
Jane Austen Unpublishable Today??

Posted by dmrbooks - 2007/07/29 06:15

www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_page_id=1770&in_article_id=469342

This story was in the Daily Mail...

Jane Austen fan submits her work anonymously to publishers... and receives a dozen rejections

It is a truth universally acknowledged that many of us who claim to have read a classic novel are telling porkies. Or have simply watched the film version instead.

This even applies, it seems, to literary agents and publishers.

For when a budding author sent typed chapters of Jane Austen's novels to 18 of them, changing just the titles and characters' names, only one recognised her words.

Another managed to recognise they were 'a really original read'. But the rest simply rejected them or never responded, according to the man who posted the manuscripts, David Lassman.

"It was unbelievable," he said. "If the major publishers can't recognise great literature, who knows what might be slipping through the net?"

"Here is one of the greatest writers that has lived, with her oeuvre securely fixed in the English canon and yet only one recipient recognised them as Austen's work."

Mr Lassman, 43, submitted opening chapters of three of Austen's classic works - Northanger Abbey, first published in 1798, Pride and Prejudice (1813) and Persuasion (1818).

He typed them out himself, and signed them Alison Laydee after Austen's early pseudonym A Lady.

To offer a few more hints, he called Pride and Prejudice 'First Impressions', the original title for the story, and wrote a return address of the Jane Austen Centre in Bath, where he works as the director of the Jane Austen Festival.

In response, the literary agency Christopher Little, which represents JK Rowling, said it was 'not confident of placing this material with a publisher'.

Penguin, which currently publishes Pride and Prejudice, responded that First Impressions 'seems like a really original and interesting read'. But there was no request to see the rest of the book.

Others to turn the works down included Bloomsbury, Random House, Harper Collins and Hodder & Stoughton. The only one who emerged with any credit was Alex Bowler, assistant editor at Jonathan Cape publishers.

His reply read: "I suggest you reach for your copy of Pride and Prejudice, which I'd guess lives in close proximity to your typewriter and make sure that your opening pages don't too closely mimic the book's opening. After all, there is such a thing as plagiarism."

Mr Lassman came up with the experiment when struggling to have his own novel published.

He said it highlighted the flaws in the publishing process.

"Getting a novel accepted is very difficult today unless you have an agent first, but I had no idea of the scale of rejection poor old Jane suffered."

Re:Jane Austen Unpublishable Today??

Posted by Sharon - 2007/09/23 06:58

I laughed so hard when I heard this story! I have my own publishing woes I could tell, but aside from that, the research I did into the process was quite enlightening. One could easily walk through most book stores and note the trash on the shelves to see that there is something seriously wrong with the process. I do not have the answer, but I thought this fella's experiment very revealing.

Re:Jane Austen Unpublishable Today??

Posted by btravis - 2007/10/01 17:02

I think this story is amusing as well, but it is also kind of a shame.

It's sad to think that someone in the publishing industry would not recognize the works of one of the most famous authors of all time!

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Re:Jane Austen Unpublishable Today??

Posted by missbennet - 2007/11/07 17:12

hi ! i'm new here..

i must say that its is indeed a shame that people can't reconize Jane's work ! i meen .. it IS a truth and universally acknowledged that her writing is particular .. and even if it wasn't .. her stories are original and unic and you don't need to be a hudge fan to reconize them. i think it is missing a little bit of culture in those people's minds. my opinion of course ...

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