



Syd Moore

Rejection

HAVING RECENTLY FLIRTED with the online dating scene, rejection is something I could probably write a book about. In fact, it's certainly got me thinking through several potential plot lines. For the purposes of this article, however, I will turn my attention to literary critical rejection, in which I am also well versed.

I don't think I have ever met a writer who considered the 'R factor' when they set out to write their debut. For me, the idea only occurred as I approached my first publication date and realised that my book was journeying out from the secure enclave of my readers (mostly family, friends and editors) to the public, who were people *I did not know*. Of course, ever the optimist, I persuaded myself that most readers would absolutely love *The Drowning Pool* – I mean, everyone else had adored it – and that, very quickly, my novel would enter the *Sunday Times* bestseller lists, sail over the pond and fly up the *New York Times* charts too.

Though the print reviews were positive you can imagine my surprise when, a few weeks after publication, in amongst the four- and five-star reviews I noticed a couple of ones and twos. Initially I decided not to read them, but curiosity got the better of me.

The first review moaned about the poor quality of the Amazon delivery service. Although I was annoyed my book had borne the brunt of the customer's ire, I was able to move on quickly. The second one-star review, however, was lacerating. I won't go into detail here but suffice it to say



that I found it so demoralising that I couldn't write for two weeks. In the end, still paralysed, I emailed the author Christopher Fowler who had been very encouraging of my early literary efforts. What came back was so great that I have asked his permission to share it with you:

There is a rule of thumb here – while I don't believe people who say 'I never read reviews' – you equally shouldn't take them to heart, especially non-professional ones. Having said that, if three or more professional reviews pick out the same fault, sometimes it's a fault that needs addressing. If every mixed review picks a different problem, that's just called personal opinion and can be ignored.

If the review is factually wrong, politely correct it. But the main rule for dealing with reviewers is the same as dealing with baboons. Don't get drawn in, into their internecine games or they'll try to kill you. Stay above it — and don't read too many Amazon ones. These are reviews by people who care enough to hit 'Send', not much more than that.

I'm glad to report Mr Fowler's wise words have served me well over the past decade. So far, I have kept sane and not been killed.

If only there was a way I could apply them to the dating apps.