

Ethics in Memoir Writing

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Review Your Goals

What are your goals for writing this memoir?

- Why am I writing about this? / Why am I sharing this?
- Who am I sharing this for? / Who will be reading it? / Who are my readers?
- What do I want the reader to experience/feel/think?
- What is unique about what I have experienced or what I am sharing, or the perspective that I bring?

Double-Check Your Goals

Revenge?

Try to ensure that you are not being vindictive in your writing/relaying of particular events.



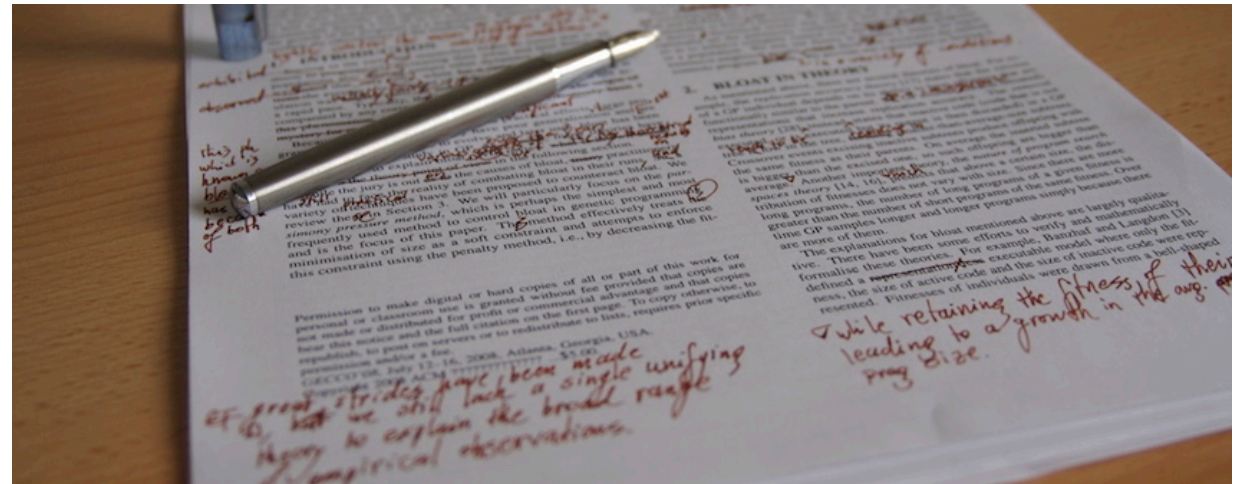
"Remember me?"

To Start It's Best To Let The Feelings Flow

First Draft is Written Just for YOU

- Raw, emotional, heartfelt
- With feeling, with conviction, with passion

Nobody will ever see this early/first draft but YOU



The Second & Subsequent Drafts

This is where you polish things up:

- The writing, language, grammar, punctuation, style, form, etc.
- A look at who is involved in or impacted by the stories you share and the potential impact your memoir may have on them
- A look at the “truth”

Important Elements to Consider for Memoir

- Accuracy
- Respect
- Permission



Important Elements to Consider for Memoir

When you incorporate other people, and places/scenes into your memoir you are bringing extra life into a story, and creating situations and scenarios that are three-dimensional. It allows you to reflect on your relationships with others.

You create a multi-layered story that has elements of interactivity, conflict, learning, observations, listening, watching.

But you must be careful about any of those things – legally, and ethically.

Disclaimer

I am NOT a lawyer, nor do I play one on TV.



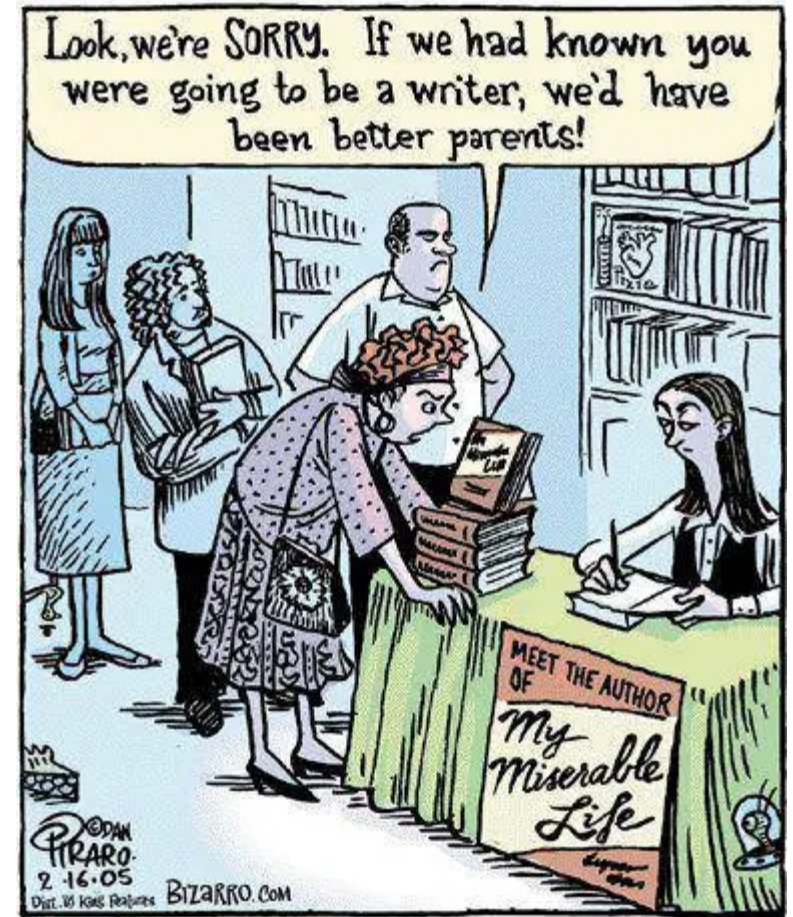
Marklock

Libel / Defamation in Memoir

- Libel
 - “A method of defamation expressed by print, writing, pictures, signs, effigies, or any communication embodied in physical form that is injurious to a person's reputation, exposes a person to public hatred, contempt or ridicule, or injures a person in his/her business or profession.”
 - It is not possible to libel a dead person. However, in some cases, a person's estate, or survivors/family/friends may sue a person/author if their work opens them (through their relationship with the dead person) up to ridicule.

Truth in Memoir

- It's possible that what you remember and share can be hurtful to other people
- It is also possible that when you write about private individuals / private citizens that you open yourself up invasion of privacy lawsuits – even if what you are writing is true.



What Is Truth? What is Accuracy

Types of Accuracy

- Factual Truth
- Emotional Truth



Factual Truth

Objective

- Recorded or documented events
- Documented records – government records (birth certificates, death certificates)
- Documented transcripts – court transcripts, multi-source news stories

Accuracy Can Be Measured or Seen

- Letters, diaries, or journals
- Photographs
- Original art

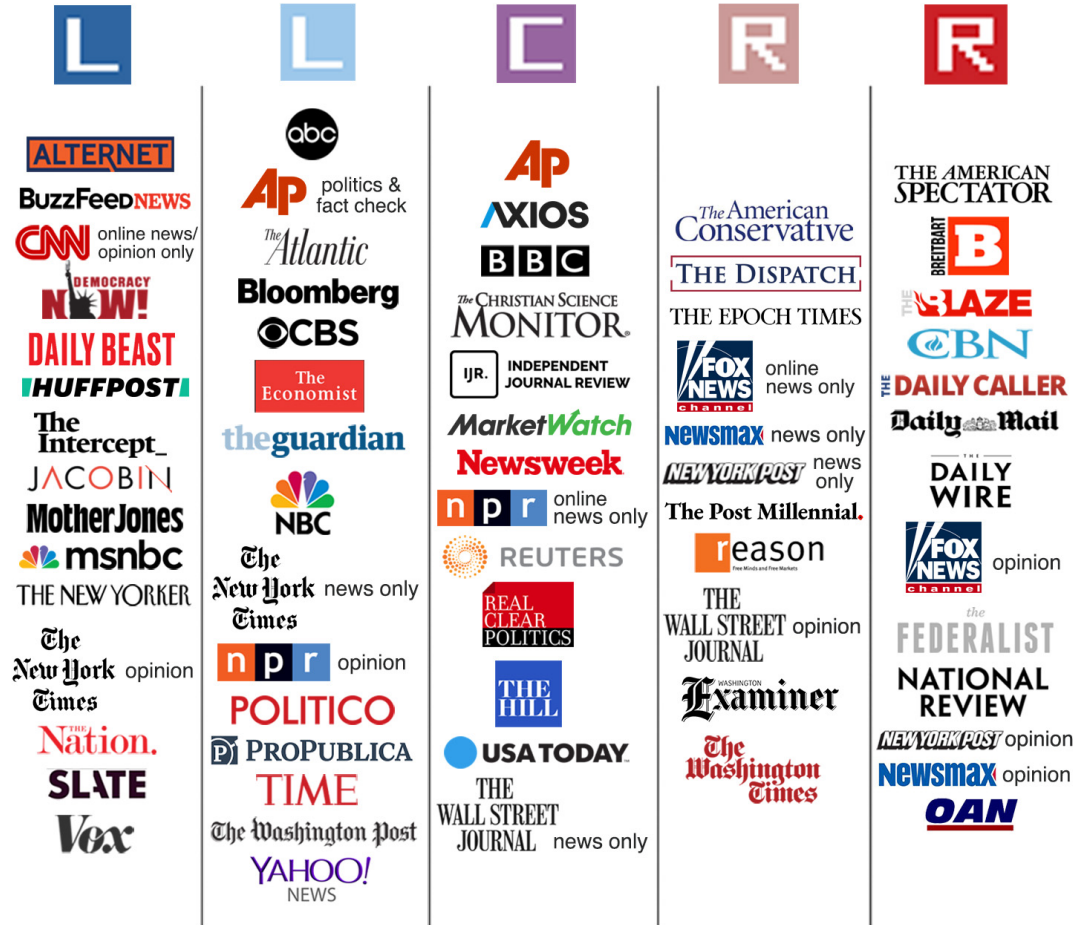
News Media Bias

Perspective

Left / Center / Right

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L LEFT L LEAN LEFT C CENTER R LEAN RIGHT R RIGHT

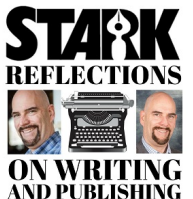
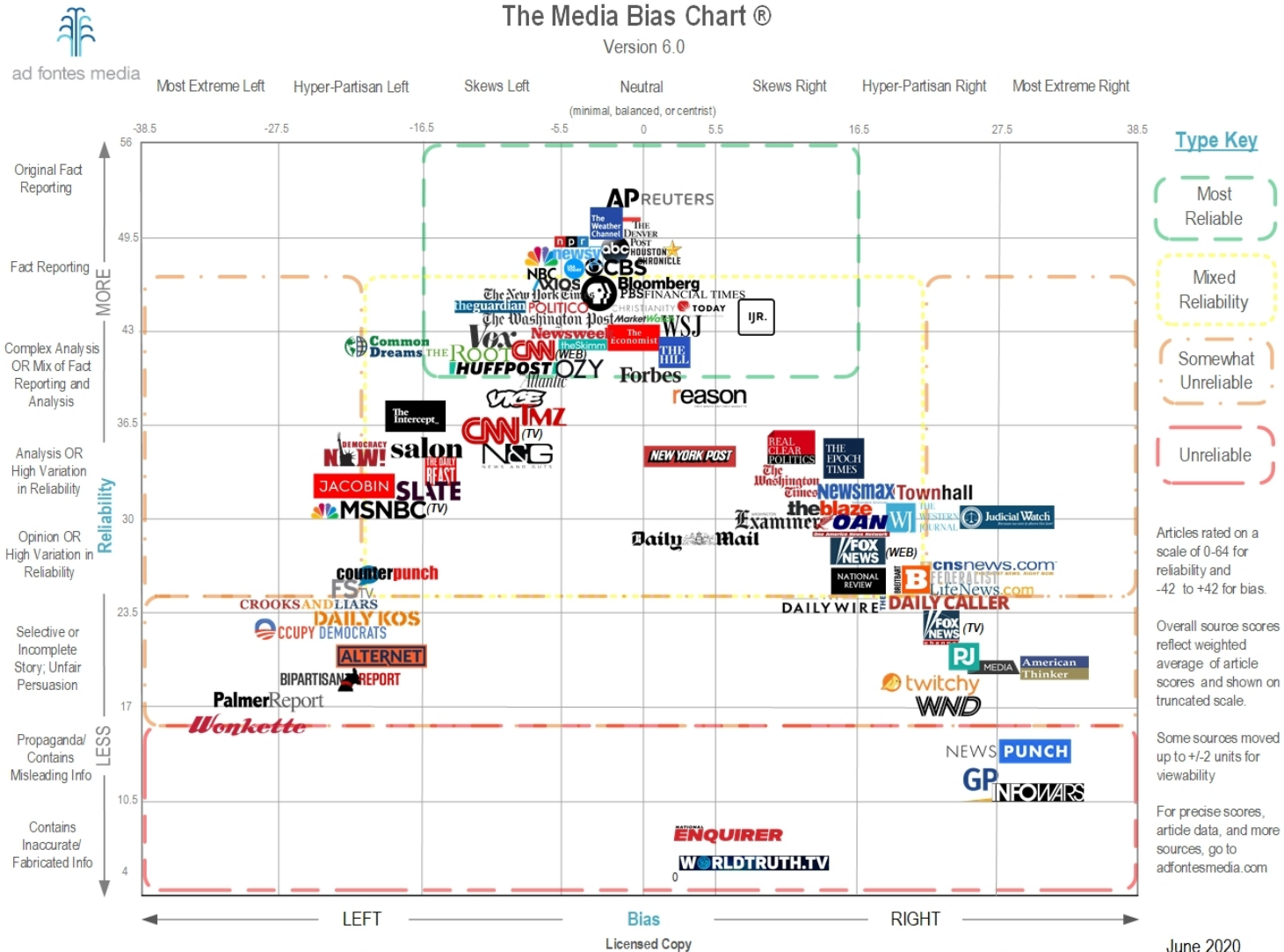
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News Media Bias

Left / Center / Right

Combined wit:
Factual Reporting
VS Fabricated



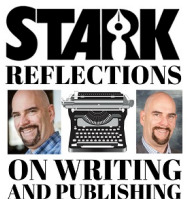
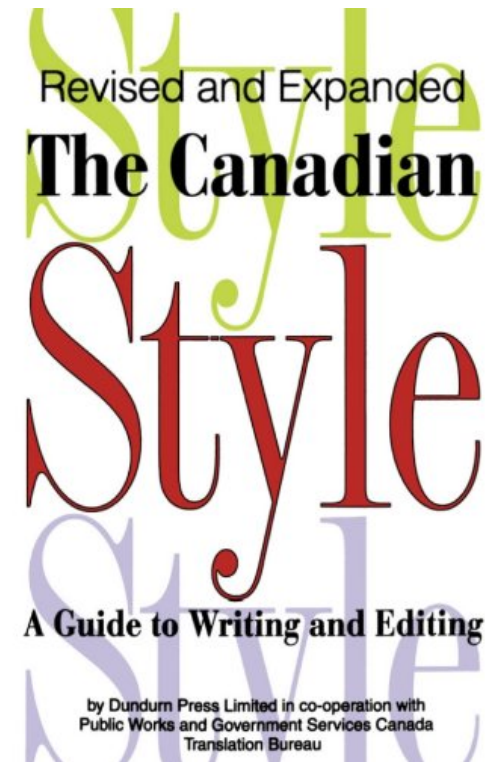
Factual Truth

Factual truth can work at helping to ground or solidify a story in a time and place

Use citations where applicable.

Attribution

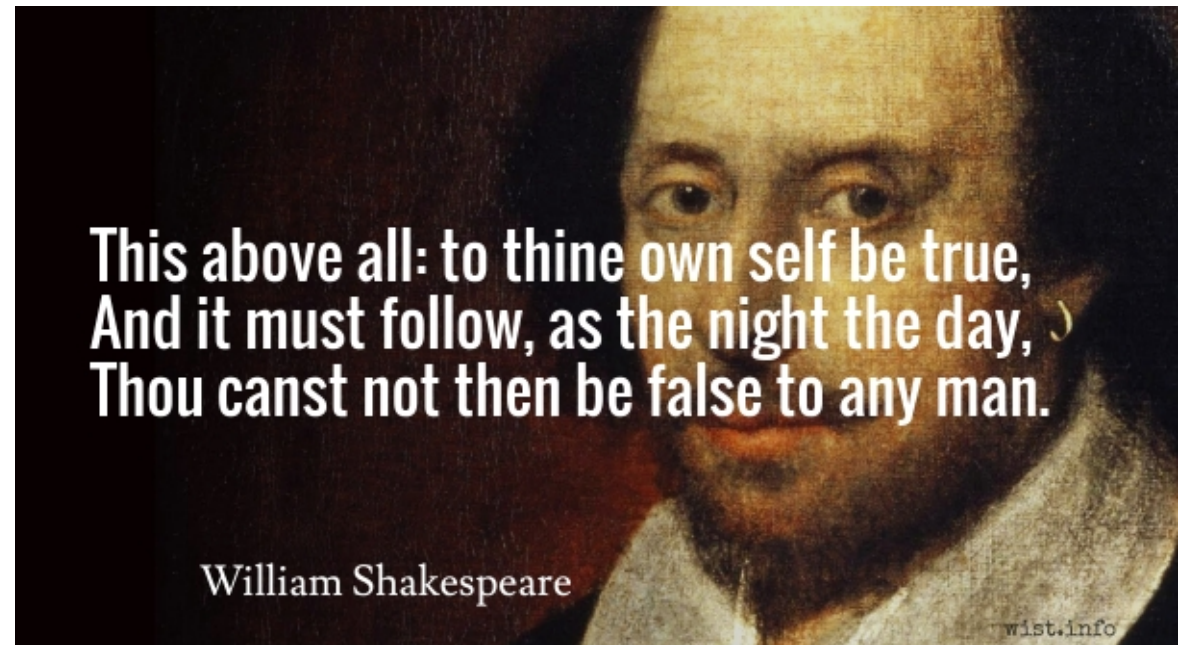
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Emotional Truth

Subjective / Based on KNOWING something to be true

- Memories
- Feelings and impressions
- Opinions and perspectives
- Personal beliefs



Emotional Truth

When presenting emotional truth, be sure that you are expressing these truths as your perspective of a particular moment/scene/occurrence rather than as hard factual truths.

Use language that denotes this is **your** memory of something, or **your** impression of a conversation, situation you witnessed.

- “**I remember that** my father always seemed to have a both a cigarette and a beer bottle within easy reach.”
- “According to my Baba, Uncle Joe was an angry man who couldn’t be reasoned with when he was in one of his *moods*.”

Respect

- Different people have different tolerances for privacy
 - Example: Mark (open) & Liz (private)



Respect

- Not everyone is interested in being “immortalized” in someone else’s story
- Your memories/words/sharing could offend someone else

Thursday, December 11, 2014


Playing The Lemons You're Dealt

I was recently up at my Mom's house in Levack. I've been spending a lot of time there lately as I help her sort through some health issues.

Being back in my childhood room leaves plenty of space for introspection. This has been a particularly challenging year with twists and plot turns that I just didn't see coming. So one can imagine how that might lend itself towards engaging in self-reflection and looking back at my life. And, being in the home I grew up in, of course, comes with all kinds of physical props that can stir so many different memories.

But the other day I was fascinated with a particular piece of "art" that I had created when I was in Grade 12.

It was a piece of art I called *Second Excalibur*.



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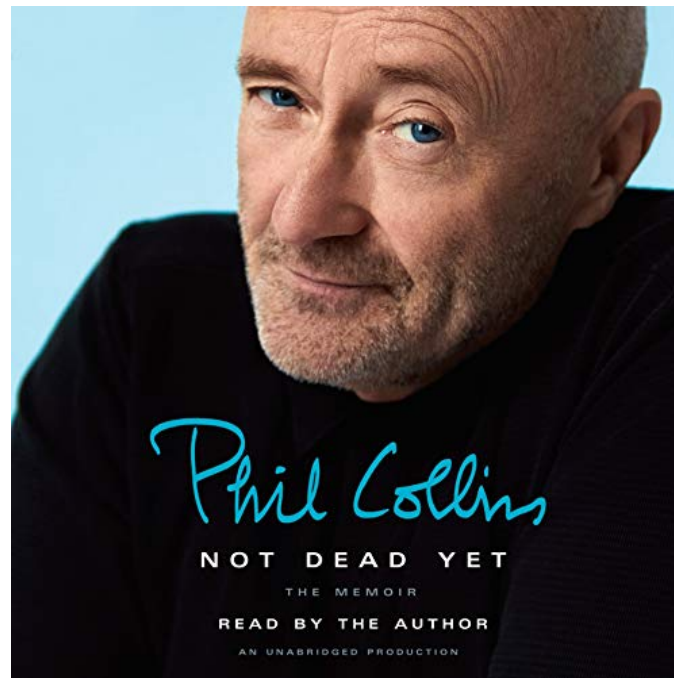


An unexpected twist or plot-turn might, at first, seem to be a negative thing. But are there things that can be gained as you head down that new path? Do those twists take you somewhere new where you can discover things you might not have been able to see before?

You, of course, need to have your eyes open and look for those opportunities; inspiration can come from what might otherwise be considered a bad turn.

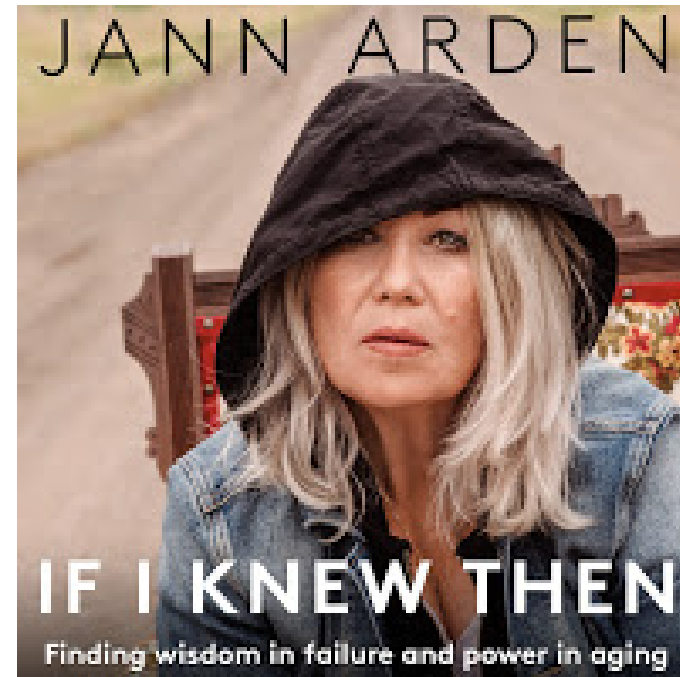
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Respect

- If a person is no longer living, you might be able to write more honestly/authentically about them
- But consider how your memoir might affect them in memoriam – their legacy, their reputation
- How might it affect living family members?



Permission

- Look at sharing your story with anybody who is included in it so that they can give you their approval for their appearance in your work

Permission

- Consider whether or not you should create some sort of waiver

Weird Waterloo Story Submission Form

Please note that by entering and submitting this information you are providing full permission for use of the story in the book WEIRD WATERLOO by Mark Leslie.

The book will include true ghostly, strange, weird and unexplained or unsolved mysteries that take place in Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo and the greater Waterloo region.

Submissions are not guaranteed to be used and they may be edited for clarity and brevity.

Previous books from Dundurn by Mark Leslie include HAUNTED HAMILTON, SPOOKY SUDBURY, TOMES OF TERROR, CREEPY CAPITAL and HAUNTED HOSPITALS. They can be found here: <https://www.dundurn.com/authors/Mark-Leslie>

Your Name *

Email *

Phone Number

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I certify that the story submitted here is true or understood to be true to the best of my knowledge. I also agree that the authors and their publisher may reproduce, distribute, publish, display, edit, modify, create derivative works of and otherwise use the material in the creation and promotion of WEIRD WATERLOO, with attribution of the story to be note as outlined in my personal preferences selected above. *

I Agree to the Terms as stated above

Options: Respect Boundaries

- Only include details and memories about others that actually add to or enhance your story
- Change or limit the use of actual names in memories
 - “The first girl who broke my heart at the age of twelve.”
 - VS
 - “Nancy Drew, who mysteriously broke my heart at the age of 12.”

Options: Adapt Memoir into Fiction

- Use pseudonym
- Change real names into made up names
- Don't just make Mark into Marcel and Elsie into Eliza – REALLY change the names so they aren't recognizable
- Change identity, sex, nationality, race, religion
- Memoir of a naval officer – change regimen, location of where something happened, etc

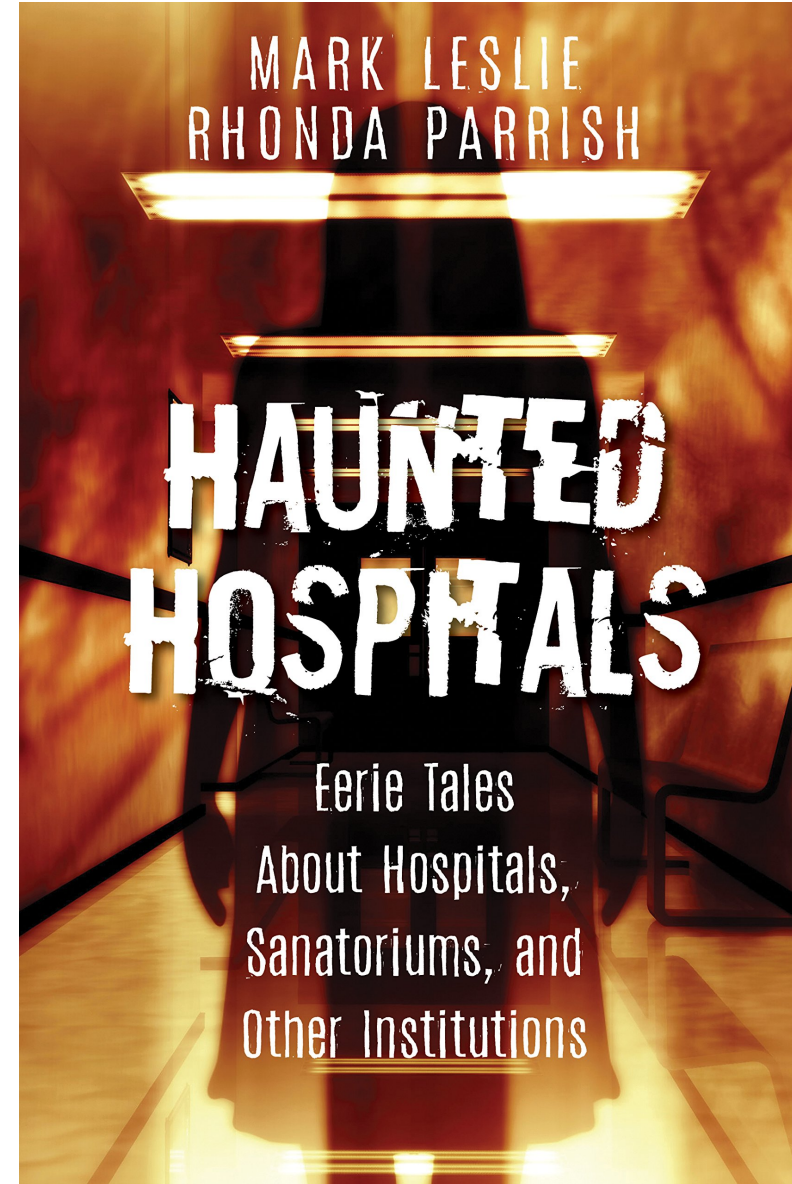
Examples

- Mistake made
- Cursed house in Chelmsford



Examples

- Changed name
- Cursed woman in Ponoka



Discussion

Potential Resources

- <https://starkreflections.ca/?s=memoir>
- <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/tag/memoir/>

