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Self publishing: two servants needed

In his review of a book on self publishing (publishing the self?), Julian Chancellor sagely observes that the really hard part is marketing and distribution. In the same issue we authors are warned, as so often, of the dangers of subsidy (or vanity) publishing.

Subsidy publishers do the whole job for us, charging dearly and taking no risk upon themselves. We take note that this is not the solution. Yet we yearn to be published, and are sick to death of publishers. They do not treat us right, and never have. If there were any justice, the author and originator would be in the driving seat. Whose work is it?

I write this letter in the experience of having had seven books published by commercial, not subsidy, publishers. Yet I have also written the same number of other books that commercial publishers have shown no interest in. Are they to be thrown away? I do not think so.

In relation to these latter by now I have grown a little tired of the telephone manners of those bright careless creatures who are employed by publishers yet do not realise they are ultimately paid by the slighted unheeded breed of authors. Mr So-and-So is at a meeting. I might tell him you called, and possibly he will be indulgent enough to call you back - if he can find the time and thinks it worth the effort. Meanwhile I have my giggling and flirting to do, my delectable mouth to paint, my boyfriend to ring for endless *quarts d'heures* on my employer's telephone and in my employer's time. So excuse me, won't you.

If the really hard part is marketing and distribution, if subsidies are out and publishers are indifferent, what is the poor author and originator to do? Self publishing is not the answer. I am a writer, and prefer to stick to that. It's what I'm experienced in, and good at.

What we need is *two* servants at our command.

One servant ('the producer') is responsible, under his author's close surveillance, for producing the required number of copies of the book: printing, binding, design, illustrations (if needed) and all. The other servant ('the distributor') is responsible, also under close surveillance, for distributing, marketing, and promoting the aforesaid copies. The author pays the producer. The distributor gets paid by results. Royalties are a thing of the past: the author pockets *all* the net proceeds.

There is no reason why one 'publisher' should do both these jobs, except to keep the poor author in subjugation. A person can earn a good living as a producer. A quite different person can earn a good living as a distributor. It's up to the author to organise it, perhaps through his or her guild or union. It need take very little of his or her time. These people are *experts* remember.

Under this arrangement, the author is in the boss seat and the 'publisher' is on the bread line. Hooray! Let's get to it. What's stopping us?