The Writing Life

The Writing Life

TWELVE NEW ZEALAND AUTHORS

DEBORAH SHEPARD

Photographs by John McDermott

MASSEY UNIVERSITY PRESS

Contents

Introduction

'. . . there is an aching need for art in our country. We need an art to expose ourselves to ourselves, explain ourselves to ourselves, see ourselves in a perspective of place and time,' wrote Bill Pearson in the landmark essay 'Fretful Sleepers', which was published in the literary journal *Landfall* in 1952. Pearson was studying at Oxford University at that time, and from that distant vantage point he reflected on the characteristics of New Zealand culture that he found stifling: the lack of intellectual discussion, the dearth of writing located centrally in New Zealand and of work conveying a rich interior life. He described the unthinking, 'threadbare life' of New Zealand's citizens as 'dumb and numb, null and dull' and longed for talent to be realised, for emotions to be examined so there could be 'greater depth, more joy, heavier sorrow'. New Zealand writers, Pearson argued, needed to reject the colonial influence that had smothered artistic endeavour for more than a century and find their subject matter in the people who inhabited this place. 'It is our job to take a lead in awakening New Zealanders from their fretful sleep,' he wrote.

In 1952 the generation of authors who are the focus of this study — Joy Cowley, Marilyn Duckworth, Tessa Duder, Chris Else, Patricia Grace, David Hill, Witi Ihimaera, Fiona Kidman, Owen Marshall, Vincent O'Sullivan, Philip Temple and Albert Wendt — were all completing their secondary educations, based on a British curriculum that advanced a Eurocentric version of history. This book follows their emergence from the cultural vacuum Pearson described through six decades of brilliant hard work to the place they enjoy now, with extensive publication histories that represent the diverse cultural richness of this place and global recognition for their contributions to literature.

There is a well-known line from Allen Curnow's poem 'The Skeleton of the Great Moa in the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch': 'Not I, some child born in a marvellous year, / Will learn the trick of standing upright here', which might be read as a prediction of the attainments of these twelve authors. But it was not without struggle, for in the 1940s the literary high ground was dominated by a clique of male Pākehā editors and writers, and the canon they promoted was white, male and nationalist in agenda. It is doubtful they or anyone else could have foreseen that one day, seventy-five years hence, there would be a book cover, *this* one, featuring a world-renowned Māori author, Patricia Grace, standing directly in front of her ancestral land, the place from whence she has drawn inspiration, looking across the water into the realm of possibility. Nor could they have imagined the explosion of voices that would fan out from this generation, through the Māori cultural renaissance of the 1970s and 1980s, the feminist shake-up of the same period, and the concurrent arrival of Pasifika voices to the multi-ethnic, eclectic and vibrant literary spectrum that exists here now.

Could anyone have predicted then that there would be two female Booker Prize winners from New Zealand — Keri Hulme for *The Bone People* in 1985 and Eleanor

Catton for *The Luminaries* in 2013? Or that today our authors would be writing in a global context, travelling inwards and outwards from this place, and composing across every genre and subgenre of writing: novels, poetry, short stories, biography, memoir, the personal essay, creative non-fiction, scholarly essays and books, radio and stage plays, television and film scripts, libretti, and the vast field of books that make up children's and youth literature in New Zealand?

The vigorous health of our literary sector is all the more remarkable given the conditions under which writers operate and function. In his Janet Frame Memorial Lecture in 2007, Owen Marshall described the experience like this: 'I have a sense of work being cut and hammered out of adversity.' Despite the increase in the number of honours awarded to writers, the Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement, the Michael King Writer's Fellowship, the support of patrons and arts institutions, the Arts Foundation of New Zealand icon and laureate awards, the literary funding available through Creative New Zealand, the writers-in-residence programmes, and the Menton and Berlin residencies abroad, the writing life remains a perilous and uncertain vocation in a country that privileges and rewards sporting achievement over artistic endeavour and where authors earn less, annually, than the living wage. So along with offering a window onto aspects of our literary history and its high points, this book also illustrates how twelve individuals have navigated an extraordinarily challenging professional environment and demonstrates how they have prevailed.

The Writing Life had its origins in an oral history project conceived in 1995 by Philip Temple and the New Zealand Society of Authors (NZSA). Its aim was to gather information from distinguished members about their involvement in and contribution to the society. The original interviews were conducted in two stages, in 1995 and 2005, resulting in twenty-two author interviews recorded by Alison Gray, Michael King and Sarah Gaitanos. Ten years then passed until, in 2015, then NZSA CEO Jackie Dennis, looking for audio content for the society's website, advertised for an oral historian to continue the investigation begun in the earlier series. Thanks to Jackie's efforts, funding was then secured from the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, and a third stage was on its way.

The moment I spied the notice in the NZSA bulletin I felt a lurch of excitement, for here was an opportunity to capture and preserve the recollections and insights of a singular generation of elder New Zealand writers who had been practising their craft for over sixty years, during a defining period in the evolution of this nation's literary history. Immediately I sought to widen the parameters to encompass a holistic examination of the life and work of each author, arguing that to leave out the broader discussion would be a missed opportunity. It was an intense assignment involving a period of deep reading, writing and cramming — nothing exercises the mind like the prospect of an encounter with some of the greats of the New Zealand writing community.

Once the project was in full swing I soon realised that the stories that were amassing were so compelling that they would not only enrich the sound archives of the Turnbull Library but also make a stunning book. Fortunately, Nicola Legat and Massey University Press also saw the potential. But Nicola urged me to reach higher and work harder, suggesting another four interviews to widen the frame. Those additional interviews were conducted during 2016, after which the writing process began on what is really a series of crafted conversations, based on the original interview transcripts and expanded and refined in further dialogue and consultation with the authors.

The other aspect of the project that made my heart beat faster was the chosen medium. The oral history interview is, in my opinion, one of the most democratic modes of history-gathering. Rather than rely on the scholar to interpret history on our behalf, it draws on firsthand accounts narrated by the people who have lived through history — in this case the writing practitioners themselves — recognising them as the authorities of their own experience, and privileging their personal inter-pretations of the literary history they had contributed to and borne witness to.

When teaching memoir, I often say to new writers: 'Write as though you are speaking your story aloud to an interested listener.' With the timer on and working in a concentrated burst of rapid writing, the student is more likely to produce something fresh, spontaneous and spirited. Likewise, the oral history interview — which is the product of a dynamic interchange between a narrator and an informed listener — has that same capacity to capture a sense of vibrant immediacy. This is history enlivened and inflected with the natural rhythm of speech. It is history made accessible through vividly told and richly illustrated accounts by people whose life's work involves them daily in the practice of observation, reflection, intellectual analysis and imagining, and who by aptitude and practice are primed to reach in deep to find their answers.

The other appeal of this project was its focus on a single generation of elder authors, twelve voices in discussion, each with their own personal take on the same key stages and phases, the defining events and turning points, in our literary history. Individually and collectively their narratives provide the reader with a wealth of stunning information. There are accounts of the pioneering literary figures: Vincent O'Sullivan, the eminent Katherine Mansfield scholar, saying of her brilliance: 'She can write just about everyone off the page'; Owen Marshall saying of Janet Frame: 'How many people have been able to go to the dark side of emotional experience as she has, and come back to tell the tale?' Among the authors of books for children and youth there is so much respect for Maurice Gee and so much love for Margaret Mahy. David Hill thought Mahy 'was a genius, in the sense that she was someone into whom a spirit seemed to breathe — and she also worked like hell!' Albert Wendt talked about the galvanising power of his friendship with poet Alistair Te Ariki Campbell in helping him

counter racist attitudes from early on, and about James K. Baxter assisting him with a university essay. There are literary friendships: David Hill and Elizabeth Smither, Fiona Kidman and Lauris Edmond, Marilyn Duckworth and Maurice Shadbolt.

We learn here, too, of the enabling and inspiring role of editors and publishers. Fiona Kidman recalls far-sighted publisher Phoebe Meikle and her electrifying pre-feminist speech to the boys at Rotorua Boys' High School, and in other chapters there is a discussion of the publisher's Pacific Paperback series, which launched the writing careers of Hone Tuwhare, Patricia Grace and Albert Wendt. There is Marilyn Duckworth on the influence of Bert Hingley of Hodder & Stoughton, who revived her stalled career with the publication of *Disorderly Conduct* in 1984. There are accounts of literary editors Charles Brasch, Denis Glover, Robin Dudding, Monte Holcroft, Ian Cross, Tony Reid and Alistair Campbell, who gave new writers their first heady experience of publication in major journals like *Landfall*, *Islands*, the *New Zealand Listener* and the *School Journal*.

Then there is the discussion of the texts themselves, which offers glimpses into a multitude of wonderful books and anthologies, including literary classics, scholarly texts, novels and poetry collections. There is New Zealand's first feminist novel, *A Breed of Women* (1979) by Fiona Kidman, and Tessa Duder's *Alex*, an empowering quartet of novels about a plucky young swimmer, as well as their feminist recuperative projects that introduce readers to the pioneering heroes Jean Batten and Sarah Mathew. There are the anthologies of Māori and Pasifika writing, beginning with *Lali*: *A Pacific Anthology* (1980), edited by Albert Wendt, the first of his many major anthologies that have launched Pacific voices in Aotearoa and globally; and there is *Into the World of Light* (1982), edited by Witi Ihimaera and D. S. Long, the first of Witi's anthologies that aimed to discover new talent and cultivate the growth of Māori literature. There are the books that challenged and changed our understandings of the impact of colonisation on Māori: Patricia Grace's *Potiki* (1986), which announced the arrival of a quietly subversive and significant voice, and Witi Ihimaera's *The Parihaka Woman* (2011), a text about the peaceful stand at Parihaka that should be read by all New Zealanders.

There are works of scholarship, such as *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, edited by Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott, and beautifully written memoirs by Joy Cowley, Marilyn Duckworth, Witi Ihimaera, Fiona Kidman, Owen Marshall, Vincent O'Sullivan, Philip Temple and Albert Wendt. There are accounts of the much-loved books for children and young adults by Joy Cowley; the engaging novels documenting recent New Zealand history for teen readers by David Hill; Owen Marshall's intimate and explosive history of William Larnach and his wife Conny's affair with Larnach's son; Fiona Kidman's magnificent historical saga *The Book of Secrets* (1987); and poems quoted from standout collections by Fiona Kidman, Owen

Marshall, Vincent O'Sullivan and Albert Wendt. There are the biographies — Mulgan as viewed by Vincent O'Sullivan, and the Wakefields examined by Philip Temple — and there are famous plays, libretti and lyrics for opera and musical productions, and books adapted for television and the big screen.

The sheer volume of output is especially impressive in view of the changing shape of the publishing industry over the period examined here. This book traces that arc from the vacuum that existed in 1935, when the oldest of these authors was born, through a golden age of publishing from the 1960s to the 1990s — a period when opportunities multiplied and authors enjoyed long and secure associations with publishers who helped shape their careers — to the fragmentation of the industry post-digital revolution and the bricks-and-mortar bookstore decline, which has changed the game completely. Somehow these authors found ways to flourish, a number of them noting their good fortune to begin when they did, at a time when a new writer could approach more than one publisher with a slender pitch either here or in the UK or the US and receive an offer of a book contract almost by return post.

But the golden era didn't, and couldn't, last. Summing up the changing climate, Philip Temple says: 'In my publishing lifetime it is true to say that every single publisher I've been involved with has either disappeared, or been bought or merged, and this is detrimental to an author's career.'

How, then, did each individual manage to stay on track and sustain a writing career? There were so many questions I was longing to ask. I wanted to know whether talent and imagination were sufficient or whether there were definable qualities and attitudes that determined an author's success. I was interested in the power of personal agency and how much control an author might exert, and whether serendipity was also a factor. I was curious to know how authors dealt with rejection letters and how they overcame self-doubt. Did they have to be clever strategists to stay in the game? The prolific Witi Ihimaera told me that he likes 'to negotiate my publishing three or four years in advance'. And how does an author survive financially? Philip Temple's account of cobbling together sufficient funds to sustain him through the eight years of research and the writing of his 592-page biography of the Wakefields is particularly instructive.

But first there were questions about the writers' beginnings, in childhood, when nascent authors were experiencing the world for the first time; developing observational powers, and a heightened sensitivity to mood and subtext, to the things not said; storing up impressions that, later on, would be minutely examined in their writing. I wanted to discover how childhood experience had shaped their responses to the world and whether there was a causal chain of events that led from an early

interest in books to realising the writing dream. There is a common perception that suffering is a necessary condition of art. Was that the case here? How did childhood losses, the death of a parent, or family stresses and strains affect young writer egos?

I wanted to know about the role of play and creativity in their young lives. When did the writing begin? Was an early start a prerequisite? Did they grow up with books in the home? Were they read to at night, and did that make a difference? Albert Wendt gave a wonderful account of his family gathering each night in his grandmother's fale for a service that consisted of a hymn, a Bible reading and a prayer, and of being immersed in 'this ocean of the Bible, language, music and history'. Were there other stimuli in childhood that assisted the development of the imagination? In Tessa Duder's childhood home her family had the complete recordings of *Madame Butterfly, Tosca* and *La Bohème*. 'My idea of a Sunday afternoon with my parents was to sit down — particularly in winter — and listen to the whole opera with the words in front of me. I know *Madame Butterfly* and most other Puccini operas inside out.'

There were questions about parental influence. Marilyn Duckworth grew up in a literary family — her mother was a published author, her father wrote psychology texts, her sister Fleur Adcock became a poet — but sometimes parents couldn't comprehend a writing life for their children. Joy Cowley had a position as the 'News for Children' reporter at the *Southern Cross* in Palmerston North while still at high school, but when she raised the possibility of a newspaper cadetship her mother said no, because 'newspaper people were either atheists or communists'.

I was curious about the role of mentors in an author's development. Had people stepped in at critical junctures and influenced the road taken? When Fiona Kidman, aged ten, won a prize for children's writing, a reader wrote to her and said, 'One day you may grow up to be a journalist, or a librarian, or a famous writer.' Fiona says, 'She'll never know quite what that meant to me.' Again and again the authors cited the motivating influence of encouraging professionals. Albert Wendt was deeply impressed by a teacher at New Plymouth Boys' High who had written the textbooks they were studying in class, but he was also crushed by another teacher who called him 'black sambo'. Patricia Grace was clever and enjoyed learning, but she was also the only Māori girl at a Catholic school and felt undermined by the teachers' persistent 'low expectations of me as a scholar'.

For Māori and Pacific authors there were terrible experiences of discrimination — more than one author tried to rub the colour off their body after being told they were dirty — but these experiences also made them determined to succeed. Albert Wendt remembers Alistair Campbell exhorting him 'to prove yourself to be better than these discriminators'. The response to racism and injustice gave the writing its fiery radical edge.

At secondary school Witi Ihimaera was so outraged when he read a patronising

story called 'The Whare' by Pākehā writer Douglas Stewart in the 1953 Oxford edition of *New Zealand Short Stories* he threw the book out the classroom window. It was his first political act and he was caned for it. He made a vow then that 'if ever I became a writer I would write a book about Māori people that would be an antidote to those kinds of stories, and it would be placed in front of every school child in New Zealand'.

These testimonies demonstrate the power of the written word to challenge bigotry, and show how writing can be used as a tool for cultural survival. Such reformations are especially significant given an education system that colonised young students' minds. When presented with a writing topic like 'A Day at the Seaside' it didn't occur to Patricia Grace 'to write about the beach at Hongoeka Bay or the bush where we used to play'. Instead she wrote about 'seasides adorned with little stripy tents that I'd seen illustrated in comics. I used words that I'd never heard spoken, but I'd read them — brook, meadow, bathing costume, bluebells and primroses.'

Overcoming cultural cringe has exercised and motivated the authors who write for children and young people as well. The lack of New Zealand-based literature fired Joy Cowley, Tessa Duder, David Hill and Patricia Grace to provide empowering stories for young readers that position children and their familiar environs at the heart of the story. When Joy Cowley was growing up, 'nowhere did I find my own country in the books. I was of the opinion we were unworthy of books and that there was something inferior about being a Kiwi.' It didn't initially occur to David Hill, a master of historical youth fiction, to consider topics from New Zealand history until John McIntyre, of the Children's Bookshop in Wellington, said he 'should be writing historical fiction, and for these kids history starts fifteen years ago'.

I asked the authors whether they had encountered New Zealand writers while still at school and had glimpsed in their example the possibility of the writing vocation. David Hill remembers using school prize vouchers to buy two collections of Katherine Mansfield's short stories, but rather than perceiving a possible career he was 'moved by the wistfulness and the melancholy, moods to which I'm susceptible in literature'. Several authors mentioned writing in the Frank Sargeson realist mode when starting out, but for Patricia Grace it was discovering Dalmatian author Amelia Batistich, who provided her with a glimpse of where to begin and showed her 'that a different voice was equally valid'. She also spoke of a 1964 poem by Hone Tuwhare, 'To a Girl Poet', that ends:

> Hold it carefully:
>
> your way of saying. Cup it to yourself:
> the bated flame, diamond softness
> and fire

This was a source of inspiration.

At a certain point in the narration of a life, usually after the career is under way, love comes along and complicates the picture. The frame of my previous book projects has been feminist, but this one, with its ratio of seven male to five female authors, nudged me to examine the gendered nature of both the male and female authors' experiences and to think again about Virginia Woolf's treatise on women and the optimal circumstances for creativity. Might her argument be equally relevant to both genders? In *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Woolf argued that in order to reach her potential a woman needs an education, an income, freedom from domestic chores and a room of her own. I asked the women about their experience of the domestic juggle in the 1960s, and how they overcame the clash between wanting to write and the pressure of narrow societal expectations. Tessa Duder put it in a nutshell when she asked: 'Who is cooking the meals, who is baking the bread, who is minding the children? Most male writers don't have to stop and put a meal on the table, or go to the supermarket before they can start a day's writing.'

The male authors had different challenges in their roles as family providers, and compromises had to be accepted. On leaving his job as features editor at the *Listener* to write full-time, Philip Temple promised his wife that he would fully support the family. This meant he couldn't tackle bigger forms like the novel during the intensive parenting years. For secondary school teachers Owen Marshall and David Hill, leaving work to write full-time had to wait, and their first novels weren't published until they were in their fifties. Witi Ihimaera stopped writing and became a diplomat when his children were small. He loved writing but 'it didn't put kai on the table'. Chris Else worked at the Victoria University Bookshop and as a computer programmer for a number of years. Albert Wendt and Vincent O'Sullivan had long careers as academics and had to wait for sabbatical leave for a longer run at the work.

In my earlier work I had asked questions about the domestic and intimate areas of women's lives, including childbirth and caring for children. Would the male authors talk freely about their intimate lives? I wasn't sure but I asked them anyway. It was worth it to have an answer like this from David Hill: 'I remember the heart-shaking experience of holding Pete when he was little and fitted between my hip and the underside of my chin, and the smell of a baby's head. I hadn't expected fatherhood to be so joyous.' Listening to the men relating their personal challenges, I felt the barriers between genders melting.

I was curious, too, about training opportunities. Today there are degrees in creative writing available at all our universities, but this generation of authors was on its own. So how did they acquire the skills to write a novel, a biography, a memoir or a poem? In this respect *The Writing Life* offers a guide to writing: Owen Marshall and Fiona Kidman on how to research an historical novel; Patricia Grace on structure; David Hill

on historical fiction as an 'assemblage' process; Vincent O'Sullivan on the dangers of an academic career. There are tips on how to structure the writing day in order to reach writing goals and to ensure that the research and reading gets done.

There was a lovely set of answers to my request for a snapshot of a writing day: a swim was essential for Witi Ihimaera, while Joy Cowley liked to write on the verandah at her home in the Marlborough Sounds, where she could pause to whistle to the birds or watch the dolphins in the bay. A coffee at the local cafe and a stint of writing on the iPad worked well for Chris Else, as did writing at 3 a.m. through insomnia. Physical fitness and emotional stamina were discussed, too. Witi Ihimaera said, 'As a writer you have to be physically as well as emotionally fit. You have to have ihi, energy and stamina. Within conflict situations, you have to know how to resolve them. And you must have nerves of steel, especially if you want to go for the jugular.'

As the conversations advanced I began hearing more about the ups and downs of the writing life, the shadows falling in amongst the bright sunlight of success. I hadn't expected quite so much of this, and I was surprised by the evidence of dozens of unfinished and unpublished books, of ideas in development failing to reach fruition, of destroyed manuscripts, hundreds of unsuccessful grant applications. Fiona Kidman told me how she had taken the first draft of *A Breed of Women* down to the bottom of the garden and burned it before beginning a new draft. Taking remedial action, reapplying not once but six times for a grant — these acts of gritty resolve are what set the successful author apart.

As I listened, a profile of the writing personality was beginning to emerge. I was discovering that talent and curiosity, and an abiding love of language and books, while essential, were not sufficient in themselves to enable an author's steady ascent to the top of the writing field. What a writer needs, and what these authors convey, is a deep inner conviction that what they have to say is important and worth striving for. Tenacity, single-mindedness, perseverance and a steely determination to succeed, along with an inner compulsion to create, are the qualities that appear to insulate the writer against the torment of self-doubt on the bleak days when a project stalls or a rejection letter arrives.

And how to survive financially? Having a broad skill set, and an ability to write in more than one genre, or to teach, can protect a writer from economic hardship. I saw ambition in healthy measure, too, but more significantly I saw evidence of a highly evolved work ethic and its accompanying rewards. Sheer hard slog was the leitmotif. There's a sense of the author as worker, going to the desk each day and sitting down to first draft and then redraft and craft thousands of words, keeping going until the job is done, as evidenced in John McDermott's evocative photographs of the writers'

habitats. Fiona Kidman remembered rewriting all 100,000 words of *The Book of Secrets* in just six weeks, 'writing in a burst of passionate and sustained energy that I've never been able to replicate, hardly stopping to sleep, collapsing on the bed, dozing, eating on the run, dashing outside to remind myself it was summer, starting over again'. Tessa Duder spoke of her swimming career and how the boring slog up and down the pool had given her 'a certain stoicism and ability to endure discomfort'. Owen Marshall said you need 'that strike of inspiration', but also that 'it's a matter of sitting there doing the job, honing your skills, avoiding self-deceit. Just as the professional tennis player practises for many lonely hours to be able to produce the down-the-line winner, so in intellectual pursuits it's a matter of developing and improving skills for the challenge.'

There is pleasure recorded here, too, and a resounding sense of the deep satisfaction to be found in the writing vocation: how it feels to land a first book contract and to see and hold the book in print for the first time, to penetrate a subject and know it's been well articulated, to receive readers' responses that validate the effort. There are accounts of travel around the world to festivals, book launches and award ceremonies. But the predominant impression is of the overriding joy of being able to communicate. Tessa Duder said, 'If I suddenly found that I couldn't or didn't want to write any more, I'd be thinking, what am I going to do with myself? It's what I do, it's my identity, it's communication, it's sharing. You don't tell a story to yourself, you tell it to share feelings or for the pleasure of creating a character, a believable world and a narrative that compels a reader to keep reading.' Writers get twitchy when they're not writing. It's how they process their experience. 'Wanting to be a writer, that's like wanting to be a breather,' said Joy Cowley. 'I just lived stories.' And Chris Else reiterated, 'I write because I can't stop writing . . . I just have to. I'd even do it if I was never published again.'

In the final section of each interview I asked about the author's experience in the here and now. On career fulfilment, more than one author spoke of the pleasure of having created something that will last beyond their lifetime, and of the comfort of having absorbing work to give meaning to life. There was a discussion of ageing and adjusting to changes in physical capability, and dealing with the deaths of family and friends, but also the good things that come with growing older. One of the highlights of talking to this generation of authors was their willingness to reveal the complexity of being mortal. I was repeatedly moved by their generosity, and found courage and equanimity in the discussion of mortality and how it concentrates the mind and produces a heightened awareness of the preciousness of life. There was grief that some time in the not-too-distant future they will not be here to look through a window and see a blue sky. Fiona Kidman's poem for her husband, 'So Far For Now', expresses this so well. Together they are eating fish and chips by the Hokianga harbour in 'the collapsed world of evening . . .'

. . . Oh, you know
that you are going, that
you have already gone
far along the journey
when you sit here, just the two
of you at a rough wooden
table in this dusk light,
eating with slow care, not talking
about anything much, having said
enough, sometimes more than enough
for as long as you can remember,
not needing to say it all again.
In the morning
there is mist, the hills
have taken fright.

One of my final questions was on sustenance, because the writing life is by nature and necessity a solitary occupation. How did they overcome the isolation? Where did they find psychological nourishment on the journey? The authors spoke of the value of writers' residencies — the Katherine Mansfield Fellowship to Menton being a high point — for offering the time and space in an inspiring setting to explore a project free of financial pressures and everyday distractions. Overwhelmingly, though, the authors acknowledged their life partners and family members, saying that without their emotional encouragement the writing would have been a lonely enterprise.

This book is dedicated to Ian Kidman, husband, advocate, ally and friend of his author wife Fiona Kidman for fifty-seven years, who died, while this book was in production, on 30 October 2017. At the time of his death Fiona said that without his support 'I am sure I would not have been a writer. In a way we made each other who we were.'