**Holly:** [00:00:00] Hi, you are listening to the Indie Bookshelf Podcast with me, Holly, and me Amy, as we champion the indie book industry from independent authors and publishers to independent bookshops. We have a range of literary discussions and book recommendations to indulge your love for all things bookish.

**Aimee:** The Indie Bookshelf Podcast is brought to you by press, our indie publishing house specializing in feelgood

**Holly:** And in today's episode, we take on a highly controversial topic, dispelling the myth that traditionally published books are better than indie books. So make

yourselves comfortable and let's dive right in.

Wonderful. Wow. I feel slightly, well, I'm, I'm anticipating this. Episode, it feels like a big topic, um, the whole kind of traditionally published versus indie pub published books.

Um, but I thought it might be quite nice to just start off by kind of talking about where this myth comes from, because as with most, um, stereotypes there, there tends to be reasons as to why, um, [00:01:00] why a myth like this develops in the first place. So I thought it might be worth starting there before we, um, start challenging it and unpicking those things.

So Amy, I wonder whether you could just, um, for anyone who's maybe listening who isn't aware of, um, the different kinds of publishing, could you maybe define the difference between traditional publishing and in publishing? Great.

**Aimee:** I can do that. Um, so traditional publishing is what people think of when they think of publishing.

When you go into a bookshop, most of the books there have been traditionally published. Um, and there is a bit of crossover with indie publishing as well. So I'm just gonna, I'm gonna dive right in. Traditional pub publishing are, you know, your big four, your Bloomsbury, your penguins, your Simon and Schusters.

Just looking at my bookcase now to see the mother publisher names, but like you've all heard of them, um, their model that they use is [00:02:00] authors will get an agent, most, most typically, they'll get an agent and then the agent submits to the publishers to organize a contract. And that's, that's the model. Um, so two stages of gatekeeping and it's very profit at the top driven.

The total opposite of that. There we go. That's how I'm gonna, that's how I'm gonna, um, frame this. The total opposite of that is self-publishing, where the author themselves takes their book. They might have some work done in it with, they can, they can build their own team, their own editors. Their own marketers, if they like and their own, you know, book color designers and they spend all of their money investing in their book and they publish it themselves on their own website or on Amazon or Ingram, uh, spark, or any of the other number, huge number of things that you can do this on.

So that's the complete opposite end of the spectrum. There is no gatekeeper there [00:03:00] other than the amount of money that the author themselves is willing to invest. And then sitting in the center of that, and this is very oversimplified because there's lots of different kinds of publishing as well, but sitting in the center of that is indie publishing, which are typically smaller publishing houses.

I mentioned Bloomsbury with the traditional, um, but they technically count as in independent publishers. Um, but, but generally speaking, they're the smaller publishers, more community focused. Um, The author still has that contract relationship with the publisher and the publisher still. And the publisher is the one making the investment in the book.

Um, so the book is published on the publisher's capital, but it's generally at small scale with fewer gatekeepers and a larger scope for taking risks and fun choices. With the books you can take on. [00:04:00] Does that, I think that sums up for the purposes of this discussion. I think that sums it up.

**Holly:** I think that's great.

I think it's helpful seeing it as, um, you know, you've got traditional publishers. One end of the spectrum, you've got you with your big money, your big gatekeepers, um, the, the big names. You've got self-publishing on the other end of the spectrum where an author does it all themselves. And then you've got indie publishers in the middle.

And I think, um, to somebody who's new to the industry as I was not that long ago, that's quite a helpful kind of, Image to have in your mind of, um, and when we are talking about indie publishers, say, we'll mainly be focusing on the publishers themselves. Every now and again, we might talk about self-publishing, um, and talk about that as part of this.

But usually when we're talking about indie publishers, we're thinking of the small publishing houses, fewer gatekeepers, but still at a process of, um, application. And also, um, smaller communities, some really small, smaller titles, smaller money. Um, But, um, yeah, sitting [00:05:00] in that middle space. Um, and I guess where this kind of myth comes from, the traditionally published books are better than Inly books.

Um, often comes from the fact that we have all heard of traditionally published books. Like we've heard of Penguin Random House. Um, whereas you haven't necessarily heard of an Inly Publishing house there, there isn't that necessarily that trust in the publishing house that you've maybe, um, I see from something like a big, big four publisher.

Um, but also there's this idea that, you know, they get the best manuscripts. They have this really rigorous acceptance process with like two lots of gatekeepers. Whereas like with the indie books, it's more of an idea that they're almost like the rejects, um, and they're just not quite as good as the ones that will be published by the big names.

But also that they, you know, traditional publishers have more money, they have more connections. Um, there's this idea that they're the ones hiring the best talent in the industry, both on the author side, but also on the editing side and the marketing side. Um, and so I think that's kind of, [00:06:00] Just created this idea.

It's, it's a bit like the, kind of, the allure of Oxbridge. You've got this kind of name of all the traditionally published houses must be, um, the best. And, and everyone else, all the indie publishing houses aren't, aren't good. And that's where that kind of idea comes from, I guess. Um, but I guess being an indie publishing house, we are, we're gonna pick apart this myth, so we're gonna challenge it.

**Aimee:** We have a bias here. Yeah. I cannot promise that we won't be biased.

**Holly:** We have a very natural bias. Um, but I think it's nice that, you know, we hear a range of, um, voices and opinions and often this is an opinion that is, doesn't get heard as much. Um, so it's nice to explore this, um, as an idea. And we as ever, we'd love to hear your thoughts.

So if this is a topic that interests you and you've got experience in this, please do message into the podcast. Um, we'll be. Having various, like links down on the show notes and things, um, where you can do [00:07:00] that. You know what to find us, you know where to find us. Um, shall we start with challenge number one?

So this idea that traditional publishers get the best manuscripts. Mm. Amy, do you wanna start off this?

**Aimee:** I wanna start, continue, and finish this.

I have so many words and I'm gonna organize them all into something. Useful so that no one gets annoyed. So the idea that traditional publishers gets, get the best manuscripts, I don't think it's even, you know, held in the forefront of anyone's mind when they're buying a book. They just see a book, it's well produced, and they take it.

Um, those weren't very good thoughts. It's all right. It's all right. I'm working on it. Um, but because you've got this like two [00:08:00] layers of gate key thing, there is that expectation that if you can't get through those layers, then surely you're not good, good enough. Especially when you take, um, some of the larger publishers that are, you know, There are a hundred publishers all under a big cloak because there's so many imprints.

And the more you, the more you dig, the more you think, well, if, if they can't get published by, you know, a specialized fantasy imprint of this big publisher,

**Holly:** then

**Aimee:** that's because they're not wanted. That's because they must be rejected. And I think where that starts to fall apart, where, where you're able to challenge that is that.

Even within these specific imprints, the commissioning editors of them are looking for something very specific. They have a very specific criteria for what they're looking for. And what they're looking for [00:09:00] is something that they know will sell because every book they take on is a risk. Like I said before, um, both India and traditional publishers are taking on all of the financial risks, and you want to know that it's going to at least break even.

Most books don't break even, but like you wanna give it the best chance. Um, and that means that there isn't much confidence in breaking the form, uh, breaking what's expected.

**Holly:** So if

**Aimee:** the, uh, ma manuscript being submitted to an agent, or the agent showing it to a, uh, commissioning editor is. Who different that it might not be accepted, not based on its quality or even its marketability entirely based on its proven marketability, which, you know, isn't very fair for anyone writing anything, you know, at all unique.[00:10:00]

Mm-hmm. Um, so I think that's, that's the, the first challenge against publishers are getting the best publishers. Uh, Traditional big publishers are getting the best manuscripts. They're not. They're getting the safest manuscripts. They're getting the manuscripts that, that's a bit mean, but they're getting the manuscripts that they believe in.

And what they believe in is based on their setback lists and what they've already done and their provable e evidence. And that doesn't lead to any, uh, easy, ambitious, uh, signings.

**Holly:** No, I think that's a really good point about the priority of what they're looking for. Um, and it was interesting, I was listening to a podcast where there was an author who'd chosen to self-publish in the end, and she had been a wedding photographer and she'd written a romcom based around the perspective of a wedding photographer.[00:11:00]

Um, and she just couldn't get it published, but she received a lot of, Very positive feedback from editors. But the problem that she kept getting was, we've already got one wedding book on our list this year. Try again next year kind of thing. Yes. Um, and I think this is the thing, is that there was that preconceived criteria that they could only publish one book about a wedding that was a rocom and it already, that slot had been taken.

Um, so it wasn't about the quality of the book at all. But I also think. You know, with this idea of the gatekeeping and that this creates a certainty that you're going have a brilliant book. I think part of me then always asks, well, why do we always then hear about these best selling books that have multiple rounds of rejections?

And we can think of hundreds of examples. I mean, Harry Potters a very well known example of a book that's been a bestselling series, but it was rejected like 13 times by different publishers, um, before it finally got signed. And. That [00:12:00] immediately starts to make you question, to what extent can people predict, um, what they're gonna be, the books that connect with people, or, you know, the bestseller bestseller, chicken Soup for the Soul was objected 144 times by agents and publishers.

Um, or if we're thinking about, um, things more down the, um, sort of fantasy and sci-fi, um, route, like the book June, which is like a sci-fi epic. Received 23 different rejections from publishers, um, or the help which many people might have heard of. Absolutely bestselling awesome book by Catherine Stockett, received 60 rejections from agents.

I mean, we can just go on and on and on about this. Yeah, no, you go for it. You've,

**Aimee:** uh, touched on two very interesting examples there. One of them being Rolling's, uh, Harry Potter. Um,

**Holly:** I

**Aimee:** believe, I could be wrong. This could be a, a truism. Um, I believe she went [00:13:00] direct to publishers rather than to agents. So her 12 rejections were like pure publisher rejections.

But the person, the person, the publisher that picked her up in the end was Bloomsbury at the time, a independent publisher that saw her book and they saw, uh,

**Holly:** uniqueness and

**Aimee:** something exciting, something that they were passionate about in their book, and they picked her up based on that. And the 11 that had rejected her before had rejected her because what she was writing was different.

Just her first, I won't guess into it now, but her first page. Of this book is just completely different to all of the other fantasy children's books out there, especially at the time. So it was too much of a risk for these, these publishers that she initially, uh, contacted. Whereas Bloomsbury, at the time, a smaller indie press, were able to be driven by that passion.

June is the other example. Now, this could be completely wrong, [00:14:00] but I'm fairly certain. Initially, June was picked up by a publisher that published, uh, manuscripts on car manufacturing. Oh, wow. I've actually, I'm gonna check on that before we publish this, but I'm fairly certain. June was picked up by a car manufacturing.

Like publishing, book publishing thing that read it and went, this is incredible. The world used to see this because they were passionate about it and they, they were small enough to be able to take that risk. So that's, that's kind of comes into what we were saying earlier, that big publishers aren't getting the best books.

They're getting the books that weigh up in their cost to benefit analysis. Um, they're risk benefit analysis.

**Holly:** That's fascinating. I didn't know either of those little, little [00:15:00] bits. That's, that's great. Um, And I think one thing sort of added on to this, um, is I think it's interesting that we're seeing more and more if I say successful high class authors choosing to go down either the indie publishing route or the self-publishing route rather than going with traditional publishing.

Um, so I'm gonna give two examples here. So Honor Ross, who's a poet and fiction author, she got published with Penguin. But had a bad experience there and decided then to self-publish. And so she's now a real champion for self-publishing, um, author industry, but also Brandy Sanderson in the fantasy and sci-fi genre.

Um, again, he's been published by, by big publishers, but he's chosen to do a Kickstarter to crowdfund, um, and Kickstart and do self-publishing for his next four novels. Um, and again, I think that's a really interesting sign that, you know, when. When really good authors are then paving the way for doing more self-publishing or indie publishing route, that that's a sign [00:16:00] again, that it, it really isn't about only the best authors get picked by these traditionally published, um, route.

In fact, you can find amazing authors in any, um, of the three spectrums of, of publishing. Um, And I think now might be a good moment to highlight Jacka books as an indie publishing house, which does an amazing job of highlighting as, um, voices. So I think Amy, you know more about Jacka, so I'm gonna pass over to you for this.

I'll always

**Aimee:** highlight Jacka books and again, like they're just such a key example of how publishing isn't publishers, big publishers aren't picking up the best manuscripts. Because Jack Arounder exists because they thought that being in the industry as black women, they would be able to, you know, influence what was being picked up.

And again, I could, I [00:17:00] could talk for a whole separate hour on this. Um, But they couldn't, and they were, they were unable to publish diverse vo voices in within these big publishers because they were seen as a risk. Um, because there was no proven market of, of, uh, people buying black books and black people buying books because there were pub, no publishers publishing what they wanted to read.

So Jack around the books went through this. I'm gonna start my own publishing house. And they now only publish, um, voices from black community, black British authors primarily. And they sell fantastically because of course they do, because of course, black British authors exist. And of course, black British readers exist.

They were just underserved by the big publishing, uh, industry. Be because the, those books weren't being published. And that ends up being a cyclical issue. No one's [00:18:00] buying the books because we're not publishing the books and there's never ever any edit evidence

**Holly:** so it doesn't get done. And Jack around the books just did.

Yeah, I think that's really, could be the tagline for this whole, um, podcast episode is just like a jack around the books. Um, do go check them out and we'll, we'll be linking, um, to their website and things. But yeah, I think. It, it's just sad really, that the traditional publishing houses often have an issue with publishing, um, diverse voices because of that, uh, cost benefit analysis.

And it's amazing that people are jack around the books are, are stepping in and, and fulfilling that need because we need to hear stories from every different perspective. Um, and. Yeah, I think it's inspiring for us as a small startup in press, looking at someone like Jacka books and this amazing success they've been and, and what they do and saying, you know what?

We wanna follow in those [00:19:00] footsteps and, and learn from what they're doing. Um, and I think I'm just gonna add one last, um, piece of evidence to this kind of. Challenge of the idea that traditional publishers get the ma best manuscript, and that's simply from personal experience of reading indie books. Um, and I'm gonna highlight one, one book that we, um, have said on the podcast recently, Hester by, uh, Lori Lebanese, published by Duckworth Books, which is an indie publishing house, um, with a small team of about seven and.

Honestly, you would, you wouldn't know. You wouldn't know that it's not published by a traditional publisher in the sense of that the manuscript quality is fantastic, that the way it's been produced is incredible. There you, it's very easy to think kind of in these categories of like, oh, traditionally published books are super different to indie published books.

And then when you actually have the books in your hands, Um, it's often very [00:20:00] difficult to tell, if not impossible, and mm, I

**Aimee:** think the way you can tell as well. Um, so Duckworth books have existed for 125 years. Um, they're, they're a big name in indie publishing. I think the way you can tell is that if you look at the back list for Duckworth books compared to the back list for any given major publisher, The difference is the care and attention and passion in each of the books that they publish.

I would go as far as saying that every book that a, any given indie publisher picks up is fantastic because the level of risk that each book carries is so much greater. Each book has a, a greater, uh, percentage of risk. To, you know, earn out its, uh, advance and all the money that has been invested in, in [00:21:00] editing and whatnot.

There is no book that can, can just carry the others on its success. So every book has to be five star. Whereas the model of big publishers is that you, you aim for one incredibly successful book.

**Holly:** And, and hope that the, the financial success of that book carries the other 50 that you've published. And that means that

**Aimee:** by, you know, book 45, it doesn't need to be that good policy anymore.

It just needs to exist. Um, this is a sweeping generalization of course, but by and large indie publishers have to, every single book that they put out, give it a hundred percent. And major publishers just don't have that same,

**Holly:** that same issue. An indie publisher like we were hearing at the seminar on Indie publishing at the London Book Fair, an indie [00:22:00] publisher can't afford to make a risk, can't afford to make a loss on any book, um, or if they are gonna make a loss, it needs to be a very small loss.

Um, Where is that something that the traditional publishers don't have to have in mind? And so yeah, of course that's gonna be a, a spur on to produce the best quality you, you can. And so I think this actually leads us quite nicely to our second, um, sort of take down point, which is this idea that traditional publishers get the best talent, both from an author perspective, but also from a, um, editing and like all the behind the scenes work.

Um, like the marketing and PR and all that kind of thing. Um, And that Indian publishers just don't get that talent in the same way. Um, and I think the first thing to talk about here is actually that there are real barriers to entry, to traditional publishing. Um, so one big thing is the traditional publishers are all based in London, um, which the center of the publishing industry and the uk.

Um, but [00:23:00] entry level jobs in traditional publishing are really low paid, and that means that lots of people simply. Can't afford to take that risk of taking that first job, um, or can't get in because if you've only got a three month contract to do a. An internship or something, you can't afford to move your whole life to London for three months with no guarantee that that contractor is gonna continue.

And so that in itself means that only people of a certain background can necessarily afford to take those risks. Um, now there are charities out there like the book Trusts, which do a really amazing job of trying to help people from diverse backgrounds make that transition to London and, and, and get into the industry.

But it is an industry-wide issue, and it's not by any means sorted yet. And so, For one thing, the best talent isn't necessarily being taken simply because of the backgrounds people come from. Yes. The

**Aimee:** publishing industry on pretty much every level isn't accessible. Um, and Holly, you touched on [00:24:00] a really great point about the pay.

I mean, even for a permanent full-time employed role at, at entry level, the pay isn't enough to cover rent. Trains food, like just the cost of existing as a human being in London, the entry level salary isn't enough. They also have a really big problem with progression. So you, you might be able to get a entry level job and you might just be able to grasp for two years, um, to be able to exist on a interview entry level job in London in publishing.

But then the co level of competition to get that, that next, like pay grade, that next, uh, job role is so high that you then might end up getting stuck at entry level for much long, longer than you would in any other industry. Mm-hmm.

**Holly:** Yeah. It's definitely a big issue within the, within the [00:25:00] industry. Sort of just continuing, I'm on a slightly different note about the, the best talent.

Um, It also isn't the case that all the, the talent that does exist in this traditional publishing houses goes to every single book because as you can imagine, if you're a big traditional publishing house and you've got a big title like Prince Harry's memoir of Spare, and you know it's gonna be an international bestseller, you're gonna put your best time and energy and your best talent into that book.

You're gonna do the big push on that one. Which necessarily means the other books published by, if I say real authors, um, aren't going, sorry, that was a slight, that's fine.

**Aimee:** I'll give you it.

**Holly:** It was ghost written by, by a very successful ghost writer. Um, but you take my point that, um, authors who aren't men, celebrities, um, aren't gonna get that same time and energy and attention, um, because.[00:26:00]

The traditional publishing houses are gonna make sure that they're, they're big best sellers that they wanna bring in all that income from that they're the ones that are gonna be prioritized.

**Aimee:** Yes. I would hate to put all of that time and effort and it is a huge amount of time and effort into getting an agent, having like working on my agent to get a publisher and then getting my, my like final publish date, you know, maybe three, four D years down the line.

And it being the same week that David Wallons has published. Because I mean, nevermind everything else, the marketing effort just won't go to me.

**Holly:** Yeah. Yeah. And it's um, for a traditionally published author, you're looking at about 10 years before you even get signed onto an agent. It's the average length of time it takes, um, to even get a literary agent.

And then you add on the gears of. Then getting it to a publisher. I mean, to only have Yeah, that time and effort not go into your book. Um, whereas again, with an indie publisher, [00:27:00] if that book is taken on, it is going to be made into the best it possibly can be because the indie publisher cannot afford to make a loss because they're not signing on David Williams and Prince Harry and, and these big celebrity names and relying on them to do, Hey, the income work for them.

**Aimee:** Mr. Prince William, if you're listening and you've written a cozy fantasy, We will publish it. I don't think We'll, but also don't think he's listening.

**Holly:** Oh, you never know. So, um, and again, we just wanna highlight Jacaranda as like, um, an example of Jacaranda as an indie publishing house was set up by people who had been in the traditional publishing industry.

So, This amazing talent of these black women who were in the industry and not getting heard and not getting their voices across then decided to go indie because it was a place where they were gonna be able to flourish and thrive and, and write the kind of stories that they wanted to [00:28:00] write and produce the kind of stories and publish the ones that they wanted to tell.

Um, and so again, that's a beautiful example of it's really not a case of the traditional publishing houses that get all the best talent. And the in Indian houses don't get any of it. Um, there's, there's much more of a cross fertilization between the two. Um, and that

**Aimee:** it's, uh, Valerie branders, it's, um, Jacka books.

By the way, uh, her name just popped into my head and we should probably use it. Valerie, she's fantastic. Boy go, Valerie.

**Holly:** Mm-hmm. So should we move onto our third point, um, which is taking down the myth that only traditional publishers have the rigorous selection process, that means they get the best books.

Um, would you like to start off on this one, Amy? I

**Aimee:** mean, yeah. Such an easy myth to take down because like, Every, every like publisher has, [00:29:00] not every publisher. I see you've got a note here, um, has a selection process. Um, I'm sure many of you listeners have gone through the absolute trials of submitting two journals.

Um, to literary journals and I mean, even the grassroots of grassroots literary journals get hundreds of submissions. I, uh, worked with a lit journal through their submissions once, and they were on maybe their second publication. They had no funding. They were a small team of volunteers and hundreds. We had a whole spreadsheet set up.

With, um, our values or

**Holly:** their values and the things that they were

**Aimee:** looking for. And we were to rate everything one to seven, um, on, you know, quality and meeting values and meeting the, you know, [00:30:00] genre expectation. And I mean, that was just for a very small startup lit lit mag. So, of course, an indie publisher is going to have a selection process.

You might not necessarily need an agent, although some of the bigger indie publishers do work with agents. Um, but yes, they still have a selection process because as we said before, they're still looking for the captivity top of quality.

**Holly:** And I think this is a moment to just highlight, um, what a vanity press is because, um, some listeners may have heard of, Or come across adverts from publishers, um, who offer that they will publish your book regardless of, you know, they won't have any selection process, but you pay them to publish your book.

So I wonder whether you could just [00:31:00] explain a bit more to anti presses, Amy, and how that differs from an indie publisher.

**Aimee:** Yes, I can do. Um, yes, there's vanity, vanity press. They also. Operate under terms like hybrid publishing and, um, assisted publishing. Um, obviously there are some hybrid publishing services that are legitimate and, you know, vest everything, uh, ally, the Alliance of independent authors are fantastic for that, so check them out.

Um, but in a nutshell with, uh, publishing, indie publishing and big, big name traditional publishing, The book is the product and that is how, that is how the publisher will make money. The book is how the publisher will make money, and the book is how the author will make money cuz the book is what's being

**Holly:** sold.

The book is the product with

**Aimee:** Vanity Publishing. The author is the product. I think that's the easiest way to sum it [00:32:00] up. Um, you approach, uh, vanity publisher or in some cases they approach you and that's a big red flag. Um, I'm sure your book is great, but it's not that great, and they ask you for money. You pay them, you know, upwards of a thousand pounds, much upwards of a thousand pounds,

**Holly:** and they

**Aimee:** do a list of services to varying degrees.

Once they have that money from you, that's the guaranteed money. We've talked a lot about risk in this episode. There is no risk for the publisher because they've already been paid. The risk here for you is that they then don't, you know, invest in marketing. Cause why would they, they already have their money.

Um, so yeah, with Vanity Publishing, they're making money off you and you are still making money off a book and you've, you know, passed up with your cash

**Holly:** to do so. Yeah. And so it's worth saying that, um, we are, we [00:33:00] are gonna make a distinction between the indie publishing houses, which have that selection process.

Um, usually they'll pay an author. Upfront. So it's the author who's getting paid, um, rather than the other way around, rather than a vanity press, um, where you don't have a selection process. But I think it's worth at this moment just highlighting the self-publishing industry because they don't have a rigorous selection process in the same way.

It's basically if, as an author, author, you decide you wanna publish your book, you take that on, there's no gatekeeper there, um, to do that quality work for you. Um, and yet, It isn't true that the quality of self-publishing books is really poor. In fact, self-publishing authors, they will hire editors if they know what they're doing.

They will hire cover designers, they will get beta readers involved. They will put in a lot of effort and a lot of prime into self-publishing. Um, and often if you're a self-published author, you have a direct connection with a reader, meaning you create that kind of reading community. And that community around you.

Um, and there [00:34:00] are some amazing quality self-published books out there. I'm just gonna highlight, um, a book that's just come out recently called The Diary of a Bengali Newlywed, um, written by the author of, I think it was Secret Diary of An of an Arranged Marriage, um, absolutely beautiful, um, amazing Rocom books.

Um, she described, um, it as like the Brown Bridge, Bridget Jones. Um, and definitely worth checking out. And I just wanna also highlight a book, um, that I read recently. So I read a cozy fantasy book called The House Witch, um, which I'm pretty sure is self-published. I tried to look this up and couldn't find much information, so I see Amy going into research mode right now.

Um, and what I loved about this book is that at this particular moment, I could tell it was self-published or I could tell that it, it hadn't been traditionally published. Put it that way. Because of the way that the writing, uh, flowed. I really loved the book and the fact that it didn't have, if I say the [00:35:00] polish that I might expect from a traditionally published book, really didn't bother me because the, the quality of the idea and the equality of the, the essence and the heart behind the writing was just so beautiful.

Um, and it's been doing really, really well in terms of sales and things. And I think that's testament to the fact that, you know, maybe this isn't the. The highest quality gonna be a New York Times bestseller, and yet as a reader, I really don't care. I just want a great book. Yes. Onwards. Let's, we've just kind of taken down three kind of challenges to this idea that a traditionally published book is better than in book, but I think it might also be just nice looking at a moment for like, what are actually the advantages of an indie press, um, over traditionally published.

Press sometimes. I dunno whether you wanna, again, kick off with this

**Aimee:** in always. Yes. There are so many advantages to an in indie press. Um, obviously there are lots [00:36:00] of things to consider and that's a whole other episode. Um, but we are here to celebrate indie. So I think one of the big things is that there's a smaller team and a smaller book list, and that means.

Every book that we pick, every book that, you know, members of other indie presses pick is a book that they're passionate about and a book that's gonna re receive quality attention. Um, and not one that's going to be swept aside if something bigger comes along. Because actually what, like you, if they pick you, you are what they want.

Um, you're not just fill it for what they want. Um, which is just, I mean, I think that's the huge. The huge advantage is that every book is picked based on

**Holly:** passion. Mm-hmm. And I think along with that, um, my understanding is that authors tend to be more involved along the whole route with an indie press because it's a smaller team, because there's a smaller ba um, list of books being published.[00:37:00]

Um, you as the author get more say, um, and. They get more of an involvement in say, the marketing side and how they want to be involved in, in that side of things. And obviously if you go to self-publishing, you, you go to the full extreme and then the author has complete control. That isn't quite the, the same in an indie publishing house because um, it is the publishing house itself that's taking that financial risk.

So at the end of the day, they're gonna be the final decision makers. Um, but they're often much more willing to do collaborations with authors and much more willing to have the author involved in the process, um, and bring them onto that publishing team, really. Mm-hmm. Um,

**Aimee:** yeah, working with, I think authors to, to play, play to

**Holly:** their strengths a hundred percent.

And I think it's worth saying here, you know, one of the potential downsides of an indie press for an author compared to a traditionally published. Publishing house is an indie publishing house is not gonna pay you a six figure book deal for your debut book, um, as an author [00:38:00] advance. They're just, they're not gonna have the money to do that.

Having said that, very few traditionally published authors will get that massive big pay. I mean, you've, you've got a really strike gold to, to

**Aimee:** get there. And even if you do what, it's not gonna work out to, you know, minimum wage. Again.

**Holly:** Exactly. But I think with an indie press, there is still much value in that they really can kickstart, author the careers and, um, they can also transform lives.

You know, it's a transformational experience having a book published, um, especially if that book has been, you know, taken on, um, by a publishing house and, and really given some caring attention by them. And that's a. An experience that an indie publishing house can give an author, even if they can't always give, um, you know, a huge life-changing amount of money.

Um,

**Aimee:** yes, weigh that up with the fact that neither can the big publishers, uh,

**Holly:** but in most [00:39:00] cases

**Aimee:** in almost all, but I think another, I guess it's almost a, uh, benefit of indie publishing and it goes back to the kick. So kickstarting the careers. And it also links into the fact that indie publishers take those risks that big publishers don't.

And what that's doing is providing that data, that market data that, hey, the books that this particular author is writing, they're marketable. We can do it. So often what you'll see is, uh, an author starting their career with an indie publisher, and then later on the line, along the line, being able to like get picked up by a, uh, bigger publisher.

Because they then have, you know, a proven platform, a proven track, track, record, record of um, creating marketable books, which I guess is both the advantage and disadvantage of indie

**Holly:** presses. I guess I wanna highlight one more example, and this is, I'm gonna have to look up what the names of all of this thing is because I can't, I remember [00:40:00] the example itself, but not the names, so I apologize for that in advance.

Um, but this is the case of, um, there was a book which was written like as a stream of consciousness. And it was written by, so from the perspective of a woman who was like baking a pie. Mm-hmm. And it was a huge chunk of a book, you know, like a, a massive volume. And it was the kind of book which no traditional publisher was gonna like, choose with a barge pole.

Like it was kind of one of those, whoa, that is wacky. And it got picked up by a, um, an indie publishing house, which she decided to give it a, um, a shot. Um, and it ended up getting shortlisted for the Booker prize. And this indie house nearly went bust because they then suddenly had to print like thousands of this book because suddenly everyone wanted to read it because it had been shortlisted for the book of prize.

Um, and I think that's an amazing example of how an indie publishing house can really, uh, kickstart on all the career and, and transform lives and, and take those risks. Um, that may be a traditionally published, um, [00:41:00] pub, traditional publishing house can't necessarily. Or we'll choose not to. I'm also just gonna highlight, um, I think there's something here about supporting the small independent businesses as well.

Um, and there's that thing about, you know, an indie publishing house will often be a very small team. Sometimes they're run by volunteers, sometimes they're run by salaried employees, but a very small team of them. They tend to be a very grassroots publishing economy. They're better able to create direct connections with readers.

And they're part of what makes the publishing industry much more diverse, much richer. Um, it gives more competition, more voices, um, because they are those small voices and small independent businesses, um, that are standing up to like the, the big giants of the industry. And it's worth just giving it a little highlight for that and a little, little boost, um, and champion for the small businesses.

Nice. So

**Aimee:** that, that just about wraps up our, um, You know, [00:42:00] main body of talking. Uh, so as always, we're gonna wrap up with, um, a little bit of news, some updates. Uh, first being we went to the London book Fair. Woohoo. It was so good. We were there representing a hysteria press. Um, very cool to have. Um, a hysteria, Amy Hill, uh, commissioning editor Asteria Press on my badge.

**Holly:** Oh yeah,

**Aimee:** this. Um, so yes, a big highlight for me. I mean, I'm a cop out, but it was, it was just meeting all of my publishing industry buddies. I mean, it's such a, it is such a, a, like a human industry. It relies so much on, I wanna call it networking, but really it's like developing friendships, growth. Um, just, you know, like building relationships and that's a huge part of the London Book Fair [00:43:00] for a lot of people.

So like, just being able to go and, and see all these people that I haven't seen for a year, especially since, you know, I'm not based in London, um,

**Holly:** was fantastic. Yeah, I think for me, one of the highlights was simply the, the bars and the atmosphere and, and being in that place soaking up. Just passion of the books.

Um, and that was so inspirational and it's, uh, really motivated me now coming back, um, despite getting covid, um, There's that real boost now. London Book Fair was awesome and we, it was an amazing place to launch hysteria press into the publishing industry. Um, we gave out tons of bookmarks and made some amazing friends, caught up with old friends, um, which is amazing.

Besides that work is continuing on the novel, which we are revealing the title of, Ooh. I can reveal the title on this, can't I? Because it [00:44:00] won't go out. You can. Oh. So our novel, which is called A Case of Dragons, and the series title is the Cast Empire series. So it now has a title, very exciting. And the book cover is, uh, well underway.

Uh, preliminary sketch has been done. Um, so, and the conceptual art has been done. So that's now moving along. And Amy, you are, you are editing. Yes. The

**Aimee:** editing. I've gotten the first wedge of edits back from you, which is very exciting. Um, it'll be last week that I started line edits ploting through those, making your words be better words.

Telling you what you're actually meant to say, that kind of thing.

I

**Holly:** love this working relationship by the way. Just, just tell me what I'm trying to say. That would be great. No,

**Aimee:** I hear you. I hear you. But like, did you mean this?

**Holly:** That is wonderful. Um, so yes, [00:45:00] work is progressing on a case of dragons, which is very exciting in terms of the podcast. Um, we had initially planned to just do six episodes for our first season and then, um, take a break before going back for another season. But, um, we're enjoying ourselves so much and the, um, we're picking up, uh, lovely listeners like yourselves.

So we've decided to continue and we'll be doing, um, continuing to do our podcast once a month from now on. So we'll be back in a few weeks time with the topic. What is Cozy Fantasy? In

**Aimee:** the meantime, this is where you can find us on Twitter. We are at Press Hysteria, uh, and mastered on at press. Mm, that's wrong.

Atia press

**Holly:** bookta.com. And on Facebook and Instagram, we are at Hysteria Press. So come along, say hello, uh, tell us your thoughts about publishing, about fantasy. We would love to hear from you. It makes it more of a conversation. In

**Aimee:** the meantime, [00:46:00] keep reading, keep reading.