

Ockhams Sampler

Extracts from
the finalist books in the
General Non-Fiction Award
at the 2021 Ockham New Zealand
Book Awards

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The General Non-Fiction Award



The General Non-Fiction Award at the Ockham New Zealand Book Awards recognises excellence in primarily text-based non-fiction work from one or more authors. The winner of the 2021 award will receive \$10,000 in prize money.

Judging the category this year are Sarah Shieff, editor and associate professor of English at the University of Waikato (convenor); filmmaker and lecturer in Māori history at Victoria University Wellington Arini Loader (Ngāti Raukawa, Te Whānau-a-Apanui, Ngāti Whakaue);

and Dunedin bookseller Michael Yeomans.

The judging panel describes the finalists' books as alive with the flows of history and power that shape all of our lives. "These four books, each in its own way an extraordinary achievement in the category's defining parameters of story-telling, research and memory work, will enrich the conversations we have about ourselves and this place for years to come."

This Ockhams Sampler gives you a taste of the writing craft at play in each of this year's shortlisted books. You can read the judges' comments about each finalist in blue at the start of that title's extract.

Look out for samplers of the finalists in the other three categories in the Ockham New Zealand Book Awards. You will find them here:

www.anzliterature.com

www.nzbookawards.nz/new-zealand-book-awards

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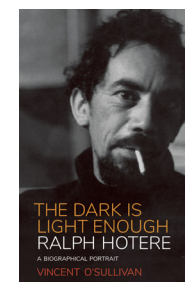


TE HĀHI MIHINARE | THE MĀORI ANGLICAN CHURCH

Hirini Kaa

Published by Bridget Williams Books

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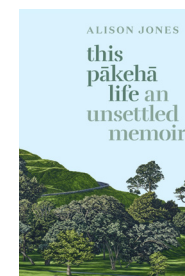


THE DARK IS LIGHT ENOUGH: RALPH HOTERE A BIOGRAPHICAL PORTRAIT

Vincent O'Sullivan

Published by Penguin,
Penguin Random House

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THIS PĀKEHĀ LIFE: AN UNSETTLED MEMOIR

Alison Jones

Published by Bridget Williams Books

SPECIMEN



PERSONAL ESSAYS

MADISON HAMILL

Published by Victoria University Press

Specimen: Personal Essays

JUDGES' COMMENTS

This compulsively readable collection charts the inner life of someone who often feels at odds with those around her. Madison Hamill traces her sense of difference in fresh, razor-sharp prose, via encounters ranging from a bullying primary school teacher, whom she quietly bests, to the clients at an under-funded drug clinic in Cape Town, for whom she can do nothing. It is as memorable for her unblinking view of herself as it is for her compassionate awareness of others' struggles.

Extract from Rules overleaf

The Computer Game

6 You are the computer. Your sister is the only one who can operate the computer. First, she has to say 'Power on' and press you on the nose. You have to say 'Please enter password'. And she has to guess, and she has to be wrong and you have to offer her a hint, and the hint should be something that only she will be able to guess, and when she has guessed it, you have to say 'Loading desktop' and your hands should do a little robotic dance to indicate the loading process, and then you have to say 'Welcome to the computer. Please select a task from the menu'. And she'll always select 'Games', which she knows how to do by pressing a knee or an elbow and saying 'Games', and then you have to say 'Games menu. Please select a game'. And then she should press somewhere, like a shoulder blade or a belly button or a pinkie finger, and you will say 'You have selected'—and you can say anything you like then, and she has to play the game. You could say 'Interpretive dance-off' and she'd have to dance to your mother's baroque mix-tapes, illustrating concepts with increasing levels of difficulty, beginning with 'anger', then 'popcorn', 'electricity', and finally 'love'. Or you could say 'The floor is lava. You have survived a volcanic eruption and must save your family's valuables without falling to your death'. And she will have to rescue items in increasing levels of danger from the surrounding lava, beginning with the salt and pepper shakers, and ending with the dog, who, unaware of the

danger, will have to be saved before he leaps off the couch to his death. Or you can say 'Time travel' and she will be transported thousands of years into the past where she has to escape a Tyrannosaurus Rex, and you have to robotically reassemble yourself into the T-Rex, and she'll run.

Then she has to win the game, and return to the Games menu, and then you have to say 'Games menu. Please select a game'.

The Sleeping Bag Game

7 The sleeping bag goes over your head and covers your entire body. Your sisters spin you around and around until you have lost all sense of where you are. You must now reach your father's library at the far end of the house, trapped in this feet-smelling polyester cocoon. All noises are suffocated out, only your own battle cry to carry you on. But your body tries to carry you in a circle instead of the way you direct it. You spin around again, the way they spun you, their phantom hands pushing you on further detours while they stand laughing.

The Mediation Game

You have to catch the moment the argument was conceived, which is always several minutes or even hours before either of your parents are aware they are having an argument.

It might be, for instance, that your dad has forgotten

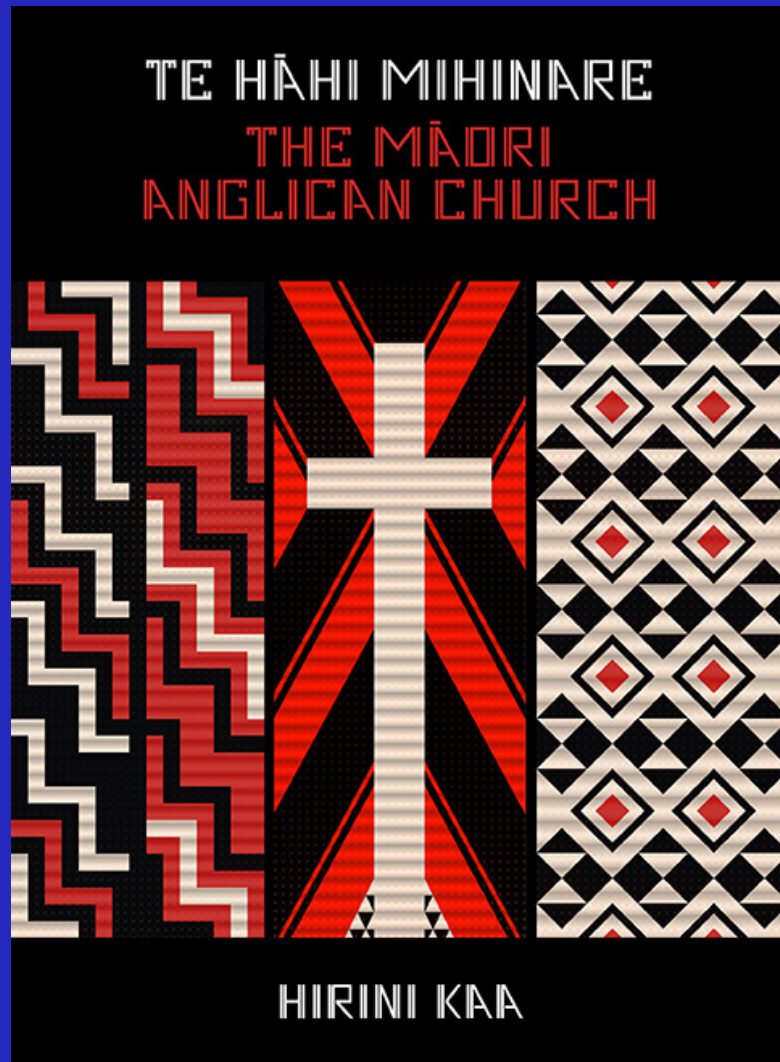
something, forgotten that your mum needed the car that day, forgotten to take in the laundry, forgotten that he needed to drop one of you off at orchestra practice, and she has had to remind him at the last minute even though she is tired because she has had a long day, and he has said, 'Oh, that's right, orchestra practice,' and she has given a twitch of both eyebrows. It is the twitch that you have to look for, as if she is trying to shake something off her prefrontal cortex.

Some time later, he will ask her an unrelated ministerial question which belongs, in her mind, to the category of things he should know by now. And she will make a generalisation about his incompetence, for which he will request further data as support for her claim. In response, she will refer to his almost forgetting the orchestra practice drop-off earlier, to which she will add, 'And I cleaned the whole house after I came back from work, and I made dinner, and my wrist hurts,' and at this point it will begin to be difficult to follow the argument, as it builds up steam and moves swiftly away from the subject about which it began, but you have to stay on your game. If you stay on your game, you will notice when your mum will say something like, 'I just wish you'd X.'

And Dad will say something like, 'Well, that's ridiculous, how does X relate to the ministerial question about which this argument started?'

At this point you can jump in and answer your dad's question by saying to him, 'Don't you see that Mum is not literally arguing about the subject that she's arguing about, and that she cannot

understand the logical argument you have attempted to present because she has her ear tuned to the frequency of feelings, and therefore any logical counter-argument is unproductive and merely serves as a performance of righteousness which makes her feel that you are not listening to her feelings?' And you can say to your mum, 'Don't you see that you are speaking in response to a subterranean hurt which has existed within you for most of our childhoods like a disused subway system, built decades ago and never properly dismantled, even long after the trains have stopped running?' and once you have said these things you can stop listening because you have won your parents' argument.



Published by **Bridget Williams Books**

Te Hāhi Mihinare | The Māori Anglican Church

JUDGES' COMMENTS

This is both a history of an institution and a corrective for 'fatal impact' narratives in which Māori are presented as the passive victims of colonisation; Hirini Kaa shows how iwi adapted the new religion to make it their own. His emblematic example is the haka 'Te Pārekereke', which celebrates the arrival of Christianity and the gift of seedling kumara – both of which promise a new start. Performing the haka acknowledges the renegotiation of mātauranga through Christianity, and embraces both continuity and change.

Extract from Chapter 4, He Hāhi Māori: The Evolution of a Pan-Tribal Church overleaf

Resources for minita

The early kaiwhakaako (teachers and evangelists) sent out by the missionaries were supported in various ways. By 1834 men were given a hardware article every six months and a blanket annually, and women six hardware articles or a garment to the same value. However, the CMS told Selwyn early on that while it could pay missionaries, it would not pay minita, so they were forced to rely on the iwi they ministered to for day-to-day sustenance. By the time Māori were offered stipends, they were paid significantly lower rates than Pākehā clergy. In the 1880s minita were paid £50 per annum, with half coming from the NZMTB, while the CMS Pākehā range was £150–£450.⁸³ The CMS had come to believe that minita could be more self-supporting than Pākehā clergy, ‘cultivating the soil in order to support their families’. The actual effect of that was to force minita into poverty, and by the turn of the century even Pākehā bishops were worried about the issue. By 1901 General Synod could no longer ignore this state of affairs because of the likelihood that the low rate would ‘discourage the better educated Maoris from offering themselves for Holy Orders’.

This situation continued into the twentieth century, however. Professional minita in the Auckland Diocese were funded from a range of sources. The largest was the NZMTB (the beneficiary of the CMS lands) and the General Trust Board (another Church trust) but there were also funds from sources as diverse as the

Hemi Matenga bequest, the Birkenhead Sunday school, the Diocesan High School and St Aidan’s church in Remuera. The rate for Māori clergy was still significantly below that for Pākehā clergy, and minita such as Wiremu Panapa were forced to live frugally; for instance, making their own candles from rendered-down fat. By the beginning of the Depression minita stipends, which had been growing, were cut substantially. This created extreme difficulties for minita, many of whom had large families to care for. Even after the Second World War, little support was given to minita from dioceses. For example, Poihipi Kohere, who had been in service since 1906, was forced to use horses and taxis to travel around his parish because the Waiapu Diocese would not help him pay for car repairs.

By the end of the war there existed a rural, professional minita class that would soon face significant change. Wiremu Panapa had been appointed Māori missionary to the Auckland Anglican Māori Mission in 1932, but he was in many ways conducting a rural ministry in an urban setting. Migration to the cities quickly began to gain pace, however, and by 1948 ‘the urgent need for the provision of spiritual leadership among those people who were cut off from tribal influences was regarded as one of the major problems’ faced by the Māori Church. By 1962 migration to Christchurch for work and trade-training schemes was such that the Christchurch Diocese appointed Te Anga Te Hihī (Dan) Kaa as the first Māori missionary. Kaa’s vast working area also included the Dunedin Diocese, and his substandard

housing in Christchurch was thought by Church authorities to be 'appropriate' for a Māori. After Kaa's untimely death in 1965 he was succeeded by a line of minita from North Island iwi, including Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Kahu, Ngāpuhi and Te Arawa. These minita connected to their own people who had migrated to the city, and in some respects reinvigorated iwi loyalties that had been left behind in the country. There was also significant Ngāi Tahu input to this Christchurch ministry, including from the Ellison whānau.

The diocese created a Komiti Matua (Council for Māori Work) 'to co-ordinate the hostels, clubs, education and counselling' needs of Māori in the city, and a Maori Parish Centre was established in Phillipstown as a meeting place for both Church and secular Māori groups, including the St John's Maori Club, the District Maori Council, the Otautahi Maori Committee, the Maori Women's Welfare League, the Te Aowera Culture Club, and the Maori Wardens' Association. Thus the Church became a centre around which Māori could gather and develop their identity in a new context. At the same time, in Auckland and Wellington, the Church was the focus of similar 'voluntary associations', identified by Ranginui Walker as key to 'the successful adjustment of the Maori to urban life'. Other denominations were also establishing such centres in the cities, with the Katorika (Māori Roman Catholic) community building Te Ūnga Waka in Epsom a focus for Catholic Māori in Auckland. Kingi Ihaka was appointed Auckland Māori missionary in 1967, and in 1969

the mission became based at Holy Sepulchre church on Khyber Pass. The attached hall was named Tātai Hono Marae – the name signifying the bringing together of familial ties. These forms of ministry even spread to new Māori communities in Australia, and in 1984 Ihaka was appointed chaplain for Māori in Sydney.

Even though the Church did respond in various ways to the growing urban Māori population, across denominations there was a struggle to engage with the newly migrated people. As Allan Davidson notes, 'Maori Christianity has its roots in rural communities and had great difficulty transferring its work, often lacking in resources, to urban centres, where denominational division, geographical fragmentation and social dislocation worked against the churches' village style of ministry.' This was not a total collapse, and as Melissa Matutina Williams has shown, in the case of Hokianga Katorika moving to Auckland, there was still a great deal of community activity centred on churches. However, as Pieter Hendrik De Bres pointed out in his 1960s anthropological survey of an urban community, engagement with denominations was decreasing. In his study De Bres observed that 'the overall picture suggests that participation of the local Maori in church activities is very limited'. This would have obvious implications for the future. Although most Māori belonged to a particular denomination by whānau, limited numbers chose to participate in that denomination's formal activities in an urban setting. There were many reasons for the lack of engagement with denominations in the cities, but one



A meeting of the Aotearoa Council at Waitangi in the early 1980s. Bishop Whakahuihui Vercoe stands in the centre with Bishop Manu Bennett beside him, and the author, Hirini Kaa, sits in the middle of the front row. Private collection



In 2018, Archbishop Don Tamihere was installed as Pihopa o Aotearoa at a service at Manutuke. He was photographed leading a haka, supported by his minita. Photograph by Lloyd Ashton, April 2018, Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

conclusion was that the model of one or two professional minita per city was not necessarily working for the changing times.

The way minita were trained was changing too. Rota Waitoa's training and ordination in 1853 had established a precedent for candidates to be taken out of their cultural and geographical context, indoctrinated, and then sent to a community as an agent of change. Although the nature of this training had altered over the decades, the minita sent as an agent of 'the Church', separate from the iwi and Māori culture, remained the ideal in many Pākehā minds. However, this model of the 'clergyman- priest, enshrined in a privileged and central position' also had its critics. From Henry Venn in the mid-nineteenth century through to Roland Allen in the early twentieth, there had been Church leaders and thinkers who opposed replicating the English parish system around the Anglican Empire, and instead advocated for minita who were more attuned to their local situation. Venn, in fact, proposed paying low salaries to native minita so as not to create divisions between pastor and people.

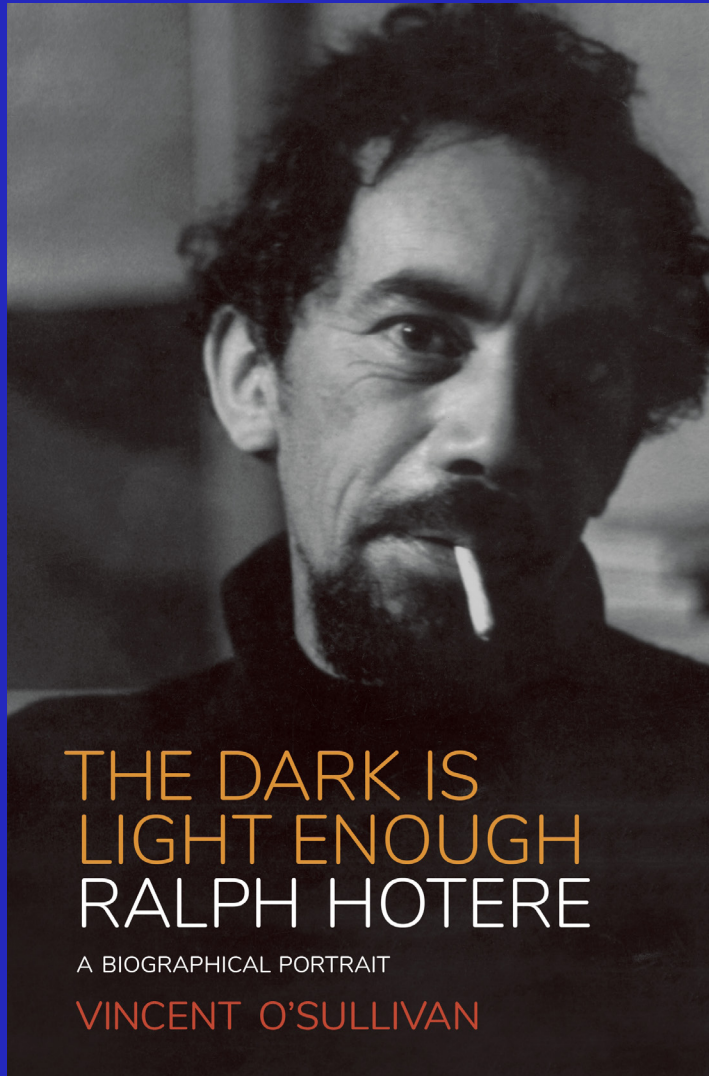
Minita-ā-iwi

By the early 1970s the approach of putting ordination candidates through the 'mono-cultural educational offering' at St John's College and then struggling to support them financially was beginning to wear down the Mihinare community, and fewer

and fewer candidates were coming forward for ordination. The challenge was exacerbated by urban migration: previously strong rural communities had been drained of their people and financial resources, while urban communities had not yet coalesced enough to provide a new pool of resources to fund stipends – if they ever in fact could. By the mid-1970s a new model had begun to emerge in the Mihinare world, where minita would be identified by their own iwi and then trained and supported locally before and after ordination. In part, this development was tied to a world-wide trend of experimenting with non-stipendiary ministry, including contextual ministry and training. It was soon taken on board by the Māori Church in the Waiapu Diocese, with Bishop Paul Reeves and Pīhopa Manu Bennet leading the way, supported by the senior minita Whakahuihui Vercoe. Under this experimental new system, minita, supported by iwi, worked as a team in new tribally based rohe (areas).

In some respects, this system was not as radical as it sounded. For decades kai karakia, or lay minita, had been performing many of the ministry functions of ordained minita on a non-stipendiary basis. As Adrienne Puckey comments, ‘in rural communities the status of kai-karakia was barely distinguishable from ordained clergy’. The new ‘supplementary ministry’ system allowed these minita to be ordained in order to celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion, and their numbers soared. Furthermore, low pay rates and the need for

support from the local iwi had always ensured that in the Māori world there was not the division between ordained minita and the people of the Church that there was in the Pākehā world: the ‘teaching’ Church and the ‘learning’ Church overlapped much more.



Published by Penguin, Penguin Random House

The Dark is Light Enough: Ralph Hotere A Biographical Portrait

JUDGES' COMMENTS

In this exemplary instance of the biographer's art, Vincent O'Sullivan transcends what in other hands may have proved an insurmountable obstacle – writing about an artist without illustrations of the work – by producing a life story that 'feeds back' into the imagery, deepening and enriching all subsequent encounters. He has given us a sensitive, meticulously researched portrait of one of Aotearoa New Zealand's most important modern artists.

Extract from Chapter X11
Camping in a Whirlwind overleaf



Among Ralph's most treasured possessions
— his white Jaguar. Gil Hanly

Ralph was out of Dunedin when Andrea phoned him in early October 1984 to tell him a fire was blazing just above the waterline at Careys Bay, at Millar and Tunnage's boat yard. Photos in the press showed what looked like an ancient ship burial flaring against a night sky. It was a fifteen-metre trawler called the *Poitrel*, and burned throughout the night. When Ralph arrived home, what he drove past was a looming, charred hulk, its blackened timbers a silhouette of loss and incineration, a wreck beached not by storm but by fire. Each time he drove past it, he was more fascinated by what he saw. He heard talk that what remained would be dismantled, the mass of ruined timber dumped. There was no question of any part being salvaged. This was total loss.

The word 'poitrel' has an overlapping of possible meanings. In parts of France it designated a small fishing boat. It was an old word for a horse's breastplate, from the past of armour and tournament. Even more obscurely, but a meaning Ralph knew, was that 'poitrel' was what modern engravers called a burin, a tool for biting metal, for shaping art. For Ralph, though, the excitement of the *Poitrel* was in what it now so obviously was — a heap of burnt-out wood, the remains of what once had been both a handsome craft and a part of daily life. He was fascinated by the thought of what might emerge from the blackened wreck. Was there anything to be made from loss on this scale?

His plan evolved over the summer, as various friends were

brought into the hard yakka of preparing the damaged timbers for a work that was taking shape in Ralph's mind, but meant weeks of hard, messy labouring for his assistants. Naomi Wilson, one of his close local friends and helpers over several years, and who bought his former studio on Aurora Terrace for what Ralph insisted was not a cent more than its rateable value, was the most assiduous in laying out the long planks.

It was necessary to wear a mask against the acrid dust, and grinding back broad horizontal strips until the strong, glowing wood that lay below the charred surface showed through. The blackened uneven planks were left as they were at one end, and sawn level at the other. The actor Sam Neill, a friend from the Seventies, was another conscripted as artist's mate. They had known each other since Sam was a student and called on Ralph for evenings of wine and not altogether easy chat: 'I always felt compelled to fill the silence . . . It's probably a bit old-fashioned now, but companion- able silence, that was possible with Ralph.' Sam was also one of the few friends who took in that Ralph was 'often angry about things, quietly angry. He gets angry about political things, or about people wanting to carve up a hill, these things enrage him. But you could tell when he was getting angry because he'd start clearing his throat — throat clearing was very important. It was accompanied by a lot of roll-your-owns too.' He suspected that Ralph's drinking was a national as much as a personal trait, something forced on men of his generation by the general assumption 'that if you were a writer or an



The fire before the Phoenix, with the burned hull of the Poitrel. **Tunnage Family.**

artist you were sort of suspect. Booze refuted it. It was a way of demonstrating that you weren't suspect if you were more of a joker than the other jokers.'

Over the years Ralph stayed with Sam several times in Sydney, or used his flat in Surry Hills, a 'flitting, enigmatic figure'. Neill was aware of his friend's deeply secretive side, the undeclared assumption that questions were not to be asked. 'You never knew quite who he was going to turn up with, if anyone, or when, because he never said in advance.' As Peter Eyley, another friend in Auckland described it: 'Often there would be mumbled evasions, phone calls during which one discreetly left the room, although one was never actually asked to.' Even if there was a woman with him, you never took it for granted that there was anything more between them than friendship. Sam felt 'the company of women was what mattered more to him perhaps than romance'.

To work for Ralph off and on over that summer as one of his volunteers was not necessarily much fun:

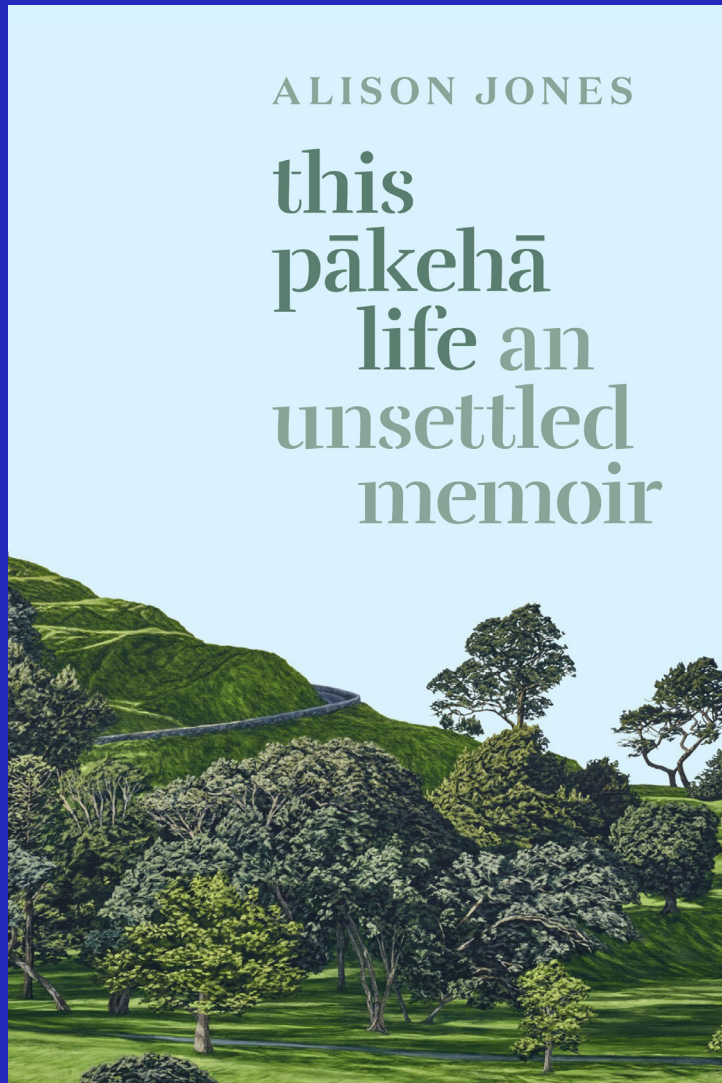
We put on terrible Hotere masks and then he put us on these circular sanders and we had to sand these burnt boards back so there's this line that goes all the way around the boards.

Kind of boring work, and after I'd been buzzing away at this, I realised I was the only person left, they just all bugged off to the pub, and they came back about three hours later and I was still going because I didn't know quite what else to do.

Hilari Anderson was another of the few who really stuck at the

tedious task of preparing the filthy planks, and has the amusing memory of taking photos of the workers, but being asked to discard shots of the open-shirted, dishevelled Neill. The control of 'professional' image was not confined to Ralph.

The concept he worked towards as the *Poitrel* was reconfigured was dramatic. Once each fired plank from the trawler received its band of freshly revealed and undamaged wood, the notion of a new birth, an emerging phoenix from the ruins, literally took wing, as rows of planks were raised to either side of the upright, detached, still-blackened prow. He again drew on one of his favourite whakataukī, a saying he had used most notably in the paintings done in Avignon and Menorca, when the death of two popes invoked one flax plume replacing another, one chief departing and another arriving in succession: 'Ka hinga atu te tētēkura, ka ara mai he tētēkura.' ('One plume dies, another springs up.') The notions of persistence, reshaping, survival, an expanding new life, became central to the large-scale work he was elaborating. The words were scored on the sections of exposed ground-back wood. When the planks were set upright against a wall, spanning to either side of the prow, with another twenty planks laid out in front of it, the horizontal bands formed a gleaming pathway across a decking of burned fragility.



Published by **Bridget Williams Books**

This Pākehā Life: An Unsettled Memoir

JUDGES' COMMENTS

The question at the heart of educationalist Alison Jones's multi-stranded memoir is what it means, for her, to be Pākehā: a non-Māori New Zealander who belongs nowhere else. It is a coming-of-age story, a family story, and a story of place. It also charts a personal journey at a time of intellectual foment, when making a difference meant protesting. Above all, it's about friendship, and about learning how to listen in order to work collaboratively towards positive change.

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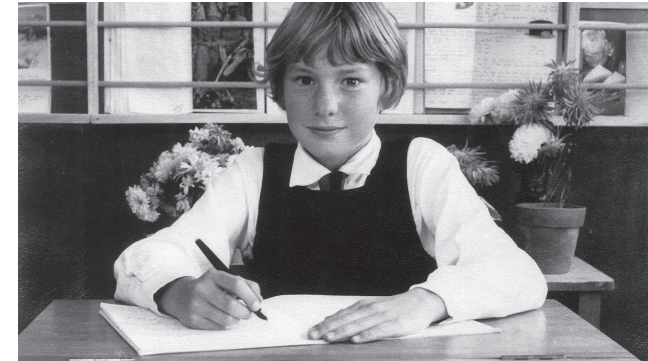
Extract from Māori on the front lawn overleaf

Whakatāne. A town by the head of a river, in a place with a magical name: Bay of Plenty. Arriving there from Dannevirke was like coming up to the light. The clouds were buoyant and fluffy: seaside clouds. The sky was sea-blue.

Whakatāne's sweet air quickly banished memories of the damp and musty Dannevirke; under its wide-open sky, my adolescent imagination filled with possibility. It was the beginning of summer, and my mother and father and we five children moved in to a small house near the hospital where Dad was to work as an accountant. I was now eleven, and becoming self-conscious about my place in the world. In Whakatāne, I would be a smaller fish in a bigger pond – and, I noticed, it was a much more Māori pond.

I have a strong memory of the first time I went into the centre of town. As in most New Zealand riverside towns, the shops kept their backs to the water, and their shady front verandahs stretched invitingly along the single main street, the Strand. My parents had encouraged the twins and me to explore. We left our bikes outside the Post Office in the metal bike racks and, like three mildly alarmed sheep, we walked in a small bunch along the shop fronts.

Two moments stand out. One was my discovery of Pōhaturua, an imposing rock, the size of a four-storey house, which stood opposite the library. The local iwi, Ngāti Awa, once put ancestral bones into Pōhaturua's sacred crevices. Apparently, the Whakatāne River had flowed past its feet, but land reclamation for the shops had left it high and dry. It was an odd thing: an



Above A school portrait at Apanui Primary School in Whakatāne, 1965. A curious and diligent child, I was in my element in the classroom. **Alison Jones collection**

Below Teaching around 1986. Egalitarian teaching was the style, with the teacher often sitting alongside the students. Linda Tuhiwai Smith is the student speaking; I am on the right. **Alison Jones collection**

enormous, jagged, lichen- and tree-covered rock, right in the middle of town.

Then I noticed the women. In the shade of the verandahs, sitting against the shop fronts, they were as surely and solidly positioned as Pōhaturoa. I herded my siblings before me, gazing at the half-dozen old Māori women who sat side by side, wearing black and wrapped in dark blankets. A couple of them smoked pipes. Most had dark tattoos, moko kauae, on their chins. A few small children sat among them and a sleeping baby lay in one lap.

The group gave no attention to passers-by, but to a young girl who had never seen people sitting on a pavement, these women were a revelation. I wanted to stop and listen to their gentle conversation, even though I could not understand a word. I tried not to stare at them. Who were they? Where did they come from? They seemed to inhabit themselves completely, and to link the present with the past in a way I could not explain.

I saw the women again on the Strand a few times at the end of 1964 and into 1965, sometimes just two or three at a time. Then, they stopped coming. They were probably Ngāti Awa people, having come in from inland villages such as Tāneatua and Te Teko, to shop and to talk. I did not know then that these women were the last of the old world, and that I was lucky to have seen them.

It was here that my parents got their first mortgage. Our bungalow on Commerce St looked not unlike the dream house on the Dannevirke butcher's calendar. It was pretty, with decorative shutters, and its spacious yard backed onto a scrub-covered hillside that overlooked the town. A neatly mowed front lawn accommodated a large phoenix palm.

Next door lived Dr and Mrs Maaka. They had chooks, and my mother had two cocker spaniels. We kids had to make sure that the dogs did not get in to the Maakas' back garden and chase the chooks. Needless to say, the dogs found any gap in the hedge and our apologies to Mrs Maaka were embarrassingly frequent. Mrs Maaka's first name was Florence, and my mother chatted over the fence with her first Māori acquaintance. When my brother saw a spectre one night in the hall of our house, Mum consulted Mrs Maaka. Mrs Maaka explained to Mum the ghost was that of a previous inhabitant. Mrs Maaka's confident assertion made the ghost real to our family. Somehow, her being Māori gave her access to that other world.

I was aware of my mother talking to Mrs Maaka in a way I did not notice her doing with Mrs Limmer, a Pākehā neighbour. Mrs Maaka, she reported, was 'lovely!' A visiting Māori tradesman had 'such beautiful handwriting!' A Māori nurse 'had a lovely smile, and did a very good job!' Her exaggerated enthusiasms served to underline for me her uncertainty about how to interact with Māori. She seemed surprised by Māori competence, which she felt compelled to encourage. I was embarrassed by this, and dreaded

meeting a Māori person in her company in case she was gushy.

I did not know then that Mrs Maaka's husband was famous. Dr Golan (Te Korana) Haberfield Maaka was one of the first Māori to graduate in medicine, and he had worked in China. He saw his patients in the front room of his house, where we children went for our vaccinations. Dr Maaka did not charge fees, relying on the government subsidy, and he had a huge number of Māori patients, many of whom would bring him a feed of potatoes or a dozen beer. Dr Maaka's patients taught him the use of rongoā (herbal cures), which he combined with Chinese and Western medicine. I learned later that he dealt with many cases of mākutū, or bewitching, by advising victims to visit the local tohunga.

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Dr Maaka's patients interested me. Most of them came to see him on the weekends, when they took up residence on our front lawn. On Saturdays, I would gaze out through the net curtains of our living room at the remarkable sight of large groups of Māori sitting on blankets under the shade of the phoenix palm, their food in pots and boxes. Kids ran about on the grass that Dad had meticulously mowed. These visitors had travelled from the surrounding districts, and would wait, chatting and joking, sometimes for hours, until family members had seen the doctor.

My mother tolerated the people on the lawn, though she never spoke to them, or offered food or water. I studied them from the window, entranced by their easy engagement with each other, and the fact that they comfortably claimed our lawn without

asking. The yearning I felt as I looked through the curtains was not a desire to be among them; I was touched instead by that same longing I had in Maria's house in Dannevirke, for a shared family life, with aunties and uncles and cousins, and laughter.

One Saturday, as I studied the group from my secret observation post, a small child from amongst them ran out on to the road. The adults did not move but shouted sharply at one of the older children who immediately dashed out, grabbed the toddler and returned him into the centre of the picnickers. As far as I could see, nothing more was said, not even a growling or a thanks; the adults simply went on eating and talking. I was astonished; in my family, the parents would have jumped up in panic and admonished the child with a smack and a long lecture about road safety.

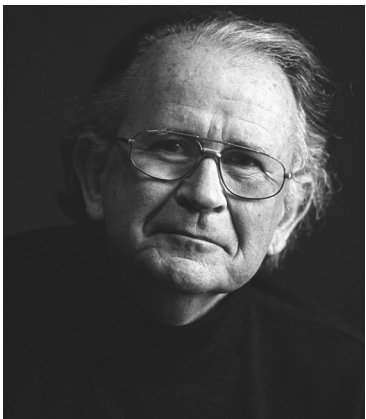
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Madison Hamill
Specimen: Personal Essays



Hirini Kaa
Te Hāhi Mihinare | The Māori
Anglican Church



Vincent O'Sullivan
The Dark is Light Enough: Ralph
Hotere A Biographical Portrait



Alison Jones
This Pākehā Life:
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