Bookclub notes

'Whenever I think of coming to punish my father, it's always in a strong wind, and that's blowing now as I drive up the long, unsealed track to the house and sheds.'

So begins one of Owen Marshall's superbly subversive stories. He offers up a wide range of subjects, from untimely deaths to unusual discoveries made about friends or neighbours, from burnishing an overseas trip to a tale about saving a business venture:

'Just in time,' said Paddy. 'I thought I was going to have to resort to giving blow jobs in the office.' It wasn't quite as Jane A would have expressed relief, perhaps, but sincere in its own way . . .

With over ten years since his last collection of new stories, Marshall explores his fellow New Zealanders, bringing his wisdom and wry eye to vivid, insightful scenes:

'Places bring back people, people bring back places, and both conjure the cinema of your past.'

About the author

Owen Marshall, described by Vincent O'Sullivan as 'New Zealand's best prose writer', is an award-winning novelist, short-story writer, poet and anthologist, who has written or edited more than 30 books, including the bestselling novel *The Larnachs*.

Many leading contemporary writers have counted themselves amongst his admirers, including Janet Frame and Fiona Kidman, who wrote of his work, 'I find myself exclaiming over and again with delight at the precision, the beauty, the near perfection of his writing.' Writer, historian and literary biographer Michael King wrote of Marshall, 'Quite simply the most able and the most successful exponent of the short story currently writing in New Zealand.' Writer and academic Vincent O'Sullivan has claimed 'nobody tells our [New Zealand] stories better'.

New work from the master of short stories

Return to Harikoa Bay

'New Zealand's best prose writer'
— Vincent O'Sullivan

Owen Marshall
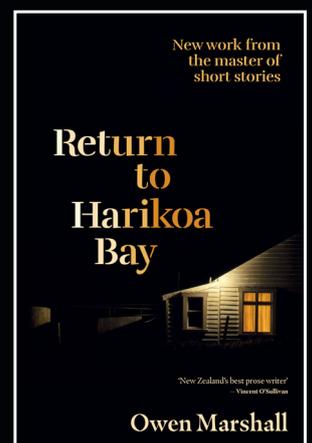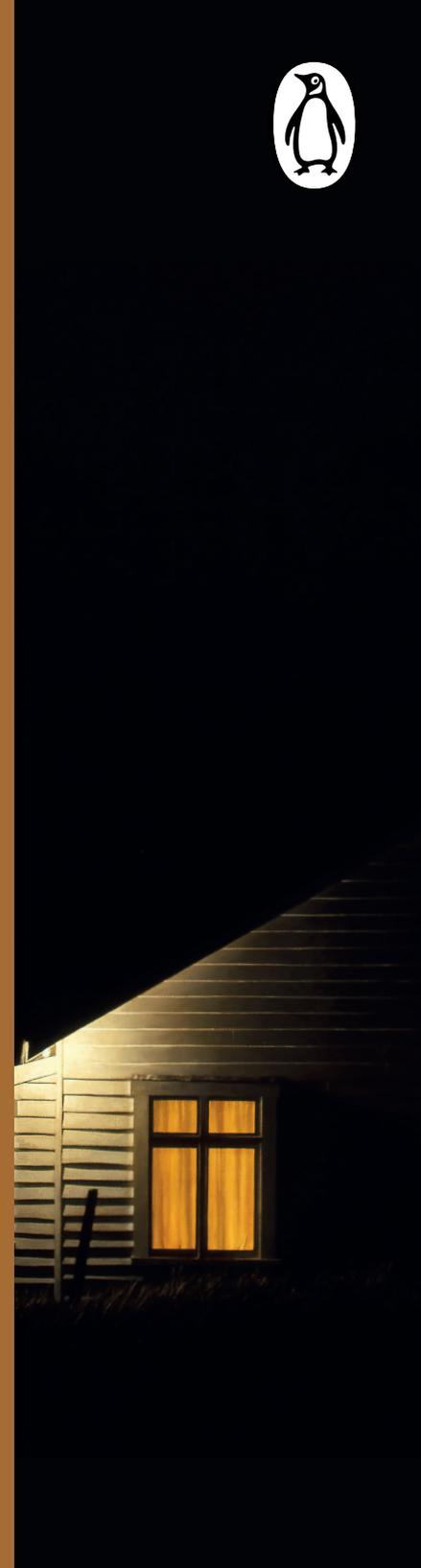
Author's Note

Return To Harikoa Bay is my first collection of new stories since 2009 and follows the publication of several novels. I have enjoyed the variety of theme, setting and tone that a collection permits. The novel can often stumble and recover: short fiction is unforgiving and the struggle is to achieve both economy and emotional power.

Bookclub Notes

1. Marshall has said he likes to test himself in the creation of characters of various backgrounds, gender and sexual orientation. What are the particular challenges that an author faces in attempting this? How successful do you feel Marshall has been?

2. Setting is important in these stories. Where characters are can be as significant as who they are. Marshall's early stories usually had local, provincial settings, but since his experience of overseas travel and residence, more stories have been set outside New Zealand. What comment have you regarding his settings? What can a setting add to a story's impact?

3. Understated humour features in some of these stories. What can humour add to fiction? Does it appeal to you? Does it trivialise the story?

4. Most writers have themes, attitudes and places especially important to them, and to which they return often in their writing. Do you see common threads in these stories?

5. Marshall has often emphasised the importance of characterisation in fiction. How successful do you feel he is in creating people that interest readers?

6. Marshall is also known as a poet and has published four collections of poetry. Do you find any poetic elements in his work? If so, what do they add to the language used?

7. The short story has an especially significant place in New Zealand literature, from Katherine Mansfield on. Do you find any common or distinguishing features in our short fiction?

8. These stories vary considerably in length as well as theme and tone. To what extent does the length of a story dictate its nature?

9. Realism is the mode of almost all the stories in this collection, but Marshall has written in other forms. Fiction can also be surreal, a fantasy, a fable, or post-modern. Have you read such worksand if so what was your reaction?

10. Which of the stories in this collection seem the most successful to you? Why?

Other books by Owen Marshall

THE AUTHOR'S CUT
Short Stories
OWEN MARSHALL
Featuring *COMING HOME IN THE DARK*, now a major film

The Larnachs
Owen Marshall
A compelling novel of love and tragedy based on a true story

CARNIVAL SKY
when death puts life on hold
OWEN MARSHALL

LOVE AS A STRANGER
OWEN MARSHALL

Owen Marshall
Living as a Moon

DRYBREAD
A NOVEL
OWEN MARSHALL

OWEN MARSHALL
PEARLY GATES
a novel

A SHORT STORY
Sojourn in Arles
Owen Marshall

Harlequin Rex
a novel
Owen Marshall
MONTANA NEW ZEALAND BOOK AWARDS
DEUTZ MEDAL 2000

A Many Coated Man
Owen Marshall

VIEW FROM THE SOUTH
OWEN MARSHALL
PHOTOGRAPHS BY GRAHAME SYDNEY

LANDMARKS
GRAHAME SYDNEY   BRIAN TURNER   OWEN MARSHALL