

## Article 12 – The Journey

By now you've moved on from the struggle of those early chapters and bravely allowed yourself to be taken on the writing journey. Your synopsis, and your original novel idea, as well as your carefully constructed chapter summary and breakdown, though still generally relevant, have had to move over and take second place to something else. You, too, have had to realise that if this novel, this piece of fiction is going to have any relevance and significance, that you will have to open your mind and your heart to the voices of the characters that you initially created and named. To build on the metaphors of the earlier articles, the embryo, has grown into a living being, and even before it is born, is beginning to show signs of individuality. Any pregnant woman will tell you how unpredictable the baby she is carrying is. That baby kicks when it chooses, turns when it chooses, causes discomfort when it chooses. More than that, it will not be dictated to, or be forced into doing what it doesn't want. How many times did I want my baby to kick for the benefit of an enthusiastic observer? How often did I, and my companion, stare in vain at my protruding stomach, waiting for a sign of life? Even prenatal, the baby had a mind of its own.

And so it is with this novel you are writing. Having decided that the characters have minds of their own, and motivations that are deeper than you initially expected, you cannot force them to act or speak in ways that just don't suit. And the beauty of it all is, that once you truly accept this, and surrender to the characters you named and put onto paper, the deeper joy of writing fiction can really begin.

When I embark upon a new project, I do so because I am drawn by the subject matter and the effect I suppose it has on people or groups of people. But having written several novels, I am now conscious of my own need to learn, and to better understand the mechanisms of behaviour and society.

In the first section of the novel, we built the foundations; we used our structure to get our story off the ground. This, the journey, is the middle section of the novel; this is the place where the novel is a journey of discovery, not only for the reader, but for the writer too. This is where the plot unfolds, the characters, deepen, and where we, as writers are lifted into a higher level of consciousness, that at times is exciting, and at times, frightening. This is the place where writers talk about 'the guidance of the muse'. This is about surrendering the ego, being humble enough to know you don't know everything. This is about trusting the process.

At this point in the novel it might be a good idea to write in a stream of consciousness fashion. Allow yourself an overdose of free association, and ask yourself 'what if' and see what answers come to mind. Some writers will filter the answers, analyse them, and already have edited them before putting them into the story. You don't have to do this. At this stage, and especially as a novice novelist, be as wordy as you like. Write it all, every syllable. You can always edit later.

Fay Weldon, of 'She Devil' fame, is a great believer in this type of writing. She says, (I paraphrase) that the first draft of her novel is full of ideas – right brain work. She only allows the left brain to take over after she has reached the end. To allow yourself to edit and censor as you go along, is to deny yourself a large part of your creativity. You can always trim a story, tighten it up, but when you've reached the end of a novel, it is much harder to pad it out, and deepen it in retrospect.

Perhaps when you've written more, you can become more discerning, but do not filter out or scrap ideas because you see them as having no value, or being silly. You know the kind of ideas I mean. They spring to mind, only to be followed by a 'don't be daft' whisper from one of those internal voices.

When I wrote *The Cloths of Heaven*, I had my doubts about my priest, and his motivations, and several times I thought of NOT writing him the way I did. No one would believe it, I thought. What a scandal, to say such things about a priest. And so on, and so on. But I had to move beyond this, I had to continue trusting 'the muse'. Now, after publication of my novel, with my less than palatable priest, a scandal has broken in Ireland - about priests and their unholy fondness for children. I know now, that 'my muse' knew what it was doing, and I am glad I listened, and somehow had the courage to write the priest in an unpleasant situation.