

22. Published?

It is not unusual that, though you've written a great synopsis and proposal concerning your novel, that publishers will reject you without having seen the novel itself. It is a highly competitive world and many authors never see their work in print. There are writers who, having set their hearts on being published, quit the writing business, feeling like failures. But the truth is that rejection, either on the strength of the synopsis or even after submission of sample chapters, is not necessarily an evaluation of the work. In fact, if you have chosen to write from your heart and emotion, and have not heeded the so called 'trends' you have possibly written a wonderfully original work but one that is a commercial risk to publishers whose own world grows increasingly competitive.

What to do? According to Dan Poynter this is the moment to take that huge leap of faith and go for it. Self-publish! It was after several rejections, and near misses, that I began to contemplate self-publishing *The Cloths of Heaven*. This story was so important to me; I had written it so that others might better understand what it was to grow up physically disabled in Ireland. If this book was not going to be published through regular channels it would either be totally forgotten or published through less usual methods.

I bought Dan Poynter's *Self Publishing Manual* and read about the various ways in which to self publish. You can go the 'whole hog', that is you can control the entire process from type setting, to printing, to designing and preparing the cover. That means arranging the printer, binder, being your own proof reader, typesetter, and more than that, having the means to store the books you produce, and the opportunity and skill to create sales, and deliver to the retail outlets. On top of all of that, you have to have energy and resources left over to promote and publicise this new book. Printing, binding, storage and distribution are costly. In order to work this way, without losing a lot of money you must be sure that you can find buyers for all the books you produce. Given that this is your first novel and given that it probably falls out of the regular category of novel that publishers know sell, it is not advisable to spend money that you need to earn back in the short run. This is a long term investment, and should not be done by remortgaging the house or borrowing from the kids savings' account!

The above was not what I wanted. Nor did I want to fall into the 'vanity' trap, where a company offers to produce 1000 copies of your book at a considerable price to you, and despite promises to the contrary, rarely gives much assistance when it comes to generating sales or attaining publicity for your work. Why should they? They have produced 1000 books with an immediate complete sell out! It's not their problem is it?

Another way of getting your book into print and at a reasonable cost to you is the POD method, or Print On Demand. Several companies offer this service, and for as little as 100 dollars your book will be printed and bound as a trade paperback. For the 100 dollars your book will be produced, you will receive at least 5 complementary copies, and your book will be added to the online catalogues of the better known internet bookstores. That's actually not bad. But, don't expect much more than that because then your in for a disappointment. Any promotion will be done by you, and for any author events, signings and the like, you will have to purchase your own books, (at a discount but non returnable) and set up the event. If you want your book reviewed by newspapers or magazines, you again will have to purchase the book first in order to do so. But, your book is in print, and all your friends and family and other interested parties can buy it. You will at least be able to share your work with everyone you wish. If you are really lucky then you will sell to people you don't know either by having the book reviewed and so creating an interest, or by introducing yourself to readers groups on the internet (when hopefully the group members will buy the book themselves on the internet). But don't expect miracles, and don't expect to give up the day job, because sales will be slow, and you will not have a bestseller overnight. What you will have is the pleasure of seeing your work bound in a cover, and the satisfaction of having it read by a wider audience.