

WHERE WE WERE, WHERE WE ARE NOW.

The 2016 Janet Frame Memorial Lecture by President of Honour of the NZ Society of Authors (PEN NZ), Dr Philip Temple ONZM, given at the City Gallery, Wellington on 12 March 2016.

This year, Philip Temple's second published book, The Sea and the Snow, will be republished in a 50th anniversary edition. As he now works on a biography of Maurice Shadbolt, he considers how much has changed and how much remains the same in the professional life of a New Zealand writer over the past half century.

I want to take you on a journey that begins and ends here. Right here. In this building. Almost 60 years ago I arrived in Wellington from London at the age of 18 and my host, knowing my literary interest and ambitions, took me along to a poetry reading. It was at the public library - this building as many of you will recall - in the basement lecture theatre. The occasion was readings in memory of A.R.D. Fairburn, perhaps the most prominent public poet of his generation, who had recently died. Here were many of New Zealand's leading poets, gathered each to render a favourite Fairburn poem: James K. Baxter, Alistair Campbell, Louis Johnson, Anton Vogt and, above all, the red-faced, Punch-like figure of Denis Glover, who gave a theatrical rendition in the aisle of 'The Rakehelly Man'. All are gone now, most long gone, but in the audience

that day were some who are still with us: writers such as then 25 year-old Maurice Gee, who was working at his short story skills when he had time off from portering at Wellington Hospital; and poet and actor Peter Bland who, several years later, would meet here with others to found Wellington's first professional theatre, Downstage. As even this short list of names suggests, Wellington at that time was the primary locus of literary activity, seen as the 'magic pumpkin' by poet Kevin Ireland, luring writers from all over. They all knew each other, drinking at the St George or the Duke and, after the six o'clock swill, in and out of rickety flats on and off The Terrace, partying, arguing literary polemics to the point of early morning exhaustion. Maurice and Gill Shadbolt's cottage at 370a The Terrace was a favourite venue for partying or crashing, a way station for writers from out of town.

So what was the wider environment for writers at that time? What was their place, what were they trying to achieve?

For the general public, there was no such thing as New Zealand literature. Any literature in English worth reading came from 'Home' or, at a pinch, the US. Even the idea of being a writer was risible, not a real job. As for poetry, well that was something for the ladies, unless you were a 'pansy'. And in the conformist, everyone-is-equal society of the 1950s, writers with ideas were too different, subversive even, Commos who needed watching. How long would it be, to paraphrase Allen Curnow,

before our literature would 'learn the trick of standing upright here'? Denis Glover dreamed of 'What may yet be seen/ In Johnsonville and Geraldine'.

Yet there was a small audience for our literature, reflected in the couple of hundred people who attended the Fairburn commemorative readings. And they would have been among those who bought the *New Zealand Listener*, under the editorship of Monte Holcroft, as much for his sustained support of short stories and poetry as for the radio programme listings. Enlightened administrators under the first Labour Government had also supported the development of a local literature and ten years before had established the New Zealand Literary Fund. In 1947 also, Dunedin poet and philanthropist, Charles Brasch, along with Glover at Caxton Press, had founded the literary quarterly *Landfall*. Along with many other writers of his generation, Brasch had consciously decided, despite the social obstacles, the small audience, the difficulties of making voices heard under the blanket of British, and increasingly American, cultural noise, that they belonged here, and not at 'Home'. It was the experience of *here* that needed to be the substance of our literature. For writers like Maurice Shadbolt, there were so many untold stories, about *us*, that needed to be told. There could be a certain self-consciousness about all of this, a trying too hard in pursuit of the 'Great New Zealand Novel'. The literary juvenile wanting to leave home. But the intent to leave home was serious, the ambition real.

If 1947 saw the first steps for the long-term support for our literature, 1957 brought the first real evidence that it could stand on its own with the publication of Janet Frame's *Owls Do Cry* and Ian Cross's *The God Boy*. Both novels produced equal amounts of wonder, praise, bewilderment and unease about what they revealed of the unexamined black roots to the tree of social equality in this land of opportunity.

Maurice Shadbolt's short story collection, *The New Zealanders*, appeared two years later, stories from the land and from those rackety Wellington flats. This book attracted a more general readership here, encouraged by high praise from critics in the UK. New Zealand was also the land of colonial cringe, and endorsement by the writers of real English literature meant it must be all right. Half a century later, although the chain of influence has become more sophisticated, the cringe and the overseas endorsement still apply.

But more than *Owls Do Cry*, *The God Boy* or *The New Zealanders*, the fiction that convinced a wide New Zealand reading public that there were real stories about ourselves worth reading, was Barry Crump's *A Good Keen Man*, published in 1960. Comic, macho, slightly appalling, the yarns were, nevertheless, in a cultural vernacular that could only have come from here. *A Good Keen Man* not only sold a couple of hundred thousand copies, it was a book that was exported to the world, not imported from an overseas publisher and speaking only to a small audience.

When I published my first books in the 1960s, and later that decade became features editor of the *New Zealand Listener*, it became clear to me that there was a growing demand for books about New Zealand. This was stimulated not just by the likes of Crump's fictions but also by a desire to know more about our history, our everyday lives and our heroes, where we lived, who we were. We wanted the iteration of our myths, both Maori and pakeha.

The two prominent publishing houses of the day, A.H. and A.W. Reed in Wellington and Whitcombe and Tombs in Christchurch, had already established useful non-fiction lists and were well placed to meet the rising demand. Perhaps the book that exemplified what most New Zealand readers of the time wanted to see and know, something that unequivocally said, 'This is us', was the superb and best-selling *Gift of the Sea*, with photographs by Kiwi Magnum photographer Brian Brake and text by Maurice Shadbolt, published in 1963. Shadbolt followed this up five years later with *The Shell Guide to New Zealand*. As motorised touring took off, it allowed everyone to know something about every corner of the country.

As early as 1965 I had wanted to go freelance, become an independent writer making a reasonable living. But in a country with a population of less than three million, the market was too small, literary support systems too slender. Like every other writer except Maurice Shadbolt, I had to work at something else to support myself and my

family. By 1972, however, circumstances had changed enough for me to try going it alone. That same year, two other writers also took the plunge, Michael King and Gordon McLauchlan.

So what had changed over the previous half dozen years, what was the world like for a freelance author at that time, that allowed some risk taking?

In terms of financial support for new literary work, nothing much had changed. The Literary Fund still operated on a modest budget but did provide a much sought after annual Scholarship in Letters, mostly for fiction writers. Outlets for short stories and poetry were still *Landfall* and the *Listener*, along with a number of small literary journals, such as *Mate*, which came and went with the energies of their founders. The awards landscape had improved from the modest PEN awards established in the 1940s and now included the BNZ Short Story Awards. The first national book awards, the Watties, had begun in 1968.

PEN was the only semi-professional writers organisation, membership based on the publication of at least one book by a recognised publisher. PEN had influence with government and its departments. It had members on the Literary Fund committee from its inception, and lately had lobbied hard for a public lending right, following the Swedish example. In 1972, although this had not yet arrived, Labour Party leader Norman Kirk was on a promise and the Authors Fund was quickly in place following his election late that year. It is hard now, perhaps, to imagine how important

the regular annual payments from the Authors Fund were to professional authors on modest incomes, especially in its first years.

There was just one university writing fellowship, the Burns, established at Otago University by Charles Brasch and other benefactors in 1958 and seen as a prestige appointment, attainable only by literary leading lights. The Katherine Mansfield Menton Fellowship had just begun but was of short duration and not well funded. There were no writers and readers festivals. There were no creative writing courses at universities or elsewhere. An author succeeded by trial and error, by writing and submitting and, if fortunate, had the support of a senior author as mentor and, on reaching publication status, the guidance of professional in-house editors. By 1972, since the austere days of the 1950s, the growth in New Zealand book publishing sustained not only the larger publishers but also the smaller literary presses such as Caxton and Pegasus, that rode in the wake of popular publishing.

But the biggest opportunity for an author going freelance in 1972 was simply that there was so much to write *about*, in both fiction and non-fiction. There were entire fields, whole subjects, that had never been explored before in New Zealand books.

I like to compare my writing career at this time with my earlier career as a mountaineer. When I started climbing in 1959 there were still unclimbed peaks in the Southern Alps and overseas; many had only been climbed once; most had unclimbed major routes to their summits. Climbing some

of these gave me the material for my first books, and writing those developed my skills as an author. But now, ahead of me in the literary landscape, lay so much unexplored country, so many peaks that were beyond the capacity of one author to attempt.

The early 1970s were also a time of great optimism under a government that declared us independent, recognised Communist China, sent a frigate to Mururoa to protest French nuclear tests. The apron strings to Britain loosened as the UK joined the Common Market. The Kirk government was the first to recognise the role of the Treaty in our national life. And 1972 was the year of Helen Reddy's hit song 'I Am Woman', marking the culminating power of the feminist movement. When I went freelance that year, moving with my young family to a home on Banks Peninsula, I took with me the newly published 'NZ Whole Earth Catalogue' edited by Alister Taylor and Maurice Shadbolt's nephew, Tim, among others. There was so much energy in the air, so much sense that New Zealand had its own future, and that you had your own place in that future.

One literary route I chose to pioneer was to find my own way in fiction and this culminated at the end of that decade in *Beak of the Moon*, an anthropomorphic novel with keas for characters that was a celebration of our natural landscape while being a lament for what had been done to it. In non-fiction, I produced the first photographic book about New Zealand's great walks, *Ways to the Wilderness*, and a unique series of

pocket guides to those walks. All of these were great sellers to a public thirsting for the 'New' in New Zealand. Just as there had been great satisfaction in being the first to the summit of unclimbed mountains, there was pride and pleasure in being first with books like these.

But now to the more prosaic. What were the practicalities of being an author in the 1970s and 1980s? There had been desk typewriters for nearly 100 years, portables for half that time, all with ribbons that seemed to fade far too quickly and keys that jammed if you typed too fast.

Although the new and more expensive 'Selectrix' typewriters had 'golf' balls with type that made life easier. As time went by you might be able to afford an electric typewriter. If you wanted to keep a copy of what you were typing, then you had to use carbons and hope the paper did not slip. If you wanted more copies then you had to go to a library or office to have it xeroxed. The worst labour of all, believe me, was when a full length typed manuscript had to be cut and revised. Those 100,000 words then had to be typed out all over again. Few authors could afford to pay a professional typist.

Also, no authors I know of could pay for the services of a researcher. Research was physical - visits to libraries, perhaps in other centres or overseas, or obtaining books on interloan. Obtaining copies of archival material was expensive - a fee per xeroxed sheet plus postage. Postage was a significant expense, as were tolls for phone calls outside your own

catchment. Communication was slower but perhaps more thorough, more considered. People still often sent you hand-written letters.

When your typed manuscript was ready for the publisher, this was edited and sent back to you for comment. You had to be able to read and apply the symbols and conventions of editing orthography. You might be queried on text that the publisher thought potentially indecent. 1972 was the year that Germaine Greer was arrested in Auckland for saying 'bullshit' and 'fuck' in public. So anything scatological was out. There was outrage from public moralists, such as the Society for Community Standards, when Alister Taylor published the New Zealand edition of *The Little Red Schoolbook* which dared to explain the facts of sex, drugs and rock 'n roll to teenagers. Publishers could not be too careful.

Later you would receive galley proofs to correct, long sheets of your precious words set in metal. Text-only books were mostly printed in New Zealand but books needing quality colour work went to Japan, Taiwan or Hong Kong. Either way, you had to wait a year before publication. Books mostly came out in hardback with a mass market paperback later on for fiction if the novel had been successful. The trade paperback started to appear in the late 1970s.

Advance copies were sent to the books editors of newspapers and magazines. Print media, backed by radio, were extensive and dominant and the main means of projecting news and views about books. Authors were sent on media tours, appearing in bookshops and libraries, and

being interviewed by local newspapers and radio stations. The bookshop chains in those days, like Whitcombe and Tombs and London Bookshops were actually keen to have local authors appear on their premises. There was just one TV channel in 1972, two from 1975, but they rarely took an interest in books unless you scored a spot on a show like Hudson and Halls. Nevertheless, it was possible to achieve almost saturation coverage for some titles.

So what did an author earn? When my first photographic book *Mantle of the Skies*, was published in 1971, the publisher was worried that no-one would buy it at a retail price of \$9.95. That was about double the price of a standard hard cover book. In 2015 dollars that equates to about \$130, a killer price today. But the fact that it did not inhibit sales of *Mantle of the Skies* - it went into reprint - shows the appetite for books about New Zealand - especially those new in the field. Of that retail price, I received 10%, a dollar a copy. But sales of the title, about 3000 a year, meant that this provided about half of a good annual income. For any book that did especially well, there was a sliding scale of royalties: 12.5% after a certain number of copies and 15% further on.

Although it was possible to earn good royalties from books, they were rarely enough to sustain an adequate income to support a family. To survive, an author had to be versatile, writing fiction and a variety of non-fiction. Journalism perhaps but mainly of the international type because local magazines and newspapers rarely paid enough. It did pay to have

an auxiliary string to your authorial bow, in my case, photography. As an author's writing reputation improved, it became possible to apply for grants. Within 10 years of my going freelance the persistent lobbying of the Literary Fund Committee with a sympathetic Minister of the Arts, Alan Hight, had seen grants increased and the establishment of other university writing fellowships. The Book Council, founded in 1972, had introduced its Writers in School programme which began to assist many writers, especially authors of children's and young adult books, as the value of the Authors Fund diminished.

Despite all the increasing opportunities, it was never less than hard work, never secure, and success was uncertain. But I was climbing mountains after all, and from time to time there was always the joy of reaching a summit.

So what has changed, and what has remained the same?

The building where I started work in Mercer Street near here is still there. But the library which I used to visit almost every workday lunch hour, so that I could listen to vinyl LP records of Beethoven symphonies in its listening rooms, has been transmogrified into this fine art gallery. The road that ran in front of the library has been transformed into a Civic Square from which a Para Matchett sculptured bridge spans Jervis Quay. A world class concert hall stands across the square and within walking distance are various theatres and performance spaces, as well as

the Te Papa Museum (and even a writers walk). These provide some of the venues for an international festival of the arts, and a writers and readers week that are in their 30th year. All of this is emblematic of the enormous expansion of activity across the country in the performing, visual and literary arts over the past few decades and with an increasingly international and multi-ethnic dimension.

More and more books are being published. Back in the 70s and 80s it was possible to keep up with every new New Zealand novel and collection of poetry published. Now this is virtually impossible. *So that must be good, right?*

Describing yourself as a writer or author is no longer seen as something risible although you will find yourself greeted with curiosity if you declare yourself as such to immigration officials at the airport. And probably told that their sister or cousin or good friend is a writer, too. *Anyone can be a writer now. So that must be good, too.* The success of Keri Hulme and then Eleanor Catton at the Bookers has also lent credibility to the notion of being a writer. I remember Ms Hulme being referred to as 'Our Keri' by a car dealer in Christchurch after she won the Booker in 1985. Although he had not read *The Bone People* or any other serious New Zealand novel, he claimed her in the way people claimed Ed Hillary after climbing Everest or Peter Snell running into gold at the Olympics. It was a big overseas accolade and there was good money involved, so it must be all right.

It may be the case that our Booker prizewinners, and near winner Lloyd Jones, are inadvertently responsible for a common belief that, if you are a full-time professional author, you must be rich. How bizarre, as that catchy little song goes. There have been no surveys lately, but I doubt if more than 1% of New Zealand authors earn the average or more than the average wage. And this includes the many children's authors we now have, in one writing sector that has seen enormous growth and success over the past three decades.

So what can an author expect to earn from a full length fiction or non-fiction book now? Ten percent of the recommended retail price is less common, especially among the larger publishers who now calculate royalties as a percentage of the nett return from sales. Authors are lucky if this equates to the old 10% and it more likely equates to 9% or even 8%. An escalation in royalties is unlikely.

Why the change? Bookselling has become more difficult and booksellers not only want at least a 45% wholesale discount but more likely 50% and also on a sale or return basis, meaning unsold books are returned to the publisher without penalty. Gone are the days when booksellers ordered and paid for the number of copies they wanted.

When you go into a shop to buy a book, have you ever considered who gets what from, let's say, the \$35.99 you pay? It goes something like this. The government takes \$4.69 in GST. The bookseller gets between \$14 and \$15.65. the publisher between \$11 and \$12.65 and the author \$3 or a

little more. You will notice that the IRD collects about two thirds more than the creator of the work and, of course, collects tax later from the author's earnings on that book. In countries which value literature more than we do, there is no or little value-added tax on books.

Selling the traditional book has become more difficult because press coverage has greatly diminished, and other media compete in the entertainment and education marketplace: especially via screens. There is almost nothing you can't download or watch live on your computer, iPad or smart phone. In 1972 there was one TV channel. Today, the choice is vast, demanding and time-consuming. In relatively recent times, the e-book has appeared with hundreds of thousands of titles out there, a majority by authors who would never have been published in earlier times but who - those cousins and friends you heard about - can now do it themselves. E-books have brought the globalisation of the word. *And that's good isn't it?*

Let me try and break the scene down into its component parts. First, the day to day business of writing. I bought my first computer - an Apple Mac - exactly 30 years ago. It was ferociously expensive and I was very suspicious of it. Would it dictate how I wrote? Soon after I got it, as I was writing stream of consciousness fiction without punctuation or line breaks, the Mac ceased to function and a little sign appeared telling me that I had created a paragraph that was too long. I knew it, I knew it! I cried and

rang the academic who had advised me to buy it. In fact, I just had to press the Return key to carry on. Not even an Apple product could govern creative writing.

But there were functions of the Mac that soon had me in their thrall. Delete and Retype and Cut and Paste. After 30 years of typing, rubbing out, retyping and retyping and carbons, these were gifts from heaven, especially for non-fiction writing that often requires changes in facts, figures and names. So now I was on the Apple conveyor belt. The Mac's software, speed, floppy disk capacity and printers steadily improved. But the next big leap forward was e-mail, for me in 1996. Then there was the Internet proper with Google starting up in 1998. Then it got faster and faster. You know the story: Facebook 2004, Twitter 2006, Apps for everything. I had my first laptop in 1995, now I have an Airbook which, I have been told, has the computing capacity equivalent to that of the 1969 Apollo space craft. What's next?

So the actual writing process is easier and slicker. Basic research on (almost) any subject in the world is now possible from anywhere you have an internet connection. But you still have to go to a real library, an archival library such as the Turnbull, if you want the genuine article. Even there, it is possible to see more and more online. The physical copying of documents, once limited by cost, has disappeared with the camera capabilities of a smart phone. *So that's good, isn't it?* And I have to answer an unequivocal yes.

With many of the physical limitations of preparing a manuscript removed, emphasis has shifted to how to write it. When I started out, there were no creative writing courses and, in retrospect, if there had been a good one in, say, my early twenties, I might have valued instruction in some of the nuts and bolts that took longer to understand through trial and error. But creative writing courses have now gone far beyond this and, at the higher levels, have become an academic industry. With almost every profession and trade now, you can't gain access to the jobs unless you have the right piece of paper from the right institution. Although these tell you little about the character of the person or their capacity to actually do the job. Some authors now, even those already published, feel they won't be taken seriously unless they gain the appropriate PhD. So this largely reflects the changes in society as a whole, the ascendancy of the managerial class across all walks of life, the requirement for bureaucratically approved qualifications.

This, of course, is a form of gatekeeping, something always practised - but somewhat less now as I will explain - by publishers. Academic gatekeeping is not only intellectual. It also reflects wider society's economic inequalities. To get the PhD you need the cash. Entry is not available to all. Even so, not many PhD holders write successful novels. But not to worry. British author Will Self suggested recently that the denizens of creative writing courses - even the non-authors - are essential to the survival of the literary novel; just as a good musical

education preserves audiences for classical music. A virtuous circle is created linking university courses, producing graduate readers of those graduate authors who go on to be published by academic or specialist presses.

The role of the traditional gatekeepers, publishers, is breaking down under the pressures of technological, market and global changes. But I am not surprised. My first book was published 54 years ago and since that time I have worked with more than a dozen publishers in New Zealand and overseas. And I can report that they will always let you down. Often in the nicest possible way, or under circumstances beyond their control. One or two of these publishers simply ceased to exist, with little notice. But the majority, large or small, have been taken over, sucked up, merged, always with reassurances that really this means nothing bad for you the author. But it almost always does - editors and managers change - the people with whom you have developed a good relationship. List priorities change, books already commissioned fall between the cracks. Once upon a time publishers used to demand loyalty from authors. But it was commitment to a literary marriage that was rarely broken by the writer.

In the current state of the book market, the major publishers' sales and marketing people are the dominant players. Few books are taken on, no matter how good, if the numbers don't work. University presses endure because they do not operate under the same commercial imperatives. A

number of smaller publishers have arrived to take up the slack: their overheads are lower and their enthusiasm and energy higher. This is a common pattern. The new small publisher takes the risk, achieves success after much hard work and eventually sells to the large publisher looking to reap the value of its list, as well as removing some competition.

The biggest change has occurred with self-publishing, once derided as vanity publishing but now taken for granted when so many regular publishers are limiting their lists. Technically, it has never been easier. Apart from uploading your manuscript as an e-book to Amazon, Kobo and Apple, there are several outfits who will take your novel, your computer document, and subject it to top class editing, body and jacket design and print management, producing a book of at least the same quality as one from regular publishers. The people who do this often have come from the editing and design departments of those publishers who earlier made them redundant, put out to work as independent contractors.

The author has to pay, of course and, therefore, has to market and sell the book in the hope of covering costs and making a profit. But then authors have increasingly been required to market their own books, no matter who publishes them. Required to work the media, to attend writers and readers festivals, to become part of the celebrity culture. The author is no longer required to just write good works but to be a good entertainer as well. *And is that good, too?* Maybe - this kind of thing has been going on since Dickens and some authors enjoy it. If we are *not* egotists, then

why do we foist our books on people? But the more time an author spends talking, travelling, blogging and tweeting, the less time and mind space she has for, yes, just thinking, contemplating and eventually writing something new and good. Somehow, authors have to find a way to avoid the electronic shouting that is all around us, to avoid the market clangour of exploiting The Product.

Managing and marketing The Product, the values of branding, have tended to edge out or stall the older belief in state or even private philanthropy. Only about 6% of Creative NZ's funding is devoted to literature, much less in real terms than under the old independent Literary Fund; and a relatively small amount of that is given to support new writing. For mostly Wellington writers, some of this funding hole has been filled over the past dozen years by grants from the Arts Foundation. Yet the funding for the Public Lending Right has been frozen since the current government took office more than seven years ago and some university fellowships have uncertain tenure. The Menton fellowship has been having a rocky time lately. There has just been the first hiatus in national book awards since the first Wattie Awards in 1968.

Partially taking up the slack has been the growth in promotion and education in NZ literature through the Book Council's programmes. We have also seen some new awards and fellowships during the past 30 years, such as the National Library Fellowship, the Poet Laureateship and, overseas, the Berlin Residency which I initiated back in 1999. Rarer

have been private charitable endowments such as the Henderson House Arts Residency which I have had the pleasure of holding for the past nine months.

Over decades PEN, incorporated into a NZ Society of Authors since 1992, has worked tirelessly on behalf of all writers to protect their rights, to find support and assistance in the form of awards, fellowships and grants. Without its efforts, the Public Lending Right would never have found its way securely into legislation, to have endured as the only sure and reliable support for authors for more than 40 years.

So what has happened to the New Zealand book in a shrinking, globalising world; a world of instant connection, easy publishing and the weekly avalanche of new titles; the new universe of media rapidly expanding from the Big Bang of the internet?

First, the book will not go. People still like it - it is a portable accessible and attractive artefact that does not need recharging. Secondly, non-fiction publishing in New Zealand seems to be in good heart. The overall market is about 60% larger than when I started publishing and the demand for books about our history, biography and on social and cultural topics, is strong, including books by and about Maori. Thirdly, our children's books are not only of world class but recognised as such by the frequency with which they are taken up overseas. Popular or genre fiction seems to be doing well, again with penetration into overseas markets.

So that leaves us with 'literature' - poetry and serious fiction. More poetry is being published, read and appreciated than ever before; but only about 3% of fiction bought in New Zealand is actually home grown. Why is that when, 30 or 40 years ago, a new title by Maurice Shadbolt would almost have people queuing at the bookshop? There are no clear answers to this (Witi Ihimaera, Paula Morris, Catherine Robertson and Paul Cleave are discussing just this tomorrow at Bats and I am keen to hear their conclusions). But there are two or three pointers. Although the wave of new fiction in English has always washed over our shores from the UK and USA, this seems almost a tidal wave now. It is difficult to be heard, especially above the media promotion from over there and the propensity to give books simplistic star ratings like new movies. A second point is that our fiction authors are being prodded to write novels that have an international market, not necessarily novels that address us as an audience. Then there is Will Self's academic virtuous circle where authors increasingly address themselves and their friends and the critics who will give them the right kind of notice in the right kind of media.

Thirty or more years ago, I had a revealing conversation with Bert Hingley, who was then publisher at Hodder & Stoughton in Auckland and who did so much at that time in the cause of New Zealand fiction, including the publishing and promotion of *The Bone People* that enabled it to win the Booker Prize. I was pressing him about how little an author earned from his books, a measly 10 per cent, the rest going to the

publisher, the bookseller and the IRD. Bert explained to me that the publisher only made 10%, too, But profit, I said, after you have paid all your costs and staff salaries. He had to acknowledge the truth of that and said, 'Well, yes, but the author is the peasant who provides the crop and which is nothing without the processing and marketing of the publisher and bookseller'.

Authors are still peasants today, but with the important difference that in the new digital world, the author need no longer be bound to the old feudal system. But most NZ authors have never made a great living from writing and it has never been entirely about that; it has been more about growing and harvesting a good crop, taking pride in it, seeing it sent out to the world where it might be enjoyed.

Ideas, imagination, the burning need to tell stories, to tell them well, these are all about us in growing abundance and now there are many more ways for them to be delivered and expressed. I have no idea where all this will lead - who does? But we need to remember who we are, where we are, what is special to our country and culture and not be too distracted by the sirens of the global marketplace. And we always need to be vigilant against the gatekeepers, more and more the gatekeepers of the market, in no matter what guise they appear. To all those young writers out there, I would say, Go back to the future, leave your smart phones and laptops at home, go up country with paper and pen, go into

the mountains or to a remote headland. And when you get there, just think. And then, just write.