

The basis of my topic has been to take the myth out of novel writing.

I have repeatedly reminded you that you don't have to live a huge glamorous life in order to be inspired. In fact, even the most fantastic experience, the most extravagant happening will fall flat if the writing of it is done without the connection to your heart, and to your spirit. Truly great writing will shine through the saddest of grammar, the most limited of vocabulary. All these things can be fixed and improved upon - they are the mechanics and can be learned.

What cannot be learned, what must be felt is the passion. It takes courage to write truly inspiring prose.

Until now I have based my topic on my novel *The Cloths of Heaven*. Here I include an excerpt from another of my novels (not yet published) *Trash Fire*.

You can see here that I have used perfectly normal events, and made them special by attaching my emotion to them.

Enjoy.

"MOVING ON

Madeline led her out to the car. Have you ever been in the heart of Connemara before? She asked.

Julie shook her head. Only to Clifden, but then everybody has been to Clifden.

You'll love our farm. Utterly isolated, but with the advantage of electricity, and good sanitation. We grow our own vegetables, of course, and never eat meat. Bread we bake, though we do buy the flour from the health food store in town.

And Julie did love it. She loved the smell of the peat and the dew in the early morning, fresh and vitalising. She loved the sight of the mauve mist over the black velvet mountains. She loved the feel of the damp, cold grass beneath her naked feet. And when she listened carefully she could hear the bleating sheep on a distant valley and the trickle of the mountain stream. Peace at last.

She helped in the vegetable garden, plucking the weeds from between the onion shoots. She hoed the thick, compacted soil loose so new crops could be planted. She harvested the beans and carrots, the food they would eat in the evenings.

She thought of her own garden, back home. Hers and only hers. The only gardening Dick did was mowing the lawn and then only on the sunniest of days. And because the mowing was his task he had purchased a motor mower for himself. He had wanted to buy one that he could sit on, and steer, so that all he had to do was take care that he drove in a straight line, and gulp beer from a can.

He didn't. He feared he might look a fool for the neighbours who still pushed their hand mowers and raked the grass into neat piles afterwards. Instead he bought a Flymo with a grass collector and generally took no longer than fifteen minutes to trim their suburban patch of grass. When he was finished he lounged under the parasol in his cushioned recliner and read the paper while drops of perspiration dribbled down his neck and under his white cotton shirt.

And while Dick recovered from his exertion, Julie weeded and thinned and fertilised her vegetable patch at the back of the garden where the sun shone its finest and the hedgerows gave protection from the west wind. She planned to replace the hedgerows next season with some gooseberry bushes that would serve the same purpose but be much more practical. She fancied cultivating a strawberry patch too, and eventually a small vine to creep along the fence that separated her garden from the one next door, on the sunny side of course.

A shadow fell over her. Julie looked up to see Madeline blocking out the sun. She smiled.

You seem to know what you're doing, Madeline remarked.

I learned it from my mother, Julie said. It's still a hobby of mine.

The garden, its produce, her grubby hands and nails blackened with soil, all transported her back to when her mother lived, and chattered and tended her vegetables. Past mingled with present. Mother returned to Julie's mind and heart."

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