The Literature of Personal Disaster
Sherri Langton

Why do writers write about tragedy?

• Desire to share comfort, “companionship in a common venture” — someone who knows what I’m feeling.

• Valid sub-genre and literary subject, but too much was “poorly conceived, clumsily written, and carelessly edited.”

• Not enough to be merely horrific.

1. Writing must be real.

• Be transparent, vulnerable — be honest about yourself, event, feelings toward the event, God, family, others.

  • Explore your feelings.
  • ANGER AT GOD IS OK.

• Be descriptive.
  • “Show, don’t tell” — not just narration
  • Make the scene/event come alive for reader: sounds, sights, smells, etc.

Two books: Writing Life Stories by Bill Roorbach and Word Painting by Rebecca McClanahan

2. Writing must be redemptive.

• Write more than a horrible story.

• There must be a change in the writer or character — spiritual maturation.

  What have you learned?
  How did you change?
  How are you different now than before the tragedy?