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Why I Write

Marion Halligan

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Why I Write

Abstract

I write in order to put the world into words. I've always done that in my head. I can't perceive anything without trying to find words for it. When I began to put the words down on paper and work at getting them exactly right I became a writer. I do this with a pen; I enjoy the physical pleasure of forming the letters, the ink flowing. The way words look is important, and so is the way they sound. I'm interested in the way that getting the sound right, in terms of their music, the rhythm, the variations and repetitions of syllables, makes the words mean what you want them to say, so that sometimes finding the way things should sound achieves the meaning that you are looking for. Sometimes I think the words are more important than the things. When I find the words I'll know what the things are.

MARION HALLIGAN



Marion Halligan was born in Newcastle on the east coast of Australia and grew up by the sea. She now lives in Canberra, with her husband and occasionally two children, and has spent some time in France. Her books have been nominated for most of the major literary prizes and have won several, including the Steele Rudd Award (for the best collection of short stories in its year), the Braille Book of the Year for *The Living Hothouse* in 1989, and the Geraldine Pascall Prize for critical writing in 1990. Her latest novel, *Lovers' Knots* (Heinemann, 1992; Minerva, 1993) won The Age Book of the Year Award 1992, the ACT Book of the Year Award for 1993 (shared with the poet A.D. Hope) and the 3M Talking Book of the Year award. Her other books are the novels *Self-Possession* (UQP, 1987 & 1992), *Spider Cup* (Penguin, 1990), two more collections of short stories, *The Hanged Man in the Garden* (Penguin, 1991) and *The Worry Box* (Minerva, 1993), and *Eat My Words*, a collection of essays about food and other things.

She is currently Chairperson of the Australian Literature Board.

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This is the way my imagination works. Anything that it lights on is material to it. It has its own honesty. Looking at the words on the page I can see whether they're true or not; if they're not I have to work at them until they are. Writing for me doesn't start with a subject, it's always words, and I've learned to trust them. It's pleasure and effort. I hope my readers will reverse the process, will get my words into their imaginations, and get pleasure from this effort; the pleasure of knowing or seeing or feeling the world I've got into words.