Magical writing by some of my fellow workshop people, read in the workshop, is included below.

Jean Mehrtens

Once upon a time yet to come, an idea was born in the form of a child.

There are no words at that time. The body speaks. Sounds emerge. This new path is creating itself from the paths that come before it.

From space, the paths are spiralling; back, and beyond.

Words come. Excitement grows.

Accumulated experiences, ideas, feelings, reflections, listenings, conversations, readings. Visions yearn for expression. Impulses. The inner and the outer impulses seek primacy — to remain silent or to express?

Who will decide?

Can all these words be allowed to exist?

The air is still.

Jean's reflections:

This just came out of the silence/experience/feeling. That space with all the people there/expressions, and the warm-up and surprised me.

It was similar to that feeling as a director/producer of not leading, rather following — somehow through me.

Bronwen Pelvin

I am in Chiselhurst in the Women's College at St Lucia campus of the University of Queensland. The room is cool. The group is in session. Diana Jones, the group leader, directs Katherine in a drama about her writing.

Katherine recognises that an author commenting that writing comes easily to her has stopped her writing. Her purpose is to start writing again.

Katherine sets out her desk, her many fountain pens — fine purple; broad-nibbed red; scratchy-nibbed blue; flowing green. The voice "You have to work hard. What you get easily is of lesser value" is concretised as her Da and reflects his Irish working-class values handed on from his Da and the Irish mob. Hard work and family survival.

Interactions between father and daughter bring out the love between the two: the pride Da feels in Katherine, the difference in their lives, Katherine's fear of losing her Da when he dies, Da's knowing that he lives on in Katherine and her siblings and, if she writes about him, he will live on even more.

Katherine concretises her joy and pride in herself and the positive response of others to her writing.

Bronwen's reflections:

This work enables me to be a flowing red fountain pen with a broad nib. I feel delighted to flow easily and generously and make my marks on the page as a record of me.

I become conscious of my father and the love we shared, and this builds me up.

I become aware of my desire to censor myself in my writing and the judgment of my own writing as I write.

I look out the window and see the dried-up flowers of the tree on the top of the canvas cover of the walkway. Writing is what is left behind.

Reitu Cassidy

Not just a piece of paper.

I'm thick and textured. I'm multi layered. I'm factory tailored and naturally resourced.

I have a history, I have whakapapa.

I'm solid and I'm waiting. I'm knowing, like the lines, the spaces, the curves and light spots, I feel them, they are already here.

Tell her! Tell her, "I'm up for it, I'm good for it, I can take it". Tell her!

Tell her, "I'm ready". Tell her!

Like Bill Withers' song *Use Me*, the chorus sounds …

> ♫♫ I, I, I, I wanna spread the news
> That if it feels this good gettin' used
> Oh, you just keep on usin' me
> Until you use me up
> Until you use me up ♫♫ … Tell her!!!

And I look out of the window across the room and see my makings … I'm connected again.

Not just a piece of paper, not just a song, just me with a new experience of sensing, feeling, hearing and taking notice, of connecting. Walking forward with eyes fixed and knowing of my past.

Reitu's experience and wonderings:

I felt super anxious I thought I was going to freeze and not write anything. And then words arrived and energy move through to press the keys and write a thing. 100 words after 20 minutes, that felt so good. I piki ake taku mauri, taku mana ahua ake e rere ana. A beautiful and uplifting freedom… that doesn't come often.

Anxiety kicked in hard when I was asked to present and read it. 'Oh god no, not me' I thought. I read out loud. It sounded like me. I shied away from singing the lyrics. The words landed softly with the protagonist whose drama created the piece of paper. Another level of relief and freedom set in. I was reminded again how much the work of the protagonist is also the work of the group. I'm thankful for that. Mauri ora.

Is it the legacy of my Irish heritage? A family culture — its beliefs, experiences, values?

My mother's belief system 'money doesn't grow on trees', 'you have to work hard to get ahead. Look at your father — from office boy to CEO'. 'You must get a qualification of some sort, so you can support yourself — if you need to,' code for, if your marriage falls apart. Wherever the source, these beliefs have not been helpful or life-giving for my creative expression.

Then this: 'Artists don't make good money', 'you have to be really exceptional to be an artist', 'Art is frivolous, a luxury, not the stuff that real, everyday life involves'.

So, taking on my immediate family's thinking, I went into the corporate world and stayed there for decades; all the time, yearning to express myself creatively.

A year with piano. I toyed with learning the guitar although I was unwilling to fully commit to my father's request 'to practise'. What did I think was 'enough' practise back then? I don't know. I do know that I took his 'deal' seriously, rather than focussing on having fun with the guitar.

I have dabbled over the years. A drawing class here, printmaking there, jewellery making, mosaics, and various musical instruments. A shallow dive into all these. Oh yes — and creative writing. I have needed to go to a class for weeks to fulfil my commitment to any of these.

I thought of enrolling in a Fine Arts course. Years ago, I went as far as enquiring about the Parson's School of Art and Design in New York City. I had no portfolio, just the guts to explore. "Yes," they said. "Apply". I didn't. My head said it would cost you one third of the money from the sale of your house at the time. My heart ached and remained silent.

What has been consistent is my singing. My choir, for the past eighteen years. I hum much of the time. People notice it and comment. Often, I am unaware that I'm humming. It just bubbles up out of me.

Percussion I love. I'm exploring it now. So many things can be used to make a rhythm.

Dancing I love. Am I doing it regularly? No. And I must source more dancing this year.

I realise that I have needed 'permission' to embrace (indulge in) creative expression.

I now give myself full permission to toe-dip; immerse, enjoy, and be filled up.

Nikki McCoy

Its freezing, windy, chattering bones
The long fences and churches stretch my heart
I belong here, I am loved here
Nothing else matters
And yet my heart hurts and yearns for words n paper and fancy pens
I ask myself
Can truth and love lay together
Yes my dear, Da Says
I trust you
I trust that love can ease me
You can let go.



Katherine Howard is a psychodramatist and mental health occupational therapist with a private practice in the Blue Mountains and Sydney. Combining her love of nature-based spirituality, feminism and psychodrama, and her knowledge and experience of the western medicine mental health systems, she has created and teaches a 2 year course called Shadow Cycles: Cyclical Wisdom for Mental Health. She is writing a book. For the grandchildren.



Jean Mehrtens is a psychodramatist and psychiatric nurse, particularly interested in clinical supervision. She is passionate about acting on climate change in collaboration with First Nations and sees the two "projects" as vitally linked. Jean enjoys making things with her hands — gardens, socks, food … As a dual citizen Jean values the ways AANZPA lives in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia.



Bronwen Pelvin is a perennial psychodrama trainee who loves psychodrama and being part of the AANZPA community. She worked for 42 years in the midwifery workforce including being the Principal Maternity Services Advisor in the Ministry of Health. She is happily retired, living in Nelson, Aotearoa with Ali Watersong. After a time of transition and adjustment, she is now loving her no pressure, "doing what I choose" life.



Ko Reitu Cassidy tēnei.

He uri tēnei nō Te Tai Tokerau, Ngāi Takoto, Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi.

"He iti marangai te pāhukahuka, he iti pioke, nō Rangaunu, he au tōna".

Reitu Cassidy is an advanced trainee in the Dunedin Campus. She is warming up to writing her thesis next year, with an idea of reflecting on the encounter and integration of te ao Māori and Psychodrama. This is what she does in her life. She activates tikanga and matauranga Māori to bring impactful and transformative outcomes.

Reitu holds many roles, as a Kairaranga, weaving for fun and for pleasure, mostly. She is a Kaikaranga, upholding a strong responsibility as wahine Māori. As Kaioranga Hauora Māori, she provides Māori intervention to whānau in mental health services and is Pou Ārahi, in supervision.



Helen Close enjoys facilitating processes of change for individuals and organizations. She has extensive experience in the corporate world, spanning more than thirty years, in consultation and facilitation, marketing, strategic planning, and consumer and social research. Now she is passionate about expanding her own and other's creative expression using psychodramatic and other methods.



Nikki McCoy is a psychodramatist who works in Mparntwe with Aboriginal people from many different cultural and language groups. She works as a trauma and addiction specialist in prison and post-prison release alongside people who have a strong desire for recovery. Nikki also runs a psychodrama group in prison for men who have significantly harmed others called Boss of Your Feelings.