

the lighter for him for his Christmas box. But the more she tried to make him hear, the deafer Hughie got. Then he went to lift his blackthorn stick again, and Lizzie got into a panic. She raced for the door, and nearly had it open. But Hughie was too quick for her this time. Before she could get the door open wide enough, he came charging after her. I don't believe he rightly knew what he was doing. "Stop there, you whore!" he roared, and he lashed out with his stick. He maybe didn't know where he was aiming. Whether or not, he swung out fierce and wild, and he hit Lizzie a hard wallop over the head. She was down on the ground with the blood gushing out of her before either of them knew what was happening. It was enough to bring Hughie to his senses. Next thing he'd dropped the old stick, and down on his knees beside Lizzie, bawling like a wean, and trying to get Lizzie to speak to him. But man dear, it was a bit late in the day for that. For all that, he went on trying, the tears streaming down his face. And there Sarah found him, when she went over to borrow a taste of sugar a bit later. They had Lizzie away to the hospital in an ambulance, as soon as Sarah got her wits about her and went out to the phone box to call for help. But for all the good it did, she needn't have bothered. Lizzie recovered consciousness enough to speak to Sarah in the ambulance, but she soon lapsed again, and she was dead the same night. When the peelers came round for Hughie, he was still sitting on the floor where Sarah had left him. Folks reckoned Hughie was lucky. He got off with a lifer, on account of the jury thought it had been halfway to an accident. But it was all one to Lizzie what he got. It didn't make a tap of difference to her. Or to Hughie, for that matter. I don't think he was ever right in the head afterwards. He died in prison." My great uncle Jimmy paused and looked past me out of the window, at the hills shining in the distance, where the day lay dying, its life spreading out in great gouts of blood across the sky. "I mind Lizzie White on her wedding day," Jimmy said. "A good-looking girl she was. And that happy." He sighed, and looked back at me. "Time we turned the lights on. Day's nearly over, now. The dark's coming on." I said, "It wouldn't happen like that nowadays. Things have changed. No girl would stay with a brute like that today. They probably wouldn't be married, anyway." "Married or not, what's the difference?" said Jimmy. "There's many a man still like Hughie White. Full of anger and jealousy, not to be changed barring a miracle. But the real trouble was Lizzie herself. A nice wee girl. And that fond of Hughie." Jimmy sighed heavily. He peered past me out of the window again. "Lizzie wanted to make a go of it with Hughie. She wouldn't have gone back to him, whatever her Ma said, if she hadn't really wanted to. "In spite of it all, and brute though he was, thon Big Hughie White, the one thing that couldn't be changed was this. Lizzie, poor foolish wee girl, couldn't get rid of the idea she had in her head. She still thought she was in love with him."

reviews

Crimson and Clover

Over the coming months, **Tammy Moore** will take a look at some of the local publishers in Ireland and Northern Ireland – just what are they looking for? In part one she takes a look at women's fiction, and the independent Irish publisher, Poolbeg.



Of course, the hard part is writing the book. You can spend months writing it and then editing it and then editing it again and then finding out on the final - definitely this time, I mean it - draft that one of your characters disappears midway through without any explanation. Still, eventually you finish. Now what?

Do you send the novel to an agent? Or do you send it to a publisher? An independent publisher? Genre or generalist? Which is the best path for you to take? I can't answer that for you – although there are good reasons to get an agent first, especially in the current publishing climate – but what I hope to highlight in this series of articles is what the options are.

For women's fiction in Ireland the place to go is Poolbeg. Although Poolbeg started its life as a publisher of children's books and non-fiction, today it publishes women's fiction of all types – from the psychological horror of *Sleep Softly Baby* by Carol McGill to the quirky romantic adventures of Anne Marie Forrest's *Rose Kiely*. Women's Fiction makes up roughly 70% of what Poolbeg publishes.

Publisher Paula Campbell has been at Poolbeg for eight years and is confident that there is a thriving market for women's fiction out there. 'The labels don't matter. Whether you call it chick-lit or hen-lit, what matters is that the readers call it a good story. Chick-lit was short lived because its target market evolved out of their niche – they married or divorced, they juggled jobs and children and pets and they want to read about heroines whose experience reflect their own. Meanwhile another group is evolving into the abandoned niche and although the lit might not be chick anymore there is still a market there.'

Poolbeg does have a defined brand, though. They don't want science-fiction or fantasy, or hardcore thrillers – although the Crimson band was created to allow Poolbeg to publish a darker style of novel without diluting their main brand. Other than that, 'make it fun, make it different and most importantly of all, make it good', says Paula. Poolbeg is a small Irish company, unlike

Penguin Ireland or Transworld it isn't owned in England, and although they all love books they can't afford to throw their resources behind any book that they don't believe in completely.

It's obvious that Paula is passionately invested in the books that Poolbeg has published under her watch. It's a small company, true, but any book that goes through Poolbeg is going to have the full support of the company behind it. Look at the Crimson imprint, only a few short months after its launch it's well on its way to becoming a household name.

At the time of this interview Paula had 55

manuscripts waiting to be read – more than enough to keep her going until Christmas. Perhaps next year some of those manuscripts will be books on shelves.

Poolbeg Recommendation

If you are thinking of submitting to Poolbeg keep an eye out for these upcoming titles for an idea of the type of titles they take:

Sharon Owens – *It Must Be Love*
Erin Kaye – *My Husband's Lover*
Carol Coffey – *Butterfly State*
Aileen McCallan – *A World of Our Own*

BRIAN MOORE SHORT STORY AWARDS

This competition is open to everyone of Irish descent and residents of Northern Ireland. This year's judge is Richard Bausch, one of America's foremost short story writers, who will be presenting the awards in Belfast in May 2009

Three prizes of £750, £300, and £200 are offered. Winner will be published in Verbal Magazine, going out to 100,000 homes across Northern Ireland; runners up will be published in our quarterly magazine, Ulla's Nib.

The competition is open until 1st March 2009. The word limit is 2000 and the entrance fee is £5 per story, with a discount for subscribers to our magazine, Ulla's Nib. Online submission and payment is available, along with full details, on our website:

www.creativewritersnetwork.org

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