

The Quandary of L'Imponderable
Friday 16th March 2018

As I write this, less than one day before the release of the sixth (!) book in the Hugo Duchamp series, I am reminded how each time a book comes out I am convinced it is the worst yet and that no-one is going to enjoy it. I'm reminded primarily because I've hit page 400 in the next book and I've come to the dreaded point where the delete button seems my only option. But then I looked at the gorgeous promo poster for 'L'Imponderable' and was taken back to when I was at the same point in writing that one. I did delete it. Twice. I would have done it a third time but life overtook me and I decided to stick with it. Those who have read it say its the best one yet, which is great and I was flattered for like a few seconds until me being me, my next thought was, 'what was wrong with the others if this is so much better?'

Writing is a lonely business and it's easy to get lost in what goes on around you, caught up in a mismatch of is such-and-such a book better than mine, or is it worse? Ultimately, neither matters. When I really decided to give the Hugo series a go after a long break from writing, my only stipulation was to do it for me, to write a book I might enjoy with characters who felt real and were flawed. As you probably know by now, I only wrote the first chapter as a sort of joke, pretending to write but for some reason Hugo and Montgenoux weren't satisfied with just one chapter. Could I have done it better? Absolutely. Would I go back and change things? Nope. An editor from a big publishing house read 'Un homme qui attend' and said it had potential to be a best seller but to do so there would have to be certain changes. I think you know where I'm going here. The implication was not so much as Hugo's personal life should be eradicated but perhaps sanitised, implied even, but not so forefront to the stories. That may be so, but that's a job for another writer. I don't pretend to receive divine inspiration when I write these books, but I most certainly believe my only talent as a writer is to listen to the characters and the story and not try to please to someone else. That is why, when I am asked a lot (and I mean a lot!) why Ben isn't in some of the stories very much the reason is very simple. It's because he's not in that story very much! To shoehorn him in would feel wrong and a bit fake, so, if he has a part to play then Ben will always be by Hugo's side and I'm happy with that. I'm also happy with these cast of characters who can come and go as need be and as each book goes by we might find a little more about them, to learn about their past, to dislike them at one time and love them another.

So back to the reason for this blog, L'imponderable. The story came to me very easily. Two sets of identical twins and the discovery of a skeleton on the Beaupain vineyard. That was it. I wrote that exact sentence in the Hugo bible and from that came nearly 600 pages and a story spanning thirty years. The idea for the time difference was inspired by another series of books I had been planning (and ultimately abandoned, for now at least) which was a sort of history of this town I've created, Montgenoux. As I started thinking about it, it all made perfect sense and the bones of the story fell into place very quickly. We get to see Hugo unravelling a mystery nobody wants him to and there is a murder of a major character. This character was always going to die, I knew it from book two and I knew their death was going to have major repercussions on the rest of the characters. I hope you get it. The other major thing was my decision not to have a cliffhanger in this one. Now, as you may know if you've read the other five books, I'm a boy who loves his cliffhangers but in this one another ending felt much better, like the tying up of loose ends, and also because, the further we get on in the series it has become more and more evident by comments I have received that stand alone novels are much easier to market and often more satisfying to readers who don't want to feel as if they can't dip in and out of a series. Pick up a Poirot book, for example, and you can pretty much read them in any order you choose. So because of that I thought, for the next book at least, I would try something different. All that being said, and me being me, don't be surprised if I completely ignore my own advice and book 7 has another corker of a cliffhanger. I like them so I suspect they will return and all I can hope is that readers new and old come along for the ride with me. I've been incredibly lucky with a little old indie published book gaining a following and loyal and devoted readers from all over the world. I never expected it and do not take it for granted.

It seems odd to me now that 'L'imponderable' has a nice ending when considering my own life took a devastating turn just as I finished. I can't say a lot about it as it's still too raw for me, but perhaps it was his parting gift?

Gary