of gifts and the burden they represent. Paraire said that he had an enormous collection. He joked about having a bonfire at some point. He had stopped collecting them by the simple device of giving them away as soon as he got them. I watched several times as someone stood to speak with reverence of what he had given them, then presenting him with a gift which he promptly passed to someone else.

We all, to some extent, see what we wish to see in the other. To experience the powerful images created by early experience or arising from our unconscious psyche, we need a perspective unimpeded by an inconvenient real identity in the other. We must reduce their complexity, deny their mundanity, paint over the cracks, until we have a lifeless two-dimensional screen on which our fantasies can be clearly displayed. Thus we create our gods.

Perhaps we need to do this, to idealise, to establish that there are those among us who can reach a little higher, do a little more, and with more integrity, more vision, more truth than we are capable of on an ordinary day. With such stars among us there is hope that we can be guided, uplifted, inspired, and taken care of by a force bigger than ourselves. It is even better if they can communicate with us after death. Then we might have a line to God. Without these saints there is only ourselves and we are forever uncertain that we can actually look after things on our own. Paraire was impatient with his sainthood. He wanted nothing more than that people, especially his own people, take responsibility for themselves, their families and their world. He became annoyed that others' idealisation of him interfered with the responsibility for themselves that he was trying to foster — and sometimes, it is true, he would use this to make a point, to play to the gallery. He would be deliberately enigmatic, exploit his status and even enjoy using it to get people's attention.

Of course there is a price for all of this. He died in May 2014, at 68, a year younger than me. I did not attend his tangi, but I know from others' reports that there was a stern message to us all from the whānau. We had better use his gifts well, because the benefit he brought to others, Māori and Pākehā alike, took him always away from home.

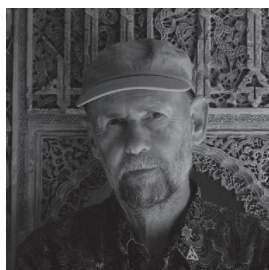
We use them up, these special individuals who are called to many marae, who go from conference to conference, from committee to committee, from workshop to workshop, teaching, writing, working in the service of a vision that drives them, with little thought for the accumulation of personal wealth or their own physical wellbeing. We “dial up” a kaumatua, then either sit at their feet or mutter in the back row as they perform for us. Paraire knew what he was doing, I guess, he chose his own destiny, but, speaking as a Pākehā, let us at least admit our part, as we acknowledge and mourn.

I could remember him for many things, but this is what I wish to hold in mind. There

were moments, perhaps when fatigue was taking its toll, when Paraire could be irascible, even brutal with people who were not performing. In the long run, though, he was endlessly patient, believing that, guided by tīpuna and the dream of mokopuna, there is a spirit in everyone that can envision and create a compassionate world.

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