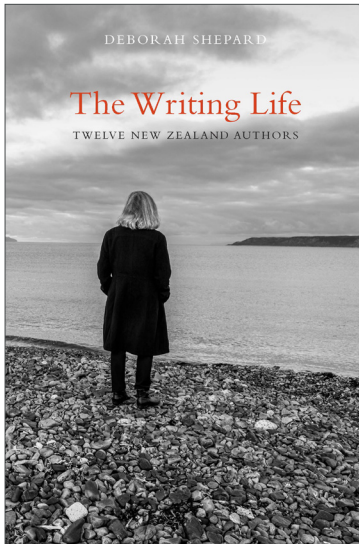


# The Writing Life

## Twelve New Zealand Authors

DEBORAH SHEPARD



\$49.99

CATEGORY: New Zealand Non Fiction

ISBN: 978-0-9951095-3-7

eISBN: n/a

BIC: BGL, DSK, 1MBN

BISAC: LCO020000, BIO007000

PUBLISHER: Massey University Press

IMPRINT: MUP

PUBLISHED: November 2018

PAGE EXTENT: 464

FORMAT: Flexibind plus jacket

RIGHTS: World

SIZE: 230mm x 163mm

### CANDID CONVERSATIONS WITH 12 WRITERS WHO HELPED SHAPE NEW ZEALAND LITERATURE

A unique, candid and intimate survey of the life and work of 12 of our most acclaimed writers: Patricia Grace, Tessa Duder, Owen Marshall, Philip Temple, David Hill, Joy Cowley, Vincent O'Sullivan, Albert Wendt, Marilyn Duckworth, Chris Else, Fiona Kidman and Witi Ihimaera.

Constructed as Q&As with experienced oral historian Deborah Shepard, they offer a marvellous insight into their careers. As a group they are now the 'elders' of New Zealand literature; they forged the path for the current generation.

Together the authors trace their publishing and literary history from 1959 to 2018, through what might now be viewed as a golden era of publishing into the more unsettled climate of today. They address universal themes: the death of parents and loved ones, the good things that come with ageing, the components of a satisfying life, and much more. And they give advice on writing.

The book has an historical continuity, showing fruitful and fascinating links between individuals who have negotiated the same literary terrain for more than sixty years. To further honour them are magnificent photo portraits by distinguished photographer John McDermott, commissioned by the publisher for this project.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Deborah Shepard** is an author, teacher of memoir, oral historian and film and art historian. She has also been a Film, TV and Media Studies lecturer at the University of Auckland. Her major publications include *Her Life's Work: Conversations with Five New Zealand Women* (2009), *Between the Lives: Partners in Art* (2005), *Reframing Women: History of New Zealand Film* (2000), and *Giving Yourself to Life: A Journal of Pain, Hope and Renewal* (2015). Deborah teaches introductory and Master classes in memoir and is a life writing mentor for the New Zealand Society of Authors.

### SALES POINTS

- The book is warm, celebratory, revealing, generous and wide ranging.
- A must have for all those who admire their writing, and for schools, libraries and creative writing courses.
- A substantial and intelligent tribute to 12 writers who have made a massive contribution to New Zealand literature and have paved the way for others.
- Full bibliographies and first covers of all their books complete the text.
- Marvellous photographs of each author, especially taken by John McDermott, including of each of their writing spaces.

PRINTABLE A3 POSTER  
AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST



**THE WRITING LIFE**

My interview with Joy Cowley took place in her Wellington waterfront apartment, which is in an old brick warehouse remodelled by the architect Ian Athfield. The vast space is lined with books. On the walls are paintings by Joy and her sister, and exciting photographs taken by her husband Terry Closs. Sunlight streamed through a magnificent arched window, divided by wooden mullions into many segments. The view took in Parliament and the Beehive, and against the dark wooded hills of Thorndon. Before the interview Joy showed me a pale manuscript cup she had cleverly turned to use as a pen pot on the table, her assignment for a woodturning society meeting in Karori the night before. She also pointed out a small blackened writing desk, built in 1914, and used by her. A dozen waxy stools which she identified as 'pear' watched out.

I was born in Levin on 7 August 1931 and named Cassia Joy Summers. My birth was long and difficult for my poor mother. I was a bronch baby and in those days, very often, the children born that way died. And I wasn't very healthy and when it became clear that breathing tubes, my name was changed, and my name added to my registered name, mainly because someone had sent there a card with a poem from William Blake, where did you come from baby, out of the everywhere here? — I've forgotten the rest of it, but the back to you here, joy be thy name. My parents were impressed with that and they closed in — o-o, and I'm very grateful they did. [Laughs]

**That's a lovely story. Can you tell me about your father?**  
My father Peter Duff Summers was born on 14 October 1904 and died in 1971. He lived in Auckland and came to New Zealand with his family in 1912 from Scotland. His mother Douglas New Zealand was a city or a suburb of Australia and expected to see kangaroos leaping in the air! They have very little about their education, only that they needed to get away from the poverty to Scotland. She didn't want her sons working the mines. My grandfather was a pig boy at the age of nine.

**Your father died young?**  
He was fifty-eight. And I had several brothers: four of them died, and I left this with a disabled foot. He was one of those early self-employed patients in Auckland. He used to joke about the fact that he was no longer a man, that he had the voice of a twenty-year-old girl to him. In 40, she was an accident victim, and we were very grateful to the parents for giving permission.

**So how old were you when he died?**  
I was 11. I had been in my early thirties, you see, he was a very full man for all the time we knew him. He was a carpenter, a builder's mate, but he couldn't tell heavy things. So he supervised, but he was a very good teacher.

**He taught you some carpentry skills?**  
Oh yes I was Godson of his, and my three sisters and my brother Jackson of Elmore when they were young. I used to actually mess this because I would be kept home from school on both days after that. But I was always strong and I became that handy and his thing was in fact I helped that to build a house over a whole year. I was twelve and thirteen when we did that. And I've always done silver and built some things. Like racking bookcases and putting in skirting boards, and screwing doors and window frames and so on.

**Did he inspire your love of woodturning?**  
No, no, that came much later, except that he got me a love of wood. And I used to make dolls' houses for my sisters and once I made a very fancy, wobbly rocking horse. But I did the working with wood and he allowed me to use certain tools and nails because he certainly couldn't afford to let me have new nails. If you've ever tried to drive in a nail and that's come out of clothes, it's terrible, so I'd get my pocket money I'd go down to the hardware shop and ask for the cheapest worth of nails. [Laughs] The lid men in the hardware shop didn't laugh at me.

**Last night you were making a cup as an assignment for your woodturning class.**  
Oh, yes, last night we had the monthly meeting of the Wellington Woodworkers Guild and it was a Finnish cup. They make wooden cups with handles, and I was intrigued as to how you could turn a wooden cup with a handle on a lathe. Actually it is just a matter of technique.

**Tell me about your mother.**  
My mother, Cassia Kathleen Gudge, was born on the twenty-seventh of March 1909 and died in 2002. I don't think she ever had paid employment. She was one of eight children and worked in the family business and was overworked when she met my father and married at eighteen. I was born when she was twenty.

**So she had a good life.**  
She was eighty-two when she died and she also had illness. Like my father, but it was a mental disability which you grew up as the girl like.

