



Randell Cottage Writers Trust  
PO Box 25204  
WELLINGTON 6140  
New Zealand

## Randell Cottage Writers Trust

### Annual Report 1 January to 31 December 2022

#### Overview

2022 marked the twentieth anniversary of the arrival of the first two writers-in-residence at Randell Cottage in Thorndon, Wellington, following the gifting of the restored historic building by descendants of the original inhabitants. The generosity of the Randell Price family enabled a Trust to be established on 19 September 2001 with the goal of supporting literary excellence and writer exchanges between France and New Zealand.

Over the past twenty years, visiting writers have enjoyed the special nature of the Cottage, which is registered as a Category II Historic Building dating from 1867, its restful and welcoming garden, and its proximity to institutions for research. The Randell Cottage Writers Trust has evolved into one of the top residencies in New Zealand in terms of its length, the stipend provided to the successful candidates, and the flexibility of the Cottage to house individuals, couples or families. A full list of 42 writers-in-residence is appended to this report.

Key events to celebrate the twentieth anniversary were the unveiling of a heritage blue plaque by one of the Trust's two Patrons, Sir Vincent O'Sullivan, as part of the annual Open Day celebrations, and the launch of *Room to Write*, a bilingual anthology of contributions by French and New Zealand residents in the Cottage, by our second Patron, Her Excellency Laurence Beau, Ambassador of France to New Zealand.

During 2022, the Trust hosted Creative New Zealand writer-in-residence, Rose Lu, who spent six months in Randell Cottage from April to September. Poet Rachel O'Neill was selected as the subsequent New Zealand recipient and is due to take up her residency from May to October 2023. December saw the pandemic-delayed arrival of French laureate, Caroline Laurent for an initial one-month stay, with plans to return in November and December 2023. Her successor, Sedef Eçer, was chosen by a panel convened by the French Embassy, with a projected arrival date of February 2023.

This report addresses the Trust's strategic goals, which begin with our responsibility for the preservation of Randell Cottage as a heritage building and home for successive visitors, followed



Beverley Randell-Price at the unveiling of the heritage blue plaque, marking her family's connection with the Cottage. Photo -Tim Gruar.

by our commitment to hosting New Zealand and French writers in residence. In support of those key elements, we aim to maintain high quality relationships with our sponsors and partners; administer our assets efficiently and with integrity as expected by our founders and funders; and promote the work of the Trust and the continuing achievements of its alumni.

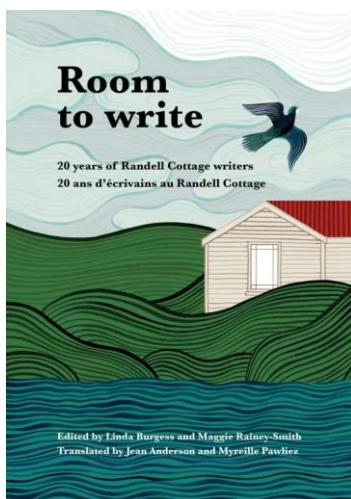
### Twentieth Anniversary and *Room to Write*

In recent years, the house and garden at Randell Cottage have been opened to the public on an afternoon in late October as part of Wellington Heritage Week. To mark our twentieth anniversary, the Trust held a special event for sponsors and supporters on the morning of Open Day, 30 October, facilitated by our Trust Chair. We valued the participation of representatives from Pipitea Marae in welcoming our guests and acknowledging our historic connections. The French Embassy's cultural counsellor, Eric Soulier, proposed a champagne toast in recognition of the long-standing relationship between Randell Cottage and the French Government. A book-shaped anniversary cake was cut by Beverley Randell Price on behalf of the Randell Family. Patron Sir Vincent O'Sullivan delivered a special address drawing on his



Trust Patron Sir Vincent O'Sullivan is poised to unveil the heritage plaque. Friends president Leslie Brown looks on. Photo Tim Gruar.

personal involvement in the search for a residency for writers. He unveiled a heritage blue plaque that records the original owners of Randell Cottage and the role of the Randell Price family in preserving and donating it. Sir Vincent said:



“So many, both French and New Zealand, have helped make the cottage a truly international literary exchange. And I like to imagine that there is a kind of Mansfieldian spirit hovering not too far off. In fact when the weather plays its part, it is easy enough, sitting in the garden of the cottage, almost to see as she did, as she looked up from the street below: *Behind there are hills. The houses are built of light painted wood. They have iron rooves painted red. There are big dark plummy trees massed together, giving depth to those light shades.*’ There is just a touch of the feeling, when you are alone in the house that you are catching up with the past rather than the past with you.”

A lasting record of the work of Randell Cottage alumni was commissioned for the twentieth anniversary, in the form of a bilingual anthology of contributions entitled *Room to Write*. This comprehensive collection of prose and poetry was accompanied by a short history of ‘Saving Randell Cottage: two voices’ by Beverley Randell Price and Dame Fiona Kidman.

Financial support from the Embassy of France and WellingtonNZ made the publication possible. We are deeply grateful to the literary editors, Linda Burgess and Maggie Rainey-Smith, for their dedicated efforts, as well as to the exceptional translators, Trustee Jean Anderson and Myreille Pawliez. Mary McCallum from The Cuba Press guided the production. with professionalism and thorough quality control, while the interior design work was carried out by Paul Stewart. Sarah Wilkins created an eye-catching and atmospheric cover.

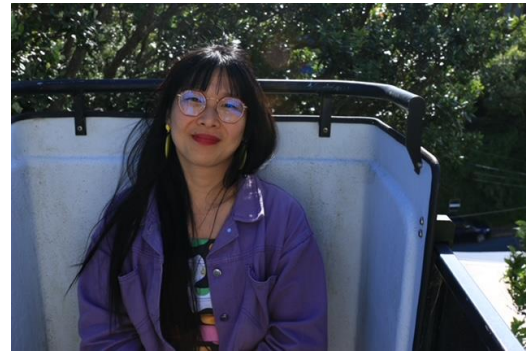
Our celebratory year culminated in the launch of *Room to Write* on 13 December by the French Ambassador, Laurence Beau, at her Residence, in a ceremony that included a context-setting address by Trust Chair Christine Hurley, an overview by publisher Mary McCallum and an introductory talk by newly arrived French writer, Caroline Laurent. The book is available through bookshops and for online sales.



Our twentieth anniversary! Pictures are (from left) Maggie Rainey-Smith, Dame Fiona Kidman, Caroline Laurent, Christine Hurley, Denis Welch, HE the Ambassador of France, Laurence Beau, Paddy Richardson, Rachel O'Neill, Linda Burgess, Lynn Davidson and Vivienne Plumb. Photo – Embassy of France in New Zealand.

### Residents Past and Present

Chinese-New Zealand writer Rose Lu became the 41<sup>st</sup> writer in residence at Randell Cottage, spending April to September 2022 there with her partner. Her project aimed to follow the story of Moon, a second-generation Chinese-New Zealander, and Hsiao-Han, who migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand in her mid-twenties. Rose summarised the value she gained from the residency as the opportunity to write full time and to feel like a writer rather than ‘being someone who has a day job and squeezes writing into the margins’:



2022 CNZ RCWT Writing Fellow Rose Lu. Photo – Eva Corlett

“Given the luxury of time, I was able to have those sorts of meandering, introspective days where the best ideas can rise to the top, and the middling-to-bad ideas can either be refined in the subconscious or forgotten completely. I spent a lot of time reading, which lays the foundation for writing. I wandered down many different paths of plot and character and had the freedom to explore what worked and what didn’t, something that was especially helpful as I made the transition from writing nonfiction to writing fiction. In the end I got to a mostly complete first draft of a novel.” During her stay, Rose addressed the Friends’ AGM and participated in a range of literary programmes and local Thorndon activities, detailed in her report below. At the end of her residency, she participated in a conversational interview at the National Library facilitated by Trustee Francis Cooke. The video of that function is available on our [website](#).

Rose Lu was succeeded by Caroline Laurent, who arrived from France in December 2022. Originally selected for 2021, Caroline was unable to travel at that time because of Covid-19 border restrictions. Special arrangements were therefore made for her to split her residency in two, with an initial one-month round of briefings and explorations, to be followed by two months at the end of 2023, allowing space in between for Caroline’s themes to mature and develop. Caroline comes from a Franco-Mauritian background, which she drew upon for her moving and powerful novel, *Rivage de la Colère* translated as *An Impossible Return*, based on the expulsion of the indigenous inhabitants from the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean to make way for an American military base. In a video recording her first visit to Wellington (see [www.randellcottage.co.nz](http://www.randellcottage.co.nz)), Caroline speaks of the Oriental Bay epiphany that brought sudden clarity to the concept for her next novel. We look forward to the evolution of this work when Caroline returns in 2023.

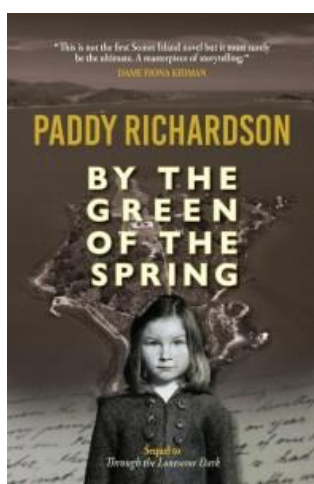


Trust chair Christine Hurley welcomes Caroline Laurent to Randell Cottage. Photo – Nick Hurley.

For our alumni and close friends of the Trust, 2022 was a year of recognition and achievement.

In March, Dame Fiona Kidman, Randell Cottage's founding trustee and long-time supporter, released her latest book, *So Far for Now*. This new volume of Dame Fiona's memoirs recorded her busy life filled with significant changes, new writing and fascinating journeys.

The debut adult novel of Christchurch-based James Norcliffe, *The Frog Prince*, also appeared in early 2022. James was the Randell Cottage writer-in-residence in 2018, which he celebrated in an article [At Home in the Randell Cottage](#). During his stay, he worked on the novel which has been described as an intriguing multi-layered novel with a dual narrative, embracing historical fiction, a love story and a mystery all rolled into one.



Next came Paddy Richardson's *By the Green of the Spring*, launched in August 2022. Paddy was Creative New Zealand writing fellow for 2019, when she researched the novel's island setting Somes/Matiu in Wellington Harbour, and took the opportunity to visit the former internment camp for 'enemy aliens' in person.

Congratulations flowed for former Randell Cottage residents with the announcement of the 2022 Ockham Awards and the Prime Minister's Awards for Literature.

Whiti Hereaka, resident in 2007, won the \$60,000 2022 Ockham Jann Medlicott Acorn Prize for Fiction, announced on 11 May.

Her novel *Kurangaituku* was described by the judges as an epic poem of a novel, resonant of Māori oral traditions that gives a voice, form and name to the bird-woman from the myth of Hatupatu and the Bird-woman.

And finally in a triumphant year, two recent writers-in-residence were granted Prime Minister's Awards in December 2022. Stephanie Johnson (2016) received the prize for fiction and James Norcliffe (2018) received the prize for poetry

## Trustees

The Trustees and Executive Committee members of the Friends of Randell Cottage Association are volunteers from a variety of backgrounds including at least three with a professional knowledge of literature, as specified in our founding Deed. Their biographies are available on our [website](#). We farewelled Koenraad Kuiper as of 30 September, with appreciation for his management of the maintenance of the Cottage and its surroundings. In November, writer, poet and former Randell Cottage resident, James Norcliffe, agreed to become a Trustee and will chair the annual selection panel for the New Zealand laureate.

In mid-2022, renowned New Zealand writer and scholar, Sir Vincent O'Sullivan, accepted the invitation to become a joint Patron of the Trust. Newly arrived Ambassador of France, H.E. Laurence Beau confirmed her willingness to maintain the tradition established by her predecessors and was formally welcomed as a Patron at a function in September.

## Activities in 2022

This report follows the structure of our strategic goals.

### Goal 1: Preserve and maintain the Randell Cottage

Regular maintenance was carried out and the Cottage remained in excellent condition. The garden was kept in good order by a commercial gardener. Insurances and rates were paid. In the coming year, Trustees will focus on the interior of the Cottage and the looming requirements to upgrade furnishings and kitchen appliances.

### Goal 2: Select, house and support a diverse and representative range of NZ writers

Writer Rose Lu took up her place as the 2022 Creative New Zealand writer-in-residence from April to October 2022, being the first Chinese-New Zealander to do so. Her successor, poet Rachel O'Neill, was chosen for 2023 following the Trust's well-established and open selection process, with application details being widely promoted online and via literary, publishing and academic circles. The panel was chaired by Trustee Siân Robyns with the participation of Tim Corballis, Lynn Davidson, Helen Heath and fellow Trustee Francis Cooke. CNZ's Malcolm Burgess maintained an overview of the process. A detailed analysis that included the diversity of applicants in terms of gender, ethnicity, regional distribution and age was submitted to the Trust as an accompaniment to the panel's recommendations.

### Goal 3: Support and house selected French residents

We welcomed the much-delayed arrival of French laureate, Caroline Laurent, for the month of December and contributed to her programme of introductions and research in conjunction with the French Embassy. Trustee Jean Anderson took part in the selection jury convened by the Embassy for the next French writer: Sedef Eçer, a Franco-Turkish novelist, actor and playwright, with a particular interest in the role of women on both sides of the Gallipoli conflict in the First World War. Sedef was due to arrive in Wellington in February 2023.

It is hoped that 2024 will see the resumption of the more regular pattern in which the Cottage hosts a French writer during the first half of the calendar year and a New Zealand writer in the second half.

### Goal 4: Maintain high quality relationships with funders, partners and supporters

Reporting obligations to funders were fulfilled on time and specification. The Trust's Annual Report 2021 was widely distributed. The Trust maintained warm and effective working

relationships with the French Embassy and the Arts Foundation. We greatly appreciated the continued and crucial sponsorship received from Creative New Zealand, which approved funding for the New Zealand writer's stipend for 2023, and from the Wellington City Council, which confirmed its grant for operational funding under the Aho Tini programme for a three-year period from July 2022. The Trust continued to work closely with its support organisation, the Friends of the Randell Cottage Writers Trust Inc. Our twentieth anniversary publication, *Room to Write*, was made possible by funding from the French Embassy and WellingtonNZ.

#### Goal 5: Administer the Trust's assets efficiently and with integrity

Trust finances continued to be soundly managed and met audit requirements.

#### Goal 6: Communicate and celebrate the Trust's work

Frequent use was made of the upgraded [website](#) to communicate with prospective residents, sponsors and the general public. Videos commissioned in 2021 on the history of *Saving Randell Cottage* with descendants of the original Randell family and a guided tour of the Cottage interior conducted by Michalia Arathimos continued to attract attention. They were augmented by a video of writer and poet, Lynn Davidson, reflecting on her working style and the advantages that the residency had provided.

The Trust's activities and the works of its writers-in-residence were communicated via the Annual Report, the Trust's website and Facebook page, Friends' functions and special literary events. Annual Reports and the post-residence reports of writers were made available online.

In support of the Trust's commitment to communicating its work and promoting those of its residents, a 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary bilingual anthology called *Room to Write* was collated, translated and published. Launched in December 2022 by the French Ambassador, the book is now widely available and continues to be promoted at Trust and Friends' events, as well as through bookshop readings.

#### Additional Information

The Trust continued to exercise caution in relation to Covid-19 risks, maintaining a management plan that identified the potential effects on its output delivery and specifically on its Health and Safety obligations to individual residents, Trustees and members of the Friends of Randell Cottage, with mitigation strategies. Applicants for residencies were made aware that they were required to comply with any future Covid-related specifications of the New Zealand health authorities.

Christine Hurley

Chair

Randell Cottage Writers Trust

March 2023

## Randell Cottage Writers Trust Board of Trustees 2022

### Patrons

H.E. Mme Laurence Beau Ambassador of France

Emeritus Professor Sir Vincent O'Sullivan, DCNZM

### Trustee Emerita

Dame Fiona Kidman DNZM OBE

### Trustees

Associate Professor Jean Anderson

Francis Cooke

Christine Hurley (Chair)

Koenraad Kuiper (to September 2022)

James Norcliffe (from November 2022)

Siân Robyns

Gordon Stewart

### Treasurer

Harold Hyde



## Randell Cottage Writers as at 2022

Rose Lu	2022	Caroline Laurent	2022
Lynn Davidson	2021		
Michalia Arathimos	2020	Amaury da Cunha	2020
Paddy Richardson	2019	Karin Serres	2019
James Norcliffe	2018	Amélie Lucas-Gary	2018
Stephen Daisley	2017	Josef Schovanec	2017
Stephanie Johnson	2016	Nicolas Fargues	2017
Owen Marshall	2015	Witi Ihimaera	2015
David Fauquemberg	2015	Tina Makereti	2014
Than-Van Tran-Nhut	2014	Denis Welch	2013
Estelle Nollet	2013	Vivienne Plumb	2012
Florence Cadier	2011	Peter Walker	2011
Pat White	2010	Yann Aperry	2011
Fariba Hachtroudi	2009	Kirsty Gunn	2009
Olivier Bleys	2008	Jennifer Compton	2008
Nicolas Kurtovich	2007	Whiti Hereaka	2007
Beryl Fletcher	2006	Annie Saumont	2006
Renée	2005	Dominique Mainard	2005
Pierre Furlan	2004	Michael Harlow	2004
Charles Juliet	2003	Tim Corballis	2003
Nadine Ribault	2002	Peter Wells	2002

## Report from Rose Lu

### Report on the 2022 Creative New Zealand Randell Cottage Writing Fellowship

The Randell Cottage is a picturesque cottage nestled at the base of Te Ahumairangi Hill. I was fortunate enough to be the Writer in Residence in 2022, and am very grateful towards the Randell Cottage Writers Trust, the Friends of Randell Cottage and Creative New Zealand for the support that makes this residency possible. There are very few paid residences for significant lengths of time in Aotearoa, and without these it would be very difficult for writers to produce works of significant length, depth, and complexity.



Rose Lu at the National Library. Photo – Tim Gruar

Given the luxury of time, I was able to have those sorts of meandering, introspective days where the best ideas can rise to the top, and the middling-to-bad ideas can either be refined in the subconscious or forgotten completely. I spent a lot of time reading, which lays the foundation for writing. I wandered down many different paths of plot and character and had the freedom to explore what worked and what didn't, something that was especially helpful as I made the transition from writing nonfiction to writing fiction. In the end I got to a mostly complete first draft of a novel.

It's very rare to have the opportunity to write full time, and actually feel like a writer, rather than someone who has a day job and squeezes

writing into the margins. The residency coincided with a workshop series called Slow Currents that I participated in, which was a partnership between Aotearoa, Australia and the Asian American Writers Workshop. I joined the video chat for these calls from the Randell Cottage, and it felt good to add some Asian American writers to the chorus of Aotearoa and French writers present in the space.

Through the Randell Cottage Trust I was also invited to speak at a few events. At the AGM of the Friends of the Randell Cottage and did a reading followed by a small Q&A, and at the end of the residency I was in conversation with Francis Cooke, one of the trustees, about the residency at the National Library of New Zealand. I met the incoming French resident (delayed due to COVID) over zoom and talked to her about the cottage and the area. I gave an interview with Lynn Freeman on Radio New Zealand about the residency. The cottage was also used as a location in the filming of the documentary series "Xīn xī lán", focusing on the experiences of contemporary Chinese people in Aotearoa.



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While I am normally resident in Te Whanganui-a-Tara, I had never lived or spent much time in Thorndon, where the cottage is located. It was interesting to see the place that I lived from another perspective, and I tried to partake in as many Thorndon related activities as I could. I got familiar with the offerings at Goods, a cute cafe tucked just behind the main street. A team comprising me, Chris Tse (current Poet Laureate) and other rag-tag individuals participated in the Sprig and Fern's quiz and won. I took many walks through the Botanic Gardens, and the winding trails of Te Ahumairangi. It's rare to be able to be writer full time, and I feel thankful for the opportunity to do so and would encourage others to apply for this opportunity.

**Rose Lu**  
**October 2022**

Report from Caroline Laurent

The French language original of this report is available on [www.randellcottage.co.nz](http://www.randellcottage.co.nz). The following translation is courtesy of Trustee Jean Anderson

### Randell Cottage Residency - December 2022

After months of uncertainty resulting from the pandemic and the closing of New Zealand's borders, I finally landed in Wellington on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2022. For over two years, following the jury's selection, I had been living with the promise of discovering the Randell Cottage. For over two years my readings, my quest for pictures, my imaginings and my exchanges with Amaury Da Cunha, the previous incumbent, had been feeding my imagination. Each time we met up, Amaury would bring me a photo from *down south*, taken during his stay there. A confirmation of reality, something like evidence. I told him: "I feel as if the country is a setting, in the cinematic sense of the term. An illusion." Which he didn't deny. Leaving for New Zealand, writing a novel on the other side of the world, writing a novel *about* the other side of the world, at twelve hours' time difference from Paris. Madness. On the other side of myself, what kind of writer would I be?



Photo – Philippe Matsas



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A slight wind and bright sunshine welcomed me to 14 St Mary Street that day. The cottage exactly resembles the picture I had been painted: a sweet little cream-painted wooden doll's house, tucked into an English cottage garden. Perfumed by roses, fresh mint and sage. Inside, it's like stepping back in time, the 19th century lives on. Sash windows, Liberty wallpaper everywhere, even on the ceiling, blue and white crockery in the kitchen, a cast-iron stove. I recognise the little china dogs Amaury told me about. I must be careful to keep the key with me when I go outside, if there's a sudden gust of wind and the door slams, I'll be stuck.

The kitchen is the main room, not because of its size but because it's the welcoming nerve centre of the house. This is where I'll work most of the time. It may well be the beginning of the southern summer, but once night falls I need the heater. I can't write if I'm feeling cold. A few days later, the French Ambassador tells me that humidity is measured here by the number of days it takes to dry the washing. For the Randell Cottage, I estimate it takes four days. The mist over the forests above Thorndon has something to do with that.

So what is it like to have a writer's residency in one of the most beautiful countries on the planet?

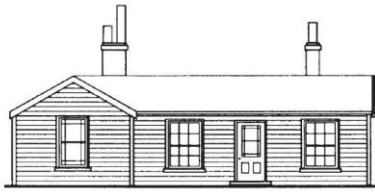
A never-ending temptation.

The temptation to go out, to stroll around, to leap into a boat, a plane, to go and see with your own eyes the volcanoes, the forests, the islands off the coast, the mountains, plains, fiords, the billowing seas, the people, yes, especially the people.

I am lucky that this is my first stay in Wellington. In a year's time I'll be coming back. I can allow myself the luxury of immersing myself in this place. I strongly believe in this: in writing without writing, in writing even before you write, by absorption, taking advantage of the subterranean workings of will and spirit. Heading out on an adventure is setting the story into motion. I'm off and away.

Wellington and all its marvels, from the Red Rocks to Makara, from Te Papa Museum to Cuba Street, Tahitian opera in Porirua, Kapiti Island, Mount Taranaki, New Plymouth, the White Cliffs, then Southland, Queenstown, Milford and Doubtful Sounds, Bluff, the Catlins, Dunedin and its fragile blue penguins that make us suddenly so humble, us humans, Otago, Arrowtown and the sad legacy of the goldmines, Glenorchy... and then the North Island again, Auckland, Cambridge, Matamata, Rotorua, Tongariro, Raglan, Muriwai, and of course Karekare Beach, because obviously *The Piano*...

People belong in a landscape, as some poet or other used to say. Aotearoa tells us a lot about the men and women who live here. Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, floods. The earth gives and the earth takes away. This slender thread binds us to one another.



## Randell Cottage *Writers Trust*

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You can't know a country in thirty days. You can only brush the surface. Pākehā, Māori and foreigners in mid-newzealandification are still mere sketches for me, but they are sketches that will take their time, hang around, turn into paintings one day. In the meantime, the sketches dance: a group of youngsters on the waterfront, a woman in town wearing her dressing gown as a coat, adults going barefoot in the street, kids with green and purple hair; two people deeply committed to the Randell Cottage who've turned their home into a living art gallery; a French woman living in Wellington who takes care of books as if they were newborn babies; strong Māori women at the head of cultural foundations; strangers in a Southland pub proclaiming themselves kings of fly-fishing; a remarkable woman translator who rejects *exoticism*; the Tahitian leader of an artistic company; the exquisitely coiffed guide to an Edwardian house; a Bed and Breakfast host who leaves a gift on my bed on Christmas Day; impishly welcoming French diplomats; writers that I didn't have time to talk to; a New Zealand woman poet; academics from all over the world; flocks of sheep without the slightest sign of a farmer nearby; a woman in charge of the Katherine Mansfield museum-house; sixty-seven-year-old hikers; a Pakistani dairy owner on the corner of Tinakori Road and St Mary Street; a learned man with an English first name who invites me to a barbecue, where he introduces his family and offers me a day paddling in the water at Day's Bay, Mansfield's favourite beach. The epiphany strikes on another beach. Oriental Bay. Wellington's most popular beach, or rather its most central. Not its biggest. I sit down on a towel facing the horizon's green waves. It's hot this afternoon, very hot. I'm starting to believe in summer. I have tucked a little square yellow notebook into my bag. The sand is thick, granular, nothing like the very fine sand on my island, Mauritius. I roll it under my feet. I listen absently to my neighbours' conversations. Distant laughter, murmuring. I am still. The sun shines through me. Suddenly, inexplicably, my head bursts. I open my eyes. There's the novel, right there in front of me. I can see it, I can see the whole thing, even, I can see the story, the characters, I can see what drives them, what holds them back, their secrets, their desires, I can see the island, the island's role in all of this, the lost paradise, the paradise to be run from, the vital urge, the fear and the anger, the earth rumbling, the duality, I can see it all. I write in the notebook, part one, part two, part three, part four, I'm writing, it's all clear, transparent as the ocean, I'm writing without thinking, without obstacles, it's intoxicating. Soon there will be a novel.

But when is soon?

I'm going to start writing it here, in my 15m<sup>2</sup> studio apartment with its combined kitchen-living-room-study-bedroom, my own doll's house, minus cast-iron stove and fine porcelain, but with the sky in its roof. And if nothing happens to dry up the source, I'll finish this novel in November and December 2023 in the little kitchen in the Randell Cottage, while nearby, patient and determined, my washing dries.

**Caroline Laurent**

**March 2023**