



BOOKSHELF

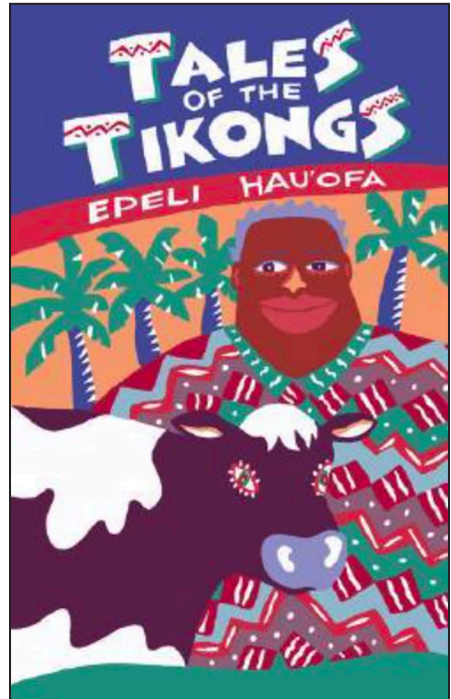
Reading something as flimsy as a novel

IN THIS section of Pacific Journalism Review we ask our regular contributors to pick three books that have played an important part of their academic, professional or writing lives. In this issue, the selection is by veteran Pacific affairs reporter MICHAEL FIELD.

Tales of the Tikongs, by Epeli Hau'ofa. Honolulu, US: University of Hawai'i Press. 1994. 104 pages. ISBN 9780824815943.

NON-FICTION is, mostly, my thing. It takes a bit to persuade me to devote precious book time to something as flimsy as a novel. Yet, at the top of my list of influential books is Epeli Hau'ofa's *Tales of the Tikongs*, published in 1994.

The one defence for its inclusion in this list is that it never felt like fiction: it was unerringly accurate when it came to the world of Pacific states and foreign aid. Hau'ofa followed it with

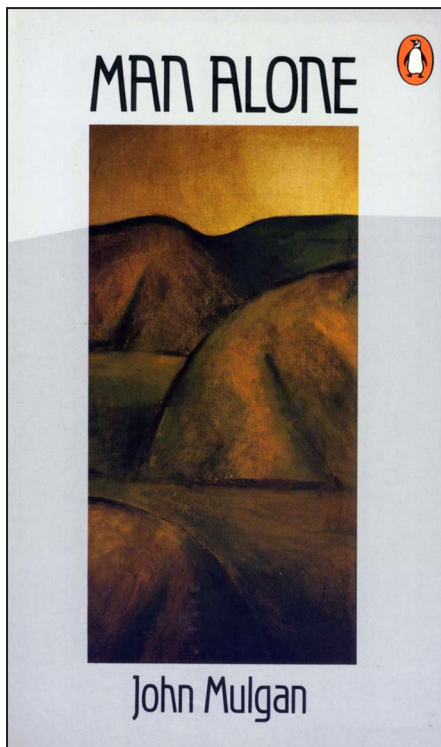


Kisses in the Nederends in 1995. Five years later, on the Suva campus at the University of the South Pacific, I asked him why his satire ran to only two volumes. He replied that he had no desire to be the Pacific Salman Rushdie.

Hau'ofa's biggest contribution was *We Are the Ocean*, a striking piece of philosophy on the way Pacific people see themselves. I came back to Hau'ofa

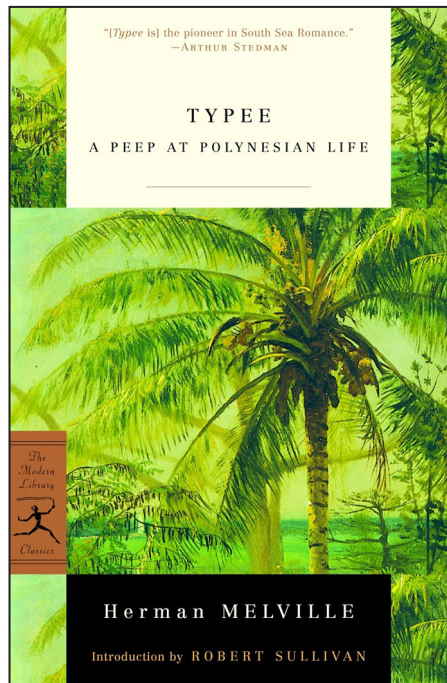
recently, gleefully buying a new copy of *Tikongs*. I had been interviewing ‘Akilisi Pohiva, Tonga’s Prime Minister who only had a few weeks left to live. He spoke of Hau’ofa’s importance to the beginning of the democracy struggle. The two men were not especially close, but had been influenced by each other.

Man Alone, by John Mulgan. Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin Random House. 1939/2002. 224 pages. ISBN: 9780143020011.



I REGULARLY read John Mulgan, of *Man Alone*, something of a definition of New Zealand, or the male side of it. I prefer *Report on Experience*. I was lucky to work with his brother and knew of the pain that led to a terrible World War Two and suicide.

Typee, by Herman Melville. Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin Random House. 1846/2001. 116 pages. ISBN: 9780375757457.



FOR MY third influential book, I cannot quite decide between *Scoop* by Evelyn Waugh (I was a news agency man most of my career and recognised much) or Herman Melville’s *Typee*.

Of course that work, based in Nuku Hiva, is overshadowed completely by his towering *Moby Dick*. *Typee* produces arguments around its accurate, or otherwise, portrayal of Polynesian culture. I think I’ve read it four or five times and am seduced by it.

So in making the decision, *Scoop* or *Typee*, I’ve imposed a tough criteria: what would get me through my time in a Fiji detention centre?

You coming, Herman?