

I just love how this whole topic is developing! It has become a deeper, more spiritual approach to the whole writing process. And all of you who are following it are spurring me on with your discussions and comments.

In the last article I brought up the subject of emotions, which led to a discussion on 'love', which I had not specifically mentioned in my list of basic emotions. That is because I see love as a verb rather than an emotion. 'Love' is something we do, and it is the result of needing to fulfill an emotion. It can be driven by fear, need for sex, joy, or a combination of any of the five emotions. I think when writing, this is a very important distinction to make. Also, love in any of its forms, will appear in a piece of writing - always if we consider that this is usually the underlying motivation of the characters. They will either be driven by their need to gain love and approval, or they will be motivated by the need to pamper themselves (self love).

The opposite of love, would be hate, you imagine. Well, consider this. The opposite of love, or absence of love is fear.

Those who seek love in order to banish fear, are responding to their need to eradicate the fear rather than their desire to give love (love as a verb or an action). The love so gained is transitory, and weak and not everlasting and pure.

And, in my own humble opinion, these themes can be traced to the fundament of any story. These are the most basic motivators. Here we find the internal conflicts within each individual. Here we find the reasons why characters act in a particular way. More importantly, here we find the way of empathising with our characters.

Even if we choose to write about an axe murderer or a child abuser, or allow one to appear in our story, if we can find his fear, his absence of love, then we can stir up some compassion and give ourselves permission to write him or her without being blocked by prejudice or hate.

In *The Cloths of Heaven*, I have included characters whose behaviour is socially unacceptable, immoral, but I have moved beyond my own personal opinion of their behaviour and dug into their 'souls' and found their motivator. Then, though I do not condone their actions, I can continue to 'write' them and experience them as whole human beings, caught up in their own inner conflict.

I recognise their search for love. I recognise their need to diminish fear.

A wonderful example of this ability to empathise with a distasteful character can be found in Nabokov's *Lolita*. Here, Nabokov creeps into the skin of a pedophile and manages to humanise him. Somehow, Nabokov has moved beyond the act of abuse and the abuser, and written, with wonderful skill I might add, this man's story of survival and need and loneliness. At times Humbert, the main character, can be pitied. It is not the abuse that is emphasised, but the loneliness and fear and insecurity that have caused it.

I have emphasised here the need to move beyond personal prejudice or pre-conceived notions when dealing with fictional characters. I have deliberately used distasteful examples because I do believe that only when we can connect with the negative as well as the positive can we truly write brilliant fiction. When we ourselves allow fear to censor us (remember those voices in our own heads) then what we write will be weak, two dimensional, and unappealing to a reader.