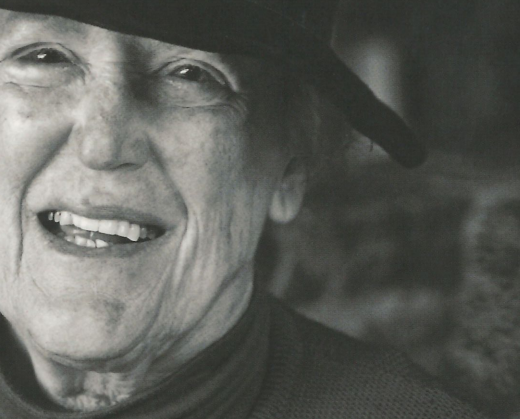




# Her Life's Work

Conversations with Five  
New Zealand Women

Deborah Shepard



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## Writing her life's work

There has been a revolution in women's lives. The upsurge of feminism in the late 20th century and the accompanying wave of feminist scholarship – with its analysis of gender discrimination and the androcentric bias in the recording of history – has made a difference. Young women today have more options available to them than ever before and are pursuing their ambitions with far greater confidence. Women are participating at all levels of society while feeling empowered to make their own choices around whether to combine motherhood and work. There are opportunities now to realise creative and intellectual potential and choose, as the five women who tell their stories in this book have done, to make their work their life's work.

And yet . . . Have the goals been reached? How easy is it really for women to participate fully in absorbing work that lasts a lifetime while raising children, running homes and participating in the community – doing all the necessary, yet unrecognised jobs that keep the wheels of society oiled – and still remain focused on a dream and a passion? By raising the level of expectation without providing adequate support structures, have we made it harder for women who want to have it all?

I began work on this book out of curiosity. I felt there was an absence of strong examples showing how a woman might lead and maintain a life that has work as a central passion. And so I turned to five women who had been down this road ahead of us: painter Jacqueline Fahey, educator Merimeri Penfold, anthropologist Anne Salmond, film-maker Gaylene Preston and author Margaret Mahy – all of whom had achieved outstanding success in their chosen fields – and posed my questions.

I wanted to know how they had negotiated the constraints imposed by their gender. Who had supported and sustained them? How had they responded to opportunities and overcome difficulties? And what helped them stay on track? The five women in this book are mothers and I was interested in knowing how they had nurtured their children through to adulthood while remaining engaged in serious work. I asked them if it were possible to lead lives that were rich in both family life and work experience without falling over with exhaustion. I was particularly interested in the conditions that facilitated their work – the kind of work that requires a woman to remove herself from the everyday world and go to her study or her studio and dive deep into her inner world, engaging her intellectual capacities and connecting with her creativity. Could it be done? Was there a cost? What might they tell me?

My emphasis was on the particular conditions in which women develop careers in a creative field. Over the last half century we have lived through a period of radical social change, and the women in this study have experienced various shifts in conditions, from the 1950s ideology that 'a woman's place is in the home', to the heady years of feminism when anything seemed possible, to the beginning of the 21st century where women are participating in far greater numbers in the workplace, but often at a cost to their health and personal lives.

One of the interesting books to come out of the wave of feminist scholarship in the 1980s was *Between Women: Biographers, Novelists, Critics, Teachers and Artists Write about Their Work on Women*. In that book Blanche Wiesen Cook discussed the motivation of the biographer, 'Who do we choose to write about? What moves us? What do we care about? For biographers, I think all choices are autobiographical.'<sup>1</sup>

In selecting the subjects for this study I sought out women who inspired me personally. I was looking for women who had not only achieved significant success in their chosen fields but who would be receptive to the questions I posed and the feminist line of enquiry. I was drawn to women who were strong in their identity and who had cultivated the necessary

discipline to achieve their aims. I thought these five older women, ranging in age from 62 to 89, were ideally positioned to reflect on how the larger social shifts had shaped their lives. And with a significant body of work behind them, they would be speaking from a position of security and able to pass on insight about the twists and turns of the creative journey.

I chose painter Jacqueline Fahey because her feminist paintings of the 1950s–80s had inspired me when I was a young mother and wife, casting around for direction. Jacqueline had married the psychiatrist Fraser McDonald, and I was curious to discover how she had sustained her work alongside a fairly demanding domestic role raising children and supporting a medical professional. As well I had enjoyed reading Jacqueline's memoir, *Something for the Birds*, and her essay in *Beyond Expectations: Fourteen New Zealand Women Write about Their Lives* and knew that her astute analysis of the plight of the woman artist would enhance this study.<sup>2</sup>

I approached Merimeri Penfold, educator, Māori translator and writer – the elder of the group, now in her 90th year – because I wanted to include an indigenous perspective and to learn from a Māori kuia. Merimeri's life story covered a fantastic sweep of history, beginning in a remote rural setting at the top of New Zealand. At a critical juncture Merimeri was sent to Queen Victoria College for Maori Girls in Auckland. I wanted to know how Merimeri had adapted to the Pākehā culture of her foster parents and how, as she became politicised through her involvement in the Māori Women's Welfare League and the university, she negotiated the two worlds. I also wanted to trace her path of learning, from the time she co-taught with her husband, Vernon Penfold, in rural schools in Māori communities, to a lectureship at Auckland University where she would make a valuable contribution to the arts, Māori language and culture.

Anthropologist Anne Salmond is renowned internationally for her pioneering work in cross-cultural research – understanding and explicating the Māori world, and providing a bridge between Māori and Pākehā cultures. I was particularly interested in her work as an oral historian and her friendship with a Māori kuia and kaumātua, Amiria and Eruera Stirling. Together they had guided Anne's PhD study of hui and invited her to write their life stories, *Amiria: The Life Story of a Maori Woman* (1976) and *Eruera: The Teachings of a Maori Elder* (1980). There was also a satisfying connection between Anne Salmond and Merimeri Penfold who, as friends and colleagues, had played a major role in the 15-year campaign to build a marae on a university campus at Auckland University.



Gaylene Preston is one of the nation's most prodigious woman directors. She has been consistently making films since the rebirth of the New Zealand film industry in the 1970s and has demonstrated a remarkable ability to succeed in a difficult environment. Her films *Bread and Roses*, about the life of trade unionist and politician Sonja Davies, and *War Stories Our Mothers Never Told Us*, which featured her mother's story of World War II, are informed by a feminist vision and have made an important contribution to our understanding of New Zealand history. In past interviews Gaylene had delivered a sharp analysis of the position of women in a male-dominated film industry and I knew her story would add further insight to my topic.<sup>3</sup>

I chose author Margaret Mahy because she is a wonderful storyteller and because her life has a magical element. In 1969, after writing prolifically for the *School Journal*, building up a collection of a hundred stories, she was discovered by a New York publisher, and over subsequent months five of her picture books were published in London and New York, with drawings by some of the greatest illustrators in the world. This was the beginning of a long and successful career as an international author. For over 40 years her books have reached out to young readers in every corner of the world and especially here in New Zealand where she has a devoted following. I was curious then to interview the woman who has succeeded on the world stage while remaining attuned to the imaginative lives of young people.

So where do books begin? The motivation for writing this book originates in a study I had previously undertaken about a woman artist who showed great promise as a young painter but was unable to sustain a long career. The artist was Anne Hamblett, the wife of one of our most lauded painters, Colin McCahon. At the time they met, Anne was a prize-winning student at art school, considered the best in her year. After their marriage Anne continued to paint and in a brief moment of symbiosis the couple collaborated on a wonderful series of watercolour and ink drawings, *Pictures for Children* (1944), exhibited at Modern Books in Dunedin and reviewed favourably in *Art in New Zealand*. This was undoubtedly a high point in the couple's relationship. Sadly, the moment was short-lived. Anne exhibited her last painting, *The Park*, in 1945 before being overtaken by domesticity, pregnancy and the arrival of four children born in close succession.

Five years passed. Then in 1950, just when it seemed that her art might be sublimated altogether, she was invited by Roy Cowan, the new art editor of the *School Journal*, to be an illustrator for the journal. There followed a productive and satisfying nine-year working relationship – with Anne's

illustrations sometimes selected for the cover. It seemed so promising. So why then in 1959, at the age of 44, did Anne put away her art equipment and stop for good? This happened just as her youngest child started school, a time when many women return to their vocation and when Anne might have been able to achieve all of the conditions outlined in Virginia Woolf's ideal scenario – an education, patronage, fewer domestic chores and the time to paint and illustrate in 'a room of one's own'.

The questions remained unanswered until I worked on an edited collection, *Between the Lives: Partners in Art* (2005). This was a study of the impact of intimate partnership on the life and work of nine New Zealand art couples and it included a chapter on Anne Hamblett and Colin McCahon. As I was puzzling over Anne's fate I came upon an idea suggested by Drusilla Modjeska in *Stravinsky's Lunch* (1999), a study of Australian artists Stella Bowen and Grace Cossington-Smith. Modjeska wondered whether 'it's not only a room of her own and an income that a woman needs, though that is often hard enough to come by, but the place in herself, the space in her soul from which she can withstand the onslaught of a world that cannot or will not take her seriously'.<sup>4</sup>

It was probably a combination of factors that thwarted Anne Hamblett's future. Her editor had resigned from his position at the *School Journal* in 1959, and this loss of a mentor compounded with other troubles – her husband was in the grip of an addiction to alcohol and was arriving home late and sometimes not turning up at all – must have had an effect on her morale. But what if book illustration had rated more highly in the art canon? If Anne had received the external support and recognition her husband was gaining at this time, would she have continued? In 1958 Colin McCahon had been awarded a scholarship to the United States to study art museum practice. Many of the leaders in the field of children's book illustration were, at that time, US-based. If Anne had been awarded funding to visit those illustrators and study their work, would that have made the difference?

In an interview for this book Jacqueline Fahey commented that Anne Hamblett, late in her life, had viewed an exhibition of Jacqueline's work and said she would have painted like Jacqueline had she carried on painting. It was a poignant remark and strengthened my resolve in writing *Her Life's Work* to provide a collection of alternative stories, showing how women can overcome the challenges wrought by their gender and how a talent might be sustained so that it can receive full expression.

What then made the difference and what can be learned from the stories of Jacqueline Fahey, Merimeri Penfold, Anne Salmond, Gaylene Preston

and Margaret Mahy? What stood out in childhood? Did parents play a role in supporting their talent? The answers were interesting. I found that each woman possessed a streak of independence from early on. Anne Salmond sailed to the Solomon Islands to do research in the field at the age of 20. Gaylene Preston was always getting out and under the fence and down the road in her fairy frock, but added 'the dress would have been made by my mother', which indicates the importance of parental support. Jacqueline Fahey's parents thought that being an artist was an excellent idea. Merimeri Penfold's parents allowed her, their eldest daughter, to leave home and live with a Pākehā foster family in Auckland. Nobody in her family had ever ventured that far away from home before and certainly not for an education. Gaylene Preston's parents immersed their young daughter in extra-curricular activities, speech and piano lessons and local amateur productions, all of which would one day prove useful for a life in film. Margaret Mahy's mother gathered together all the stories she wrote in childhood and kept them safe. When Margaret's first book was published her father wept.

This was a very good start, but what happened when they stepped outside the security of home? These women were growing up in a world where gender expectations and job opportunities were limited. There was no single trajectory to a chosen field. Jacqueline Fahey taught briefly at secondary school, worked in the navy and waitressed before devoting her energy full-time to her art. Merimeri Penfold taught in rural Māori schools long before she began lecturing in Māori at Auckland University. Anne Salmond studied psychology and English at university and trained as a secondary school teacher before the Stirlings entered her life and re-directed her study. Gaylene Preston went to art school but got into film through working in occupational therapy in England. Margaret Mahy tried nurse aiding before attaining a university degree and training as a librarian, all the while harbouring a dream of being a writer.

So who helped these women onto their chosen path? Were there mentors and role models who offered an alternative path? Merimeri recalled a Pākehā teacher who taught briefly at her remote northern primary school, 'I was fascinated by her tiny feet and tiny fingers. I used to look at her and think I would like to be a teacher like her.' Anne Salmond was on an AFS scholarship when she read a book by anthropologist Margaret Mead and glimpsed a possible career path. Margaret Mahy looked to the female pirate and to a film poster of female outlaw Belle Starr riding a bucking horse for inspiration. In her 20s, Jacqueline Fahey discovered the journals and letters of Katherine

Mansfield, which gave her direct access to the inner life of a woman writer and made her realise that 'being an artist was hard', but that she wasn't alone.

Inspiration is not enough in itself. At a certain point an individual needs recognition from the outside world. Jacqueline found this support in fellow artists and poets and was encouraged by reviews that showed an understanding of what she was trying to do. Merimeri said that her Pākehā foster parents made all the difference, acting as advocates for her education and ensuring she passed her exams and went on to higher education. Anne Salmond believed that meeting the elders Amiria and Eruera Stirling, who provided her with entry onto North Island marae and directed her thesis research, was a gift. Gaylene Preston returned to New Zealand in the early 1970s and had a lucky break when her first independent documentary, *All the Way Up There*, was bought by Encyclopaedia Britannica. Margaret Mahy remembers being 'absolutely entranced' when the *School Journal* began commissioning her stories, because she had wanted to be a writer from childhood.

But before any of the individuals could shake their wings and really fly they had to negotiate social expectations that upheld marriage and motherhood as the prime focus of a woman's life. In her book *Writing a Woman's Life*, Carolyn Heilbrun argued that while men are encouraged to organise their lives around ambition and achievement, for women reaching beyond the marriage and motherhood model, the path has been uncertain and difficult, 'The price is high, the anxiety is intense, because there is no script to follow, no story portraying how one is to act, let alone any alternative stories.'<sup>5</sup> In her opinion women would be better off modelling their lives on the quest plot and looking on life as an adventure.

Margaret Mahy did not marry and came to Heilbrun's conclusion independently. When she was a child her father had read the story of *King Solomon's Mines* by H. Rider Haggard. It became a favourite. Later when she faltered or needed courage she would think of the hero Allan Quatermain and treat her experience as an adventure, 'I didn't have to walk across deserts or up over snowy mountains but I did use the story as a touchstone to help me interpret my own experience. I would think, "I'll get across this."'

Jacqueline, Merimeri, Anne and Gaylene continued working without disruption until the children arrived. Then the real challenges began: motherhood is a critical juncture in a woman's life when inequalities between men and women open up and life becomes more complicated. For generations of earlier women artists trying to combine the two without the support of the wider culture, the juggle was too difficult and they abandoned

the work. So what made the difference for these women? Did feminism play a role?

For Jacqueline and Gaylene the theory was relevant to their work. Reading Simone de Beauvoir's *America Day by Day* (1948) and *The Second Sex* (1949) Jacqueline was suddenly freed to begin painting her domestic and interior world. And Gaylene remembers experiencing a click moment when she first read *The Female Eunuch* (1970) by Germaine Greer and *Sexual Politics* (1972) by Kate Millet. The books gave women 'a new vocabulary that helped us understand why we felt the way we did'. Anne and Merimeri found the messages of female empowerment important too but were more interested, at that time, in Māori politics and the emerging treaty movement, which was focusing its efforts on the recovery of Māori land confiscated under the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840.

Margaret thought feminism allowed her 'to rejoice' in her adventurous female characters 'in a way that might not have happened' without it. They all acknowledged that the feminist debates about a woman's right to continue working and the need for equal parenting and equal pay and the campaigns for quality childcare facilities strengthened their resolve, but didn't always help on a practical level.

That these issues continue to beleaguer women today suggests the complexity of the challenge. Through the biological act of bearing children and feeding them women are invariably positioned as the primary caregiver. And yet it shouldn't be seen as a burden because, as each woman explained, they were delighted with their newborns and wouldn't be without their family. Jacqueline said, 'I woke up and she was sleeping beside me. I was totally thrilled. . . . thrilled with the whole thing.' And Margaret said, 'It was one of the most astonishing moments of my life.' She looked at her baby and felt, 'I knew it was you. I knew it was you all the time.' Gaylene thought her life was 'a thousand times richer' for being a mother. Merimeri said that her commitment to her children and family was the strongest element in her life. And Anne Salmond said she loved having children, 'You learn about the world through your children and I wouldn't have missed that for anything.' But Anne also observed that child-rearing in western society is structured in a way that constrains women's lives and that the inflexibility of the workplace makes a mother's task harder, unnecessarily.

The stories they recounted illustrate the problems and the solutions. Jacqueline Fahey remembers the shock of realising she was primarily responsible for the care of her baby. She said, 'I felt bolted to the spot.'

Anne Salmond shared the child-raising with her husband, but was aware of disapproval from peers and colleagues. Her department held an anthropology seminar at 5pm each week, 'the worst time for a parent with young children'. At the seminars Anne would be asked who was looking after her children. 'The implication was, "Shouldn't you be at home with the kids?" And I found that quite difficult.'

Finding a way to manage work and children was essential but often it came at a cost. The women got very tired. Merimeri was exhausted by the long teaching hours and felt that her reduced stamina affected her youngest who was anaemic at birth. When Anne Salmond's youngest child arrived she was working under pressure of a deadline on Eruera Stirling's life story and recalled being 'absolutely stretched beyond anything that was reasonable'. Once when Margaret was returning home from her day job as a librarian she fell asleep at the wheel of her car with her children on board and drove into a ditch.

Impressively, none of them let their work slip away, although they did have to modify their goals and work routines. When Jacqueline's children were small she changed her medium because she found the sheer grind of getting up each night and changing nappies exhausting: 'It had to be mostly drawings and just the occasional painting.' Anne went half-time and sat her baby on her lap while she recorded Amiria Stirling's life story. When Margaret Mahy's children were little, she wrote picture books and stories for the *School Journal* and didn't begin the novels until her children were teenagers. Gaylene remembers having to curtail overseas travel and networking opportunities when her child was small: 'I mean I went to Venice for lunch once.'

Given the hardship I wondered whether there were any particular conditions that had facilitated the work. Was there a dedicated space for working in – a 'room of one's own'? And did the solutions arrive easily or evolve over time? Jacqueline didn't have a studio so she requisitioned the carpenter at Porirua Hospital to build her a platform in the kitchen where she could paint up above the children who were drawing below. The platform had a ladder that could be pulled up behind her and lowered when the children screamed. Anne and Merimeri worked at the kitchen table when their children were small, and even after Anne's husband built her a study in the garden she still preferred to work at the table and be part of family life. For years Margaret worked in her bedroom out of necessity but when finances enabled her to extend her home, she lengthened the room to include a library and continued on writing in the bedroom.

Gaylene Preston claims she didn't need a room of one's own because she is 'one of those fortunate people who can sit in the middle of a terribly busy room and write'. She believed that growing up in a crowded household without a physical room of her own and that being ill and confined to bed in childhood had helped her develop the habit of rumination or what she called 'a psychological room of my own'.

Gaylene's powers of concentration suggest that the ability to focus on the work in hand in the midst of a hectic domestic life might be just as important as a dedicated workspace. But how did this affect the children? I discussed this dilemma with Anne Salmond, who remembers her children coming up and cuddling her legs while she worked. I asked whether they remembered that time and what they thought about it. Anne replied, 'I think it was hard for them because I'm very focused. I had to be to get everything done. I'd go off into another world when I was writing and have probably always done. There were times when I had to wrench myself out of it and I think they didn't like that.' But she also pointed out that she wasn't always writing and that the children seemed to have 'survived amazingly well'.

While developing my ideas for this book I read a study, *Composing a Life* (1989), written by the anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson. There she wrote about the impact of disruption in a woman's life and the role of adaptation in transforming that life. Tracing her own development and that of four older women friends, she argued that a woman's life is never lived as a single rising trajectory.<sup>6</sup> It isn't possible. Because of her gender and the multiplicity of roles a woman is required to perform, her life is necessarily fluid and constantly evolving. Bateson's tone was upbeat. She was interested in the creative potential inherent in complex lives, seeing interruption as an opportunity for change, and she coined the phrase 'life as an improvisatory art' to illustrate her idea.

This analysis makes sense of the twists and turns and evolutionary passages in a woman's life and suggests that disruption and non-fulfilment of a dream or plan might not necessarily be negative. Perhaps it is possible to turn these experiences into something worthwhile. I was curious then to learn if these women had encountered stumbling blocks and how they had coped. Gaylene described the heartache of not securing production funding for a much loved project that had inhabited her head for a very long time: 'I found it psychologically very difficult to walk away . . . . It was very hard . . .' In the meantime, a younger filmmaker approached her asking for assistance

with a film she was having difficulty making. Gaylene accepted and redirected her energy into turning the new film, *Punitive Damage*, into an outstanding success. It is difficult to imagine that a writer as successful as Margaret Mahy would ever encounter disappointment but Margaret told me there had been an awful time when she wrote a book and nobody wanted to publish it. Importantly, though, she didn't give up. She waited – 20 years – and then reworked the novel for publication.

Jacqueline Fahey found the moves associated with her husband's career difficult, especially a move from the painting scene in Melbourne, where she was just getting established, to rural South Auckland: 'The move was very good for Fraser but it wasn't good for me. Of course it never is for wives. I didn't have the same support. . . . I slowly started to get into it but it took years.' Sometimes then there isn't a quick solution and the individual must hold on to her self-belief and endure the nagging doubts. Gaylene commented ruefully, 'There's nothing so sure as doubt.' When I asked Jacqueline whether she had experienced disappointment in her working life, her reply was refreshing: 'Oh, yes, gosh yes. We've all had that, win some lose some. And you'd better get used to it. I used to say one ghastly disappointment is cancelled out by the next . . .'

Pragmatism, humour, stubborn bloody-mindedness – what else does a woman need to carry her through the ups and downs of her life's work? Merimeri talked about the marae campaign, which lasted for 15 years, and how it was a combination of quiet determination and her ability to endure that kept her going, but she also acknowledged the importance of the team. 'I would not have survived alone. You have to maintain and work with other people and that's a skill – to be able to form a team spirit.' Jacqueline insisted there has to be an inner compulsion to create, 'I had no choice. If I don't do this I'll die. I have no choice. You are compelled.' Gaylene agreed that there has to be an all-consuming need to do it and added that being wild about things 'is a galvanising and positive force. There's usually a sense of outrage behind every film I make.'

So where then did they derive sustenance? Anne found it in her family relationships and from being on marae and seeing things change for the better. Merimeri derives strength from going home to Te Hāpua and visiting the cemetery where her relations are buried, 'It's up on the hill and I look down on the same view that you can see from our old homestead and that's a very heartening experience. We always, all of us, when we go back home, we go straight up to the cemetery and we have a chant or wish and we talk.'



When I asked whether major awards and recognition had made a difference, the responses were modest. Margaret laughed and said as soon as she won the Carnegie Medal in 1982, 'it was like – probably to a lesser degree – the All Blacks winning the World Cup. There you are, you've done well overseas and so you've proved your worth.' Merimeri thought the award and honours process was 'interesting', but had refused an early award that would have been delivered by the Queen because it didn't mean anything. 'But you see my brother and I are regarded as the Whaea of the mutu and that's a Māori title that's meaningful to me. This other one is not. I know it is an odd sort of attitude but that's how I feel.'

Approaching the end of each interview I asked the women to comment on ageing. Had their ongoing involvement in creative work insulated them from some of the problems associated with growing older and from social discrimination? As might be expected, none of them have allowed negative perceptions of ageing to affect them or slow them down. They are too busy getting on with their work to even consider retirement. Merimeri in her 90th year is still writing and involved in the university, still flying around the country to board meetings and hui and tangi and she emphasised the fruits of growing older, 'I believe that with age comes wisdom and that's what you have to offer and it keeps you in good stead, in a good healthy frame of mind.'

Anne Salmond added that being around Māori who revere their elders had had a positive effect on her. And Gaylene thought that the old stereotype of 'a woman bent over a stick wearing thick opaque stockings dragging round her puffy ankles' was redundant because today 'grannies stride out in red high heels and incredibly sexy gear doing marvellous things'. And while she acknowledged the rising health issues that accompany the ageing process, she was feeling more focused and energised than ever before, with three films on the go at the time of her interview.

So had the work made them happy and had the effort been worth it? Each woman talked of the nourishment they derive from being actively engaged in absorbing work. And they didn't question the years of hard work and application that went into achieving their goals because they couldn't imagine living their lives in any other way. Anne spoke of her enjoyment working for institutional change, 'picking up on something that hasn't been working well and making it work better, that's satisfying'. And then added, 'But I love writing. I really love writing.' Likewise Jacqueline enjoys the place her painting takes her: 'I have become more absorbed in my own work and I think I would find it very difficult to live with anybody else now because once

I get into my work, once I get something rolling, I find it hugely interesting and satisfying. I think I would find life rather empty if I couldn't have that time to concentrate.'

This notion of the working process providing fulfilment in itself is perhaps the key to continuing good health and happiness. Through working steadily, building up a significant body of work and achievement, each woman has found a meaningful identity and a rewarding way to live her life. As Margaret Mahy reflected, writing had been 'for me a very persistent thread that was put in place early and which I have followed through very strongly. I still have a notable family life, living here as I do with the animals.' Looking at the cat eyeing her silently, she continued, 'They can be quite implacable, like the cat there who wants to be fed.' And then she reiterated, 'I'm a grandparent and all those other things, but even if I have slowed down a lot, predominantly in my own head I'm a writer.'

Margaret's cat pulls me back to the present and to my own reality, writing in my study with a cat for company in the big chair near me. On the desk beside me the books are piled up, some still open, others closed and finished with for now. Next to the books and leaning against the wall are the portrait photographs taken by Marti Friedlander. Looking at these images of the five remarkable women I feel a leap of excitement that their stories are ready to go out into the world and be shared with the reader.