

Article 2 – From Embryo to Foetus

So there it was. My ideas were as good as anyone else's, and it was OK for my inspiration to shoot out of everyday, dare I say, mundane events. And once that notion took root, it was as though the universe decided to work with me. Events came together; information reached me through gossip, television, chats over dinner, and an anthology of poetry.

I should count myself blessed to be Irish, even though I haven't lived there for over sixteen years. Ireland is the land of storytellers. There is an atmosphere in Ireland that is found nowhere else I've been. The air trills with a suppressed passion. And because of the restraints of the church there is always the hint that one day people will stand up and scream that they are going to break free, and hang the consequences. I feel it immediately I step off the plane, and time and again I feel driven to write about it.

After a four-year absence, I decided to go home to Ireland and spend some time with my family, especially my brother, who has CP. Since his birth I have felt a special bond with him; at times I think I can feel what he feels. And on this occasion, I felt his frustration and his longing to be heard, to be understood and moreover, to be taken seriously. That was my motivation – to give him a voice. And I wanted that voice to be heard, and to capture the hearts' of eventual readers, and the only way to do that was to wrap his existence into a page turning piece of fiction. That was the driving force behind this novel.

But knowing that I wanted to give my brother a voice, and knowing that the best way to do that was through fiction, was not a plot, was not a story. But it was a great motivator. It was the reason my mind 'tuned in' to my surroundings. All I had to do have faith and trust that the snippets of information I picked up would, if given the chance, fit together like a jig saw puzzle. As it happens I didn't have to wait long for the first thread of a plot to present itself.

We were sitting around the dinner table one evening chatting, and the topic that was on the tip of everyone's tongue was the recent scandal involving the Catholic Church, in particular the less than honourable behaviour displayed by some priests. I was all ears. The butterflies in my stomach told me that this would be an important element in my plot development.

But there needed to be more. I needed a protagonist, someone to link the disabled and the able worlds. I wanted a totally contrasting figure to the narrator, someone to link all the characters, someone large and exciting enough to carry the desires and dreams of the disabled narrator. And at that moment, I was given a copy of Yeats' poetry anthology, with a short bio, wherein Maud Gonne was introduced.

Maud Gonne - who was the inspiration for the exquisite love poem – He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven. Immediately, I had a name for this protagonist, and a title for the book.

The Cloths of Heaven was taking shape. The sources of inspiration were normal and nothing spectacular of themselves. They did not come to me in a vision (though if this happens, great!). I did not have to visit an exotic location, or be exposed to extraordinary events. I was inspired, because I believed that EVERYTHING is potentially inspiring. My source of inspiration and the method I employ to use what happens around me, is unique to me, just as Anne Rice and Maeve Binchy each has her own source and method.

Okay, the inspiration was there. I had three characters, the pivot to the plot. I had the situation, and the environment, and I had the setting. Remembering what I had learned from reading How-to books on writing. I decided I wanted a character-based book, letting their psychological development steer the plot. I knew too, that for a book to come to life there is one element that cannot be omitted – the element of conflict. But there are several types of conflict. Inner conflict. Conflict between individuals. But, there is also the universal conflict of man against his surroundings. I was determined to incorporate all three.

And that would be the arms and legs, and the beating heart of this story.

