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Why I Write

Beverley Farmer

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Why I Write

Abstract

I write in fragments, cutting and polishing until each one seems ready to be put in place - here? or there? - in the mosaic. As the work fills out and the pattern begins to show, it becomes easier to stand back and judge the effect. I look for the illusion of depth and of movement in time and space within the frame of the thing - story, poem, novel - and a symmetry set up by its resonances and correspondences. Towards the end, it seems to be writing itself, fulfilling its own demands. The whole should have the feel of a lived experience, and seem to come together naturally.

BEVERLEY FARMER



Beverley Farmer was born in Melbourne in 1941 and educated at MacRobertson's Girls' High School and Melbourne University. Except for six years of secondary teaching, she has supported herself mainly by hotel and restaurant work in Australia and overseas. In 1965 she married a Greek migrant and for some years, during which she wrote her first book, *Alone* (1980), they lived with his family in the village house where he was born. The stories that came out of this experience are collected in *Milk* (1983), winner of the 1984 NSW Premier's Prize for Fiction, and in *Home Time* (1985). *A Body of Water* (UQP) 1990), journal and writer's notebook interspersed with poems and stories, was shortlisted for the National Book Council Non-Fiction Banjo Award and for the NSW Douglas Stewart Prize for non-fiction. Her most recent novel is *The Seal Woman* set both in Australia and Denmark.

Beverley Farmer has one son, born in Australia in 1972.

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I write in fragments, cutting and polishing until each one seems ready to be put in place – here? or there? – in the mosaic. As the work fills out and the pattern begins to show, it becomes easier to stand back and judge the effect. I look for the illusion of depth and of movement in time and space within the frame of the thing – story, poem, novel – and a symmetry set up by its resonances and correspondences. Towards the end, it seems to be writing itself, fulfilling its own demands. The whole should have the feel of a lived experience, and seem to come together naturally.

Writing for me is a matter of fits and starts, any number of false starts. I work my way by instinct towards making what is on the page fit in with my sense of the whole work-to-be. The process is like getting to know someone intimately. We go on limited knowledge, fumbling our way to a greater knowledge, or to rupture. Works fail, come apart.

I try to make whatever I write as airy and spare a structure of words as will bear the weight. Through phase after phase I find more that can be left out. I strive for clarity.