

## **On Little Island Press *from* Good on Paper (Feb 2016)**

*by Leah Grant*

I never turn down an opportunity to visit Stroud Brewery. Never. Even if I've drawn the short straw and find myself twiddling my car keys as I ponder the brewery's non-alcoholic selection, I'm still happy to be there, soaking up the atmosphere of one of Stroud's most successful independent businesses. It seems inevitable then, that on a cold evening in late-November I should find myself huddled on the brewery's rustic deck interviewing the co-founder of another of Stroud's ambitious start-ups, Little Island Press - a new literary publisher that, coincidentally, has more than just independence in common with my favourite haunt.

Officially established in January this year, Little Island Press began life as a quarterly journal promoting poetry and cultural criticism. Now, as a small literary publisher, the business adds non-fiction and international works of translation to its portfolio whilst continuing to advocate the work of emerging and established poets: "In today's current publishing market we wanted to focus on tactility and books that lasted," explains the company's managing editor Andrew Latimer, "especially as a lot of poetry publication is based around ephemeral pamphlets." With the help of his business partner Jessica Kelly, the pair have decided to concentrate their current efforts on three collectable series - Budding New Poets, Memento and Transits - creating aesthetically pleasing hardback books that aptly mirror the quality of the writing within them: "I think the more stuff becomes digital, the more people are starting to realise that reading is a three dimensional experience, there's the smell of the book, there's everything that goes with it that you forget when you're in the voyeuristic zone of just looking at the screen. That's why we are committed to the printed book and especially bringing poetry into print because I personally don't find poetry satisfying to read on the computer."

Both the Budding series (cleverly named after Edwin Beard Budding, the Stroud-born inventor of the lawnmower and - perhaps even more prestigiously - the namesake to Stroud Brewery's Budding Pale Ale) and the Memento series deal exclusively with poetry. Whilst the latter focuses on the work of established poets who have posthumously fallen out of public consciousness ("I often choose the Memento poets based on a quality that I feel the poet possesses that maybe contemporary poetry lacks, so it's like reinvigorating the soil of the work produced at present..."), the former works as a foot ladder for new poets intent on making a name for themselves ("So many people are published on tiny presses or do it themselves and they just don't go anywhere. I've had a few friends who have done it and it's just the most anti-climactic thing in your life..."). Andrew's passion for poetry is evident in the compilation of these two series, but his motivation to give this art form greater prominence extends much further than just publishing new and existing work with talks of a possible mentorship scheme between experienced and early-career poets in the pipeline as well.

Under the Transits banner, Little Island Press will publish literature in translation – a skill that, whilst intrinsically creative, is often under-appreciated and one that Andrew and Jessica are keen to promote. Initially, the business will focus on translating Estonian literature ("...it's just been untouched for so long. When the Iron Curtain came up not much really came out of Estonia into English...") and there's one particular project that has really got Andrew excited - the translation of Anton Tammsaare's career-defining pentalogy, *Truth and Justice*: "We've got a really good translator from America who is due to be working on that quite soon. It will take about a year to do the first volume and then we will be bringing out a new volume every year."

The next twelve months may prove to be the most exciting to date for the new publisher as Andrew and Jessica ready themselves to release their first five titles - four poetry collections from the Memento series and one from Budding

New Poet, Freddie Mason. It is this slow yet considered approach to publishing that epitomises Little Island Press and gives readers confidence in the titles they intend to publish; even their name – Little Island Press - is a well-thought-out representation of the business Andrew and Jessica hope to create: “We incorporated the ‘little’ into our name in order to reference the so-called little magazines of the early twentieth century, such as The Dial, The Little Review and The Criterion. These were admirable enterprises that sprouted up in the US and UK around the 1920s, which published without concern for immediate commercial gain but that housed the likes of Joyce, Hemingway and T.S. Eliot before the big publishers took on such writers many years later. The publishing world is full of diminutive miracles – small magazines or presses that punch well above their weight. We are just one more such venture that intends to keep the voice of independent publishing vital and ubiquitous.”

In a town known for its small, independent businesses and one with a particular affection for those who think outside the box, Little Island Press will undoubtedly be taken to Stroud’s heart and could even become its next big success story.

- If you would like to submit your work for consideration for publication by Little Island Press or to find out more about their collections due for release in 2016, please visit their website: [www.littleislandpress.co.uk](http://www.littleislandpress.co.uk)
- To keep up-to-date on all their latest news, follow Little Island Press on social media: @L\_I\_Press or facebook.com/littleislandpress