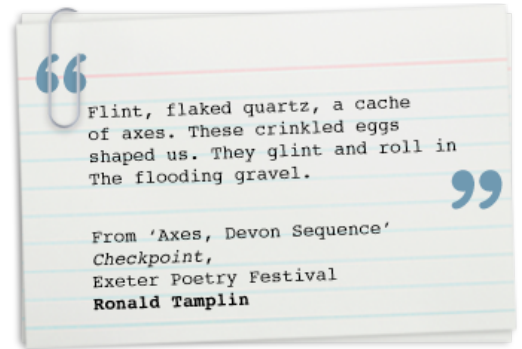




Good Afternoon! It's Tuesday on March 01, 2011.

Literature for everyone in the South West



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South West Writer Profile: Jill Mansell



Jill Mansell is one of this country's top selling female fiction authors and she has sold five million copies of her books worldwide. She's been writing full-time since 1992, although that's not strictly true; she watches TV, eats fruit gums, admires rugby players in the field behind her house, and spends hours on the internet marvelling at how many other writers have blogs. Only when she's completely run out of displacement activities does she write. She lives in Bristol.

Cyprus Well caught up with Jill recently to ask her about her work and writing in general.

On your website it says "only when she's completely run out of displacement activities does she write"! Can you tell us about your typical working day once the displacements are banished! Do you have a particular writing place where you work, a set number of words per day, and so on?

I am a huge procrastinator when it comes to writing, as are most of my writer friends, but the fact remains that if you don't finish the book, your publisher isn't going to pay you any money. So one way or another, we have to get it done! Basically, I do the school run in the morning, then come home and check emails, sort out paperwork and deal with the non-fiction aspects of my work. (Writing this article, for example, will take me several hours. I'm dreadfully slow!) Once that's done, I'll start writing. I use A4 Pukka Pads and a Harley Davidson fountain pen. For me, I can only create fiction when I'm writing by hand. Six hundred handwritten pages make up a book, then my daughter types it up and sends it off to my agent and editor. I do have to pay her for this! I aim to write five pages a day, roughly 1,000 words, but some days are easier than others. I'm contracted to produce a book a year. All writers have different methods, but this works for me, so I stick to it. I sit on the sofa in the living room with my feet up on the coffee table, and write by hand. Or I may stay in bed and write. I always have the TV on, and borrow ideas for my stories from items I see on programmes like This Morning and Oprah. I couldn't listen to music – that would be far too distracting!

Has writing become easier, the more books you have written, or does it get more demanding?

I've written twenty three books now, and it's getting harder to come up with plot-strands I haven't used before. Every brilliant new idea I think of seems to have been done in previous books. You just have to tackle them in a fresh way, I suppose, and make sure the outcome is sufficiently different the next time! I also struggle to think of new names for my characters, because readers love to tell me when I've duplicated them. If I were organised I would have kept a list...

You mention in an interview that you love the Jack Reacher novels, and thrillers in general – are you ever tempted to give the genre a go?

I'm going to stick to what I know! I greatly admire authors who can write thrillers and murder mysteries, but could never write one myself. The joy of romantic comedy is that you always know there'll be a happy ending. I plot as I go along, making up new characters and storylines along the way, and I don't think that would be possible if you wrote the Jack Reacher style of book!

What tips do you have for aspiring writers?

From my own experience, I would say write the kind of book you would want to read

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Literature Clips

Our patron, Helen Dunmore
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yourself. It's what worked for me. Also, don't get in a panic thinking you have to plot out an entire synopsis before you start – I never do that. If you write the first ten pages and enjoy it, just keep going. We're writers – we're allowed to make things up and change our minds if better ideas strike us along the way! Another tip is to create a timeline, so that once you've begun a story-strand, you won't forget to finish it!

At Cyprus Well we're trying to keep an eye on the digital developments in the publishing world – iPads, Kindles, etc – do you have any feelings about where this might all be heading?

It's all happening so fast, isn't it? I love proper books, but I also love my iPad. At the moment I'm using the iPad to read samples of books, so I can decide if I want to buy them in proper-book form. But if people are reading more as a result of all this amazing new technology, I'm all in favour of that.

Finally, any recommendations for good books to read that are coming out in 2011?

I haven't read it yet myself, but I've heard amazing things about *When God Was a Rabbit* by Sarah Winman and can't wait to get hold of it. Another is *Mennonite in a Little Black Dress* by Rhoda Janzen. I'm also looking forward to the new books by Veronica Henry, Katie Fforde, Christina Jones and Lisa Jewell. I could go on. So many books, so little time!

Thank you Jill!

www.jillmansell.co.uk

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