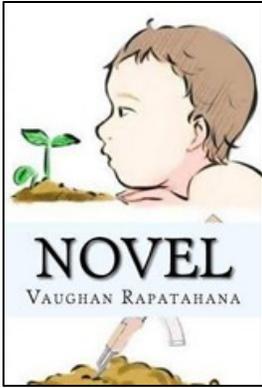


***How did the idea for your latest book, *Novel*, come about and what inspired you to write it?***



I guess that recent – and to me, worrying – trends stirred me to write this novel, itself based on what is going on around us internationally. Namely authoritarian regimes pushing their various interrelated agenda onto the ‘average’ citizen to the extent that personal freedoms are being even further eroded, just as our global environment is being ceaselessly damaged beyond repair. I don’t need to list the countries and their leaders here: I am sure readers will know who and where I mean. Let’s just say they are ‘Mainlands’.

***For curiosity only, why do you commute between the Philippines, New Zealand and Hong Kong?***

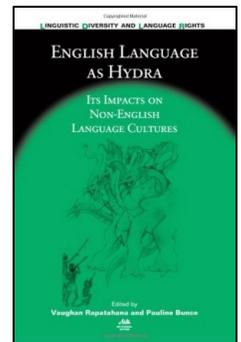
Because our children live in Hong Kong and our extended family lives in Philippines and I was born and raised in New Zealand. More, because we have lived in each for long periods of time, we have homes there.

***Of the three, which inspires you the most in your writings?***

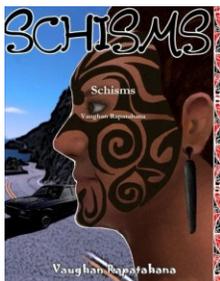
All three equally and contemporaneously and all three are very different. All three – as well as visits to other locales – inspire my writing. Travel makes the mind fly.

***Explain briefly about Hydra and the English language.***

My co-author Dr Pauline Bunce and I coined the concept of the English language Hydra to depict the rather rapacious spread by agents of the English language (think, for example, of The British Council and the various profit-making English language testing companies) into communities and countries which are not traditionally English as first language and which all-too-often don’t actually ‘need’ or even utilize the tongue. I speak from experience, having taught English in many countries and being as guilty as anyone else here of ‘power-aiding’ the language onto students who have subsequently never used it.



***Do you prefer poetry over the other genres and why?***

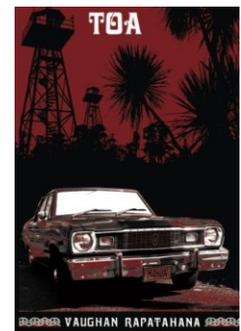


You know, I have no clear preference regarding genre. Indeed, I believe my most significant work is to do with the co-authored books to do with English language imperialism, *The English language Hydra* and *Why English? Confronting the Hydra*...I seem to go through phases too, as regards different genre and sometimes write very little poetry at all.

As a side note here in relation to poetry, one of my collections titled *Schisms*, was published by Stonestrow Poetry, Las Vegas, Nevada...

***How did the idea for your novel, *Toa*, come about and what inspired you to write it?***

My own life was the basis for writing this novel: I had been living/experiencing the events of the novel for years previously, via a whole raft of adventures, life experiences and escapades, not all happy ones by any means! Had to set everything down in the guise of a fictional work. There is the hackneyed phrase, after all, ‘life is stranger than fiction.’ My life up until then was a series of bizarre encounters and *Toa* – I hope – expresses these via the chief protagonist – Mahon. Who is, incidentally, also mentioned in *Novel*...



## ***You are currently contributing to the University of Pennsylvania's Jacket 2. What is Jacket?***

*Jacket* was originally an Australian-originated academic online poetry magazine, committed to serious discussion and appraisal of poetry *per se* and under the editorship of John Tranter. *Jacket 2* is a continuation online of this serious and in-depth evaluation of poetry, now under the auspices of the University of Pennsylvania. It was moved to Philadelphia in 2011.

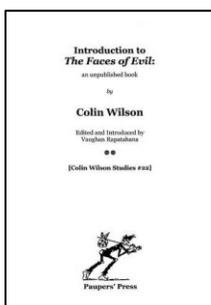
## ***Married? Children? Pets? Hobbies?***

Yes, I am married to Leticia who is from Philippines, although she lived for many years in countries as diverse as Israel and Hong Kong. Our children are adults and live in Hong Kong and Australia. Indeed, we are grandparents. Our dog, Bruno, is a very affectionate Border Collie-Whippet cross. Hobbies? Sports watching, reading, current affairs, travelling, writing and working on our homes.

## ***You have book signings, speaking engagements, lectures, etc. Do you also teach?***

I have retired from formal teaching and advising as in a 9 to 5 job, but I do travel to schools under the New Zealand *Writers in Schools* scheme to deliver poetry and literature teaching classes. More, the series of poetry teaching resource books which I write are – I guess – a form of me teaching, albeit not being physically in the classroom.

## ***You have several books on the work of Colin Wilson? What do you find so fascinating about him?***



Colin was a *sui generis* writer, original, prolific, engaging in person. He wrote across a wide spectrum of genre, but all his works were united by his prime driving positive belief: that man/womankind are not using their full consciousness and are in fact abnegating their potential evolution accordingly. Wilson was *The Outsider* he wrote about in 1956 in a book with the same title.

I met Colin in Melbourne, Australia in 1993 and I also wrote my Ph. D thesis about his many novels. He continues to be an influence for a lot of people and there have thus far been two Colin Wilson Conferences in Nottingham, England. I gave a lecture there last year.

## ***How difficult was it to become so multi-lingual and is there a lot of similarity between them? I ask because in America we tend to focus more on Spanish & French.***

It is not difficult for me to be multilingual – as is my wife – because several of the languages I can speak, namely te reo Māori (my own language), Tagalog (one of my wife's first languages – the other is Kapampangan), Bahasa Melayu (Malay) have several strong similarities in pronunciation and sharing some words. After all, the migration pattern of the Pacific ensured this similar passage of these languages.

More, because of having lived in PR China and Hong Kong SAR, we speak Cantonese (our children's first language) and Putonghua or Mandarin too. Leticia has Spanish also, as Philippines was colonized by Spain, while I have French as it was compulsory when I went to school in New Zealand last century – as was Latin!

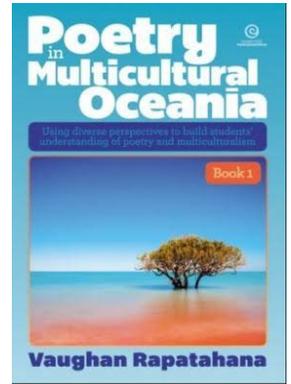


### ***Are you working on anything now?***

Yes, thank you, on several projects. My collection of short stories is an ongoing project and is titled *Indigenous Expatriate*. It will be published late in 2019. Includes stories originally published Stateside.

Very soon Book Three of *Poetry in Multicultural Oceania* will be published – I have completed the book and am doing the final proofreading right now.

On Sunday 31st March the launch of *Ngā Kupu Waikato* [Waikato words], which is a collection of poems by Waikato-based poets, will take place. Waikato is a large region in the North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand and where we have a home. This is the first such anthology and I initiated the project and edited it.



There are also several other projects, including organizing all my *Jacket 2* commentaries into a collection.

More, one book has already been published in 2019 – *Colin Wilson: More than the Existentialist Outsider* (Paupers Press, England), which is a collection of my published essays on Wilson – several having appeared in *Philosophy Now* – and a new, lengthy piece sharing the title of this book.

### ***I live in the country. Our "critters" are very much different than those you appear to "come in close contact" with. Can you tell us more about them?***



In New Zealand, we live pretty much in the country too. Lots of cows, some sheep, horses populate the many farm paddocks around us not far from our home in Mangakino, which is itself located on a lake. No snakes, some rabbits – and lots of pet dogs here. Lots of possums too – often as roadkill, while the birdlife around us is prolific. In Pampanga, Philippines, again many dogs - and caribou, with a few donkeys pulling carts too. Hong Kong, at least where we live, has miniature dogs, often pushed around in prams by their owners, as well as small birds carried around in cages by their owners. Pet fish too!

No coyotes, cougars and suchlike critters, though.

### ***If there was only ONE thing you could tell aspiring writers, what would it be?***

Never – and I mean never – give up.

### ***What helps you to focus when writing?***

Generally, some driving idea, concept, emotion which impels me to write and to continue to write, including returning to – a poem especially – to further hone it. If the work is non-fiction, I also get further focus, by searching for as many relevant references as I can. In short, I become a bit obsessed by any given project until I am happy with it...obsession brings focus.

***Do you ever visit the U.S.?***

I visited the USA several years ago – for example Hawaii – while we travel more to USA-influenced zones, such as Guam, Saipan, Tinian, Palau. Mind you, some would say that Philippines is still a USA-influenced zone - as indeed is Okinawa, another visited place!

***Because you travel so much, how do you "vacation"?***

In many ways travelling IS a vacation, as it brings about new sightings, new experiences and adventures. Leticia and I look forward to seeing family and enjoy relaxed travelling accordingly.

***Is there anything else you'd like to add for your readers?***

Only to say kia ora or thank you for reading this interview. And the same to you for asking these searching questions.

Good luck.

***ABOUT VAUGHAN...***



Vaughan Rapatahana commutes between Hong Kong SAR, the Philippines and Aotearoa New Zealand. He is widely published in several genres in Māori, English and other languages. He was a semi-finalist in the Proverse Prize for Literature in 2009, highly commended in the 2013 erbacce-prize for poetry from more than 6000 entries, and won the inaugural Proverse Poetry prize in 2016, the same year as his poetry collection Atonement was nominated for a National Book Award in the Philippines. His latest poetry collection is ternion (erbacce-press, Liverpool, England). Vaughan has a PhD in existential philosophy from the University of Auckland on the novels of Colin Wilson, whom he has written extensively about and lectured at the Wilson conference in Nottingham in July, 2018. Vaughan is also a language critic and instigated and co-edited English language as Hydra and Why English? Confronting the Hydra (Multilingual Matters, UK, 2012, 2016). He has also written commentaries for Jacket2 (University of Pennsylvania), including a 2015–2016 series and a new series currently in progress.

Rapatahana has authored or co-authored over 30 books.

Website: <http://www.bookcouncil.org.nz/Writers/Profiles/Rapatahana,%20Vaughan>