

First Monday July 10<sup>th</sup> 2006

Dear Creative Writers,

Welcome to this course. It is the first time we have run a course of this description so I am intrigued to find out what your expectations are. I cannot guess the sort of needs and wishes profile our group may have.

I have written a book on this area ( with Christine Frank) ( forthcoming with Helbling) , and this was preceded by LETTERS ( OUP 96) and yet I feel open, vulnerable and unsure of myself, never having taught a two week course in this area. Much will depend on the sort of things you come with and the sort of needs you turn out to have.

How have I seen myself as a writer and how do I see myself as a writer? My first book, at four and a half, was motivated by the wish to make clear to my father that I had no need to learn to read and had no intention of doing so. The book was about my life as a tramp, since I reckoned that, in this occupation I would not need to read, providing I pushed my old mother around with me in a wheel chair! The book was all pictures and no words.

At University I reckoned I was a poet.....and I spent hours mooning around the stuff I admired myself for having been inspired to write. Embarrassing, when I look back.

My first real writer training was in my first job, subbing at Reuters in London. Those men knocked the idea that I was some young Keats right out of my head. I realised that I was a wet-behind-the-ears whelp who was of no use on the news desk unless I left romanticism behind and cultivated cool accuracy, minimum verbiage and maximum speed.

I could bore you with more autobiography but the purpose of this **letter is to ask you first of all, to write me a 1-2 page letter in which you tell me how you have seen yourself as a writer and how you see yourself today.** Please can I ask you to start your letter by listing all the texts you have ever written , from shopping lists, via love poems to, maybe, 12,000 line epic poems! Please deliver your letter to me.

When you have delivered this first letter, please put up a piece of paper with your name on it so all can see and then start writing letters to other participants about whatever you will, the aim being to get to know each other. When you have finished your first letter, deliver it. Then start a letter to some one else in the group. When you receive a letter please answer it.

At morning break time I like to do 1-2-1 work with people and also from 1.30-2.00pm. These sessions will deal with what you propose, with what you want to talk about. It may sound odd, but over the two weeks it is very valuable for both you and me,

Warmly yours,

Mario

Ps: do you write letters to your classes? Might be something you want to try to help the groups you teach to create a "writing climate". We will talk more of this.