

Chapter Twelve

WRITING I

I believe one writes because one has to create a world in which one can live.

Anais Nin

The true art of memory is the art of attention.

Samuel Johnson

There is only one trait that marks the writer. He is always watching. It's kind of a trick of mind, and he is born with it.

Morley Callaghan



— A SENSE OF PURPOSE —

SL

Why Write?

I thought the Anais Nin quote in her book *In Favor of the Sensitive Man and Other Essays* was especially relevant to both of us, when she said —

“Why one writes is a question I can answer easily, having so often asked it of myself. I believe one writes because one has to create a world in which one can

feeling exists, perhaps a visual image, but usually an amorphous, ambiguous, verbally unformulated urge. Writing takes on a different quality here.

What is that urge, that feeling, that emotional push? How can one transform a nonverbal mist-cloud into a thought, and the thought into a coherent, communicative sentence? Sometimes it might take hours or days; other times, only a second or two. As Otto Rank once said, “The essence of art lies precisely in the concrete representation of the abstract.” Either way, that process of turning nonverbal urges, sensations, or insights into language — in other words, writing — creates not only the sentences on the page, but your own inner strength.

With writing, you create an identity; you come to know who you are; you build on that created knowing; and slowly, over a period of time, you become a fuller, stronger, more perceptive, compassionate and knowledgeable person: from within the inner murk, from out of the shades and shadows within the unconscious domain, a diamond is born. It is filled with light. It is diamondfire.

And it is a blessing to all upon whom your let your light shine.

SL Grist For The Mill and Moral Decisions

You are so fortunate that the writer in you is a good observer of external objects and shifting internal conditions — shades of emotions, thought-streams, contradictory thoughts and feelings, fears, needs, etc. — and you articulate them so well! You think clearly when you write, so the logic flows undisturbed and virtually unnoticeable (which is a major factor in writing), and the feelings you express touch the reader’s heart deeply and carry him/her right along on the story’s wings. . . .

It's something, isn't it? — for the writer, *everything* is grist for the mill. Nothing need be cast aside or dismissed or condemned or forgotten. Everything is beautiful in its own right, whether it be joy or pain, cruelty or compassion, disappointment or success, and everything can be utilized to give fire and light to the writing. For the writer, everything is real and everything is sacred, and everything is, can, and perhaps should be subject to inclusion.

On that score, of course, other questions may arise. IS everything subject to inclusion, or are some things morally unacceptable? — There is no objective answer to that. It is a purely personal decision. But most writers don't agonize over that question. Life is to be lived, and once it's lived, it becomes the writer's property, potential grist for the mill, to be used or saved until later or not used at all. It is the writer's choice entirely. It depends upon the subject's artistic relevance and the writer's judgment, not on some external, abstract social code. Nevertheless, this is a very tricky area. Zelda hated Scott Fitzgerald when he drew from their conversations word for word — but then, of course, she did the same thing in her own writings!

In my view, everything human is sacred. Even pain or transgression can be presented realistically AND with compassion (as I did in *Blue Melody*). At the same time, I have occasionally refrained from writing about certain things over the years that would hurt friends or loved ones, and to that extent made moral decisions within the context of the writing that transcended artistic possibilities. As I said, it's a personal decision.

SL The Heartbeat Inside My Windsongs

Your late-nite experiences with my poem “Sunbather” — the vivid scenes sparked in your imagination by those slow-hand sense-touch images — were no mistake.

You did the right thing! I would hope to empower you. It has to do with imagination, privacy, pleasure, and freedom. Read — and enjoy!

I think imagination — a personal self-generated inner world — is profoundly important for a writer as well as for a reader. It can resuscitate one's energies. It can be like a dell of ferns and waterfalls and quiet whisperings, a magical spot far away from noise and tawdriness, a place of the heart and soul. It can generate fire and searing sensuality too. In dreams and images and thoughts, imagination — fueled by art, nature, or desires — can bring to you in mind-spirit everything you need and want.

A poem can spark a vision that makes you tremble or chuckle or close your eyes and drift into dream. It can awaken juicy passion, tearful gratitude, waves of gentle or fierce emotion — all within your own heart and mind, with nothing to fear from others — a private world of inner beauty, pain, and pleasure, enjoyed with impunity whenever you need it or want it.

Passion is immensely valuable. It generates fire and energy. . . .If we have to or need to or want to, we can provide our own methods; generate our own energies; create our own contexts; invent our own satisfaction. It is available, not only to writers, but to all of us, yes? And we can do it without guilt and without retribution. It is an open door, leading to smiles, laughter, sighs, sweet kisses, languorous pleasures, dancing lights, bright eyes, bubbling joy.

Thank you for letting me know you hear the music inside the language of “Sunbather.” That music is the heartbeat inside my windsongs.

SL Do We Serve Rage, or Love and Beauty?

My heart goes out to you and your feelings about these psychological, spiritual, religious, environmental, and political issues that plague humanity in the extreme these days. Human madness combined with technological power is killing the earth and brutalizing the psyches of sensitive souls such as yours at every turn. Is there anything we can do to help or change ourselves, others, or the situation at large?

These are the issues you are coping with. You are by no means alone in your love, rage and frustration. And these are the issues I confront and attempt to explore sometimes in the e-mails I write to you and a few others. . . .

When we direct our attention to human madness, the cloud of insanity can be overwhelming. Once we confront it, we are forced to examine, not only the issues "out there," but ourselves, "in here." Ultimately, it comes down to our own recognition of who we are as individuals and how we wish and choose to expend our energies during our life-journey.

Do we serve rage, or do we serve love and beauty through individual creativity? Can the two dynamics work synchronously together within the social context? If so, how? These are some of the questions I'm examining in some of the e-mails I have written to you. They have everything to do with how we decide to live our lives in this insane slaughterhouse called "the world."

JS Write From the Heart

Hi, J,

I think this chapter you sent is terrific — sensitive, heart-touching, full of love and compassion, very tender, poignant. Your writing, too, has come a million miles

since you began this journey. The feelings you felt while composing the chapter come through vividly and communicate directly, intensely. Way to go, J.

You expressed concern that when you read it to your group, everybody was moved by it, but felt it was too sad. That's understandable, I suppose, because many people love to witness suffering, but they hate and fear the thought of real death (because every death reminds them of the inevitability of their own death). Death is okay if they don't care about who it is that dies — bad guys are lots of fun to kill — and that's okay, too, if there is a happy ending, some kind of denial of death or some other way of suggesting that death is always somebody else's. I call it "band-aid" death. Unfortunately, that kind of denial doesn't help a sincere, courageous writer who is trying to communicate the suffering of death and dying from both perspectives — in this case, your son, M, and his various pains, and you, his mother, and his witness.

I suggest you keep on keepin' on, following whichever inner voices sing most clearly to you. Write from the heart, write as well as you can, enjoy the journey, know you are giving voice to love, beauty and the truth of your own life. If others can't handle it easily, or sometimes even at all, well, it's their problem and their loss, not yours. Don't try to fit the expression of your feelings to *their* ways of thinking. Instead, fit the expression with your own deepest, most sincere feeling — even as you have done in this chapter.

Write everything this way, keeping in mind that the story expresses dozens of moods and moments, not just sorrow. Simply write it as it unfolds for you. Only after everything is written as well as you can, then go back, check your arrangement of chapters, placement of moods, themes, sections, etc. It's at *that* time (not at the beginning) when you will be able to see the whole, which will then help you see what you might want to open with, what you want to follow with, what you want to close with.

After everything is done, considerations such as emotional impact, communication with an audience, the "music" of the overall composition with each part being a melody, etc.— those concerns can be addressed at that time.

— THE POWER OF OBSERVATION —

SL **The Writer: Two People, or One Unified Observer?**

Hi, Lovely One,

You show valuable insight when you say, “I am two people since I began to write, and the writer in me is the one causing all the angst and dissatisfaction. What I have to do is not lose the writer in me, but learn to live with her and recognize that she will never be happy.”

Bravo! That restlessness, that urge for “more,” that urge to live and experience things deeply and then create out of those experiences serves as a link to life’s vitality. Many great Seers have called it “Divine Discontent.” It is the Life Force that urges you to grow, change, shift, remain awake, alert, alive, and creatively energetic. It can’t remain stuck for very long, hence the restlessness, the dissatisfaction. It wants to *grow* — and its growth by no means has to be destructive.

At the same time, let me gently suggest that you can view the writer in you simply as “the observer.” The writer only sees and hears and takes notes. In the sense that I am using the word, the writer is never happy or unhappy. S/he just watches. Angst

and dissatisfaction come from a more personal you, the you who yearns, desires, likes, dislikes, wants, doesn't want, the you who walks through life every day feeling up about this, down about that, joyful about this, angry about that, happy about this, sad about that. But the writer simply sees and hears it. The writer simply observes it and offers suggestions about how you may utilize imagination and your life's substance as material for great stories. See what I mean?

I guess I'm saying, honor and treasure the writer. Although she often makes life uncomfortable (that "Divine Discontent"), never fear or reject or lose her. In fact, nourish and develop her skills and powers of observation. Locate your consciousness in her, utilizing her powers of observation to observe not only everything around you outside, but everything that's going on inside of you too. And then follow her urgings to sit down and do the work. If you're unhappy, let the writer see and write it. If you're celebrating, let the writer see and write that too, yes?

In this way, that sense of a "split," of there being "two of you," vanishes. You are *one person*, a person who lives life and feels it and has desires and emotions AND a person who is simultaneously capable of being conscious and aware of what is taking place without and within *as it happens*.

This "observer" is what meditators from time immemorial have cultivated. It is the "witness" of who you are and what you do. It is a nonjudgmental consciousness, a "watcher on the hills," a seeing inner eye. Locate your awareness *there*, and you will feel a sense of bliss and compassion arising in you as you go about your daily life, conscious of everything — being in-the-now, noticing the way the flowers bend in the wind, the way a slight change of your husband's voice in conversation indicates a shift of meaning, the way you respond to a stranger's smile or an alteration of the light on dark grey clouds near the horizon.

The witnessing I am talking about has nothing to do with "thinking," "dreaming," "concentration," or "imagination" (those elements come later, during the work). It

has to do with full presence in the now, wide awake, quiet, observant, gently alert, seeing clearly without coloring the outer or inner reality by filtering it through your conditioned mind and its values and preferences, simply *being in the present and aware* of what is happening outside and inside. This is the writer in you. No matter what happens, she sees it and notes it.

(For example, except for credited interviews and specific dates, nearly all of *Blue Melody* was written from memory, including those dialogue scenes and outrageous drunk scenes — no matter how stoned I was, the *writer* dimension of me saw whatever was happening and took note, simple as that. Years later, the writer recollected them, made decisions, and wrote from them.)

As Samuel Johnson once said, “The true art of memory is the art of *attention*.”

LI Living and Writing: Both/And

I know what your great Italian writer Pirandello meant when he said something like "life can either be lived or written." And I agree with you that his comment is slanted a bit sideways. I don't think the situation is either/or. It is both/and. In other words, I heartily agree with you that for a writer, both life and writing can — and should — happen simultaneously.

That is, a writer has a certain way of viewing what s/he lives. Even as she lives it, she has *an inner eye that is always awake, always aware, always looking, seeing, and remembering*. This inner observer is taking "notes," so to speak. When the urge to write makes itself felt inside — sometimes late at night, sometimes early in the morning, whenever — she sits down and gives that urge its expression in words. In giving that urge expression, she utilizes whatever images bubble up from the

"notes" she has taken while experiencing love, joy, heartache, fear, desire, yearning, beauty, ugliness, violence, gentleness or breathtaking passion. In this way, living and writing are merged. They become one and the same. Living is writing. Writing is living.

The English poet Wordsworth once said writing is "emotion recollected in tranquility." He was speaking of poetry in particular, but the principle applies to our conversation here. That is, first comes experience (and the objective *watching* by the inner eye), then later comes the experience recalled in calmer moments. That's part of it — the other part, equally valid — is writing from immediate passion, giving voice to lightning, thunder, and whatever storms may be raging inside in the living present.

Whether recalled in tranquility or in emotional upheaval, *the writer has a consciously developed unity between her experience, her observation of experience, and her utilization of her experience and observations when she follows the heartsong that urges, even demands, that she sit down and write what she feels and thinks* — partly *recollected* observations of experience, yes, and partly *imagination*.

A fellow named Morley Callaghan (writing from a male point of view) once said "There is only one trait that marks the writer. He is always watching. It's kind of a trick of mind, and he is born with it." (And, needless to say, so is any "she" who takes writing seriously.)

The process of writing is also an experience in itself. You search yourself and discover who you truly are.

Sometimes it is thrilling. You like what you discover. Even if you do not care for what you discover on any given day, the discovery itself helps *you* become more conscious. You become deeper, richer, fuller. New aspects of yourself continue to bubble up. The more you write, the more you come to understand who you are,

what you think about who you are, and how you feel about yourself and others. The process of writing is an adventure, a drama, a love affair. Sometimes you love what you find out; sometimes you are shocked and dismayed. Nevertheless, *the process itself* is one of the greatest ways I know of to come to know yourself.

Write honestly. Write truly. Don't take short-cuts. Explore. Value everything you discover. Give it shape, form and music in the images and thoughts and feelings. It takes courage, even as it helps you become more courageous. It takes strength, even as it helps you become stronger. Even as you give of yourself, so you nourish yourself. Often it is a lonely journey, because only you can write truly whom you truly are. But it is also the most remarkable, exciting, life-affirming journey you can embark upon.

You instinctively know these things already. Am I right?

Experience in itself is not the key. Observation is the key.

Observe what others say and do; observe what you say and do; and especially observe what you think and feel inside about what's going on. Then write. It's true that a lot of writers go out into the world seeking experience, just so they will have something to write about. Others, such as the poetess Emily Dickinson, stay in the house. They never go out, and they write anyway. Of course, most writers have as many experiences as they want (and the *kinds* of experiences they want), and yet carve out time to write, even when they are active in the world (Lord Byron, for example).

Remain confident: you will seek and find and create your own way. Even as you do so, stay awake and aware, keep observing, and keep writing. Every moment is of value. You are a beautiful young woman of eighteen. You are feeling the struggle to understand yourself. That in itself is a great thing to write about. Feeling desire well up in your loins is something to write about; the way the touch of a hand feels on

your breasts is a powerful source of writing; learning how to move your body, how to look into the mirror or into your lover's eyes; observing the effect you and your grace and beauty have on men and on other women can be a creative rush, a thrill, a source of power — and a great source of writing energy; the books and poems you read and the way paintings and music make you feel — a marvelous source of material.

It all happens, not somewhere down the road when you are "older" and "more experienced," but right here, right now. You already are doing it, are you not? Bravo!

Keep it up. Move into it with still more energy, more passion, more confidence. Seek out the experiences you want and need; keep your writer's eye awake, alert, and interested. You are absolutely on the right track; the books will appear in and of themselves whenever you are ready.

Trust yourself. Trust time. And write-write-write!

— THINKING CLEARLY —

MH Look, See, Feel, Write

I taught myself how to think clearly and how to write by taking on the job of writing about music and musicians professionally. I have always loved music, and have fallen in love, so to speak, with dozens of musicians and their musics.

However, I initially found the prospect of discussing them in print to be somewhat daunting. So much responsibility! How could I possibly live up to the subject (music), the musicians, the readers, and to myself as a writer? And how could I

possibly transmute the abstract, nonverbal emotional experience of listening to music into its concrete representation in language? Once I got into it, the actual writing proved exhilarating.

The process itself taught me how to look deeply into the issues, how to see clearly and objectively, how to feel the music on its own terms, and how to structure sentences that cleanly, clearly and accurately articulated my views. Writing itself became one of my greatest teachers, not only about music, but primarily about myself and my own thought processes. That's why I say, Go for it!

You are already a capable writer; writing for publication will enhance your thinking and writing skills ten-fold. As the old saying goes, "If you really want to learn something, teach it." Let me know how things go, won't you?

JS **The First Step**

Simply seeing that you have trouble expressing your own feelings in writing is a marvelous beginning. It is the very first step. That realization alone opens doors of perception and helps you become more thoughtful, self-aware and expressive. Not easy to do at first. All sorts of inhibitions arise. What ARE your feelings in the first place? And then come a flood of judgments *about* them. Then come worries about criticisms from others (perhaps especially from Mummy Dearest, who forever lurks in the shades and shadows of one's deepest psyche).

But as soon as one realizes that none of these things matter initially, then the first question is, "What do I actually and truly *feel*?" Then comes the *thinking* about which words best give expressions to the feeling(s), and that is where *clear* thinking comes in. It's all a matter of practice, of teaching yourself how to be as honest and self-revealing in your writing as you are in your dancing and painting.

KMc

Creativity is the Goal

I like your writing. I don't think clarity is in any way degenerative. So much of writing involves clear thinking, whatever the subject. Whether stoned or straight, a word-sentence-concept has to move from the nonverbal sensation in the mind, up into consciousness, out into some sort of verbal expression. The question becomes, what sort of expression? What is the quality of it?

Sometimes when stoned, passion intensifies. Feeling goes deeper and higher. Emotion burns with greater purity. That's wonderful as far as sensations go. The trick, of course, is to find the wherewithal to express it in writing in such a way that the purity of the feeling comes across to a receptive reader so the reader can and will experience the same feeling, or will comprehend the same feeling-thought that the writer felt and intended.

Alas, the annals of writing are littered with intense feelings expressed in muddled ways. Such writings lack clarity, precision, rhythm, momentum, vividness. They may communicate a certain emotional vibration and contextual atmosphere, but if emotional tumult overcomes intellectual rigor, the effect becomes partial, at best.

I am not one to suggest that anybody follow any approach other than whatever feels good and right and operable for them at any given moment. For myself, however, I like the blend of feeling with clear thinking. Anybody can have strong feelings, but the expression of them in writing seems to find its greatest fulfillment when feelings are linked with perceptual clarity. Of course, if intellect overpowers passion, then that result is also partial (although in certain kinds of expository writing, of course, emotions may be secondary, irrelevant or inappropriate).

Einstein once said, “Science without religion is lame. Religion without science is blind.” There is a parallel here.

In writing, I like the blend, in which mind *serves* insight-feeling. I suppose great poets such as Walt Whitman or Shakespeare, or great novelists such as Nikos Kazantzakis or Henry Miller might serve as good examples. These and dozens of other giants of world literature seem to find that blend, that synthesis of clear thought expressed with deep feelings, and, conversely, deep feelings expressed with diamondlike clarity. Writing about music and musicians is a marvelous way of teaching oneself how to master this mergence.

As well, I like the idea of writing at any time of day or night, and in any and all states of mind. If one is feeling clear-sighted and intellectually alert, alive, and creative, then great, write from that perspective. If one is a bit snoggered, or even loaded to the gills, and feels the urge to write, that too has incredible value. Among people I have admired, almost everybody has written when stoned one way or another. Arthur Rimbaud did not corner that market. From my own experience, I know that I feel differently when straight than when stoned. Each serves its purpose.

My view is, make the most of whatever energies emerge from either state of mind. Creativity is the goal. And creativity serves all muses well. No point in wasting creative energy, just because it happens to appear when absolutely sober, or when tipsy or loaded. Whenever the desire to create appears, I am the first to say, don't hesitate, give it free reign. Follow the feelings, follow the thoughts, give them the clearest and most heartfelt expression you can summon. Only later on, after the effulgent rush, maybe take a look, see what was accomplished. Without self-flagellation, delete whatever does not work; keep whatever does work; and know that the act of expression is itself a step forward toward greater self-empowerment. Eventually, one finds one's way to authenticity.

In other words, I'm a "whatever works" kind of guy. The main thing is not wasting passion, energy, or the mind. Every state has its power. The trick, in my view, is finding that blend between passion and clarity, and consciously developing the discipline that enables both to work at their peak.

Of course, a lot of artists think being loaded is the only way, but we know where that leads if carried too far, too long — dementia or death. I like to keep in mind the fact that Jackson Pollock was a serious drinker. But he did his best work when he moved out of the city, into the country, stopped drinking, painted when sober, and used his knowledge and experience and awareness of having been continually loaded to infuse passion and imagination into his new work. Interesting, isn't it?

All the best, L

MR *Blue Melody and Diamondfire*

I eagerly look forward to the publication of *Blue Melody*, but must say that it deals with a time in my life that was quite confused, unhappy and self-destructive. It was a good time, a beneficial time, in the sense that I needed to explore various dark and terrible zones in order to know them, and to discover how far I could venture into them without killing myself. At the moment of finality, I recognized my situation, made a choice to live, and from there began the journey of ascension. *Blue Melody* does not delve into that upward journey into expanding consciousness, because the primary story is about Tim and the years I spent with him, which of course concluded when he died in 1975.

My own story in *Diamondfire*, the novel I am writing now, travels through those dark zones, not as an end in itself the way so many novels and films do, but as a

significant *part* of the total journey upward, toward the light, eventually *into* the light, which light, of course, gets brighter and brighter.

It seems to me that the evolutionary journey of consciousness, with its confusions, dangers, struggles, setbacks and eventual unfoldings and bedazzling realizations, is one of the most exciting journeys a human being can take. Whether or not I can pour that into a book in such a way as to captivate and inspire readers remains to be seen. However, I write because it feels authentic and true, something worthwhile for me and perhaps a few others as well.

I do not focus on publication. That effort will come later, after the book is done. I focus on the writing itself, on the kind of *living* I must do here and now, *today*, in order to think clearly and deeply, to remain available to the higher domains of the psyche, and to sustain energy enough to complete the work.

To be sure, for me and for others, there is nothing inevitable about that continual brightening. It needs to be nourished, never taken for granted. It needs to be cherished and vitalized, not abused. I could fall away in an instant if I chose to become defiant and cynical or bitter and faithless, or just gave up and sank back into the comforts of unconsciousness, sweet darkness, sensual intoxications, nonresponsibility, the "accidental life, floating like driftwood" that Osho and Lao Tzu talk about.

So, yes, I continue growing, and share whatever tidbits of insight and encouragement I can, keeping a keen eye on the workings of my own mindstream, especially important during this lull between *Blue Melody's* completion and my return to the writing of *Diamondfire*.

And so, my friend, we keep on keepin' on, don't we? It's great to be able to participate in blisstalk, is it not? If we lived in other states of consciousness, we

would not be concerned with these matters. The very fact that blisstalk plays a role in our lives indicates that we continue on the right track.

Let light, love, hope, creativity, compassion and laughter lead our way.

All the best, M,

Namaste, L

JS What is the Bedrock Truth of the Matter?

No question about it, the story you are writing takes you into every zone you have ever lived in, not only your parents and M and C and me, but San Francisco, Venice, all the times afterwards. It's your story, so where else can it go? No need to avoid any issue or any area just because it may be painful or confusing, or it may bring up various incidents or events that take you back into angry places. So what if anger is involved? Nothing wrong with that, is there?

Keep in mind that your presentation of *your* story doesn't have to have anything to do with "objectivity" or "fairness" or "right" or "wrong" or "blame" or "validation." You are writing a subjective, first person narrative. It has to do only with how *you* saw it and felt it, and how you want to present it so that your presentation matches the truth of it as you still see it and feel it. No need to worry about positive elements versus anger or frustration — see *all* sides clearly (from your own perspective), and present them all!

Some things in your life and your story were terrific, some were painful; some were uplifting and sensitive and tender and beautiful; some were ugly, degrading, destructive — not only on your part, but on everybody's part. One of the great things about leading a passionate, and perhaps confused and confusing life, is that it can serve writing well. All of it is valid, all of it is grist for the mill, all of it can be

utilized as both a mode of self-expression and as material for exciting reading. Ups, downs — it's all real, all worthwhile.

And nothing matters, finally, but the perspective you yourself gave in your recent e-mail: "Telling my truth as I saw it and felt it." That's all you need to do, and that is everything that means anything.

The question that cuts through all the confusion and doubt is simple enough: WHAT am I trying to SAY here? (In other words, What is the bedrock truth of this matter? What is the reality that I want to get across? What is the point I want to make?)

No need to consider others, how they might perceive the same event differently — let them write their own book! You will consider only your own perspectives anyway. If those include perspectives of the other person or persons, great; include whatever of theirs you feel is relative to your own truth that you are trying to express in that particular passage.

The deeper you go into issues, such as your relationship with men, or your relationship with your son M, or your relationship with your mother and father, or your relationship with this or that particular man, the more you come to know yourself. The more you will be able to see how life-events tend to form patterns. Those patterns usually emerge from early sources (particularly parents, and especially the mother). The more extensively you explore, the more you come to see how certain underlying forces in your own psyche repeat themselves — the specifics may have been different (different face, name, whatever), but the general principles were similar or even the same. In other words, as you explore yourself honestly, through writing, you come to know yourself better and better.

Courage comes into play when you can see how you looked at things in such a way as to generate the same old destructive dynamics in a wide variety of *new* situations.

It can be truly shocking. What are you going to do with these realizations? Cover them over? Make other people the bad guys? Or are you going to accept responsibility for whichever screw-ups or distortions were your own, and put that into the writing along with all the things that glorify you? If you can do both, your writing becomes richer, more interesting, more truthful, more real — and more captivating to readers. The real truth is the full truth. It includes the nasties along with the beauty and goodness.

Hope these thoughts help you wend your way through some of the mazes as they come along. Everything will work out splendidly, because you are hanging in there, doing the work, asking the right questions, confronting issues, dealing with doubts, angers and other unpleasant things that inevitably appear, and are handling every situation in your own mind with as much honesty and integrity as you can. That in itself gives enormous creative thrust to the writing process.