

1994

Why I Write

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Recommended Citation

Strauss, Jennifer, *Why I Write*, *Kunapipi*, 16(1), 1994.

Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol16/iss1/32>

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Why I Write

Abstract

I find it very difficult to talk about myself as a 'Poet'; everything seems to fall into the language of false pride or false modesty or else an evasive irony that escapes neither.

JENNIFER STRAUSS



Jennifer Strauss was born in Heywood, Victoria in 1933. She has published *Children and Other Strangers* (Nelson, 1975) and *Winter Driving* (Sisters Publishing, 1981). She is currently a lecturer at the Department of English, Monash University, Victoria.

JENNIFER STRAUSS

Why I Write

I find it very difficult to talk about myself as a 'Poet'; everything seems to fall into the language of false pride or false modesty or else an evasive irony that escapes neither. Even in talking about simply writing poems, I'm abashed by the smallness of my output and my lack of an articulated 'poetics'. I've never been able to produce a finished poem by making up my mind to write a (=any) poem at any particular time, much less by making up my mind to write 'a sonnet', 'in tercets/hexameters/dialogue/heroic handstands.' I can only write when the idea of a particular poem germinates in experience – usually the kind of experience in which there is some kind of intersection; of feeling and thought; of past, present and speculative time; of particular and type. The 'idea' of the poem isn't an idea at all in a philosophical or even discursive. It's a kind of dimly perceived shape, and the defining of that shape is a process of discovering as much as of 'making'.

All my poems are personal; very few are unequivocally autobiographical. Mostly, I write because things disturb (rather than distress). I want to make an order out of that disturbance, which isn't always caused by chaos, obvious dis-order; the wrong kind of order can disturb even more. And the poem doesn't exorcise the original feeling; poems aren't problem-solvers, not even dissolvers.

I write the only kind of poems I can. I admire a great many other kinds.