

Trigger warning: Richard III was not such a bad guy

by Lorna Salzman

Through the miracle of (reverse) time travel, Will Shakespeare read Katy Waldman's essay on why it's OK for students to read the white, racist, sexist, colonialist writers who form the basis of today's academic "canon" in universities.

So let's go back in time and postulate what gentle Will would say to Katy the Shrew....who will be neither Kissed nor Missed. Along with her sistern, they'll none of them be missed.

Dear Katy:

I recently read your essay (my powers of foresight have enabled me to read and write modern English) in which you put your stamp of approval on reading my works and that of others of my time and before.

Here are my comments:

I am SO glad to see that I actually meet your standards of morality and that you think it is OK for you and your 21st century intellectual "feminist" (is that a real word?) cunts (or pricks as the case may be) to go ahead and read me!!!! I am forever grateful!!!! Maybe I will get more money from my publisher now, as my sales to you generous feminabobs increase, now that they have been told that they can read my plays!!! And poetry....and by the way my dark lady sonnet might, just MIGHT, be about a man!!! So I am not guilty of being a cissexist heteropatriarch!!!!.But I'll keep you guessing so I can please everyone.

By the way, Katy, you really have insulted many of my writer

friends. I am not quite sure what you mean by "racist,sexist,colonist"; could you explain those terms? I assume they are pejorative, so in addition could you provide examples of how they merit your wrath? I know Christopher Marlowe is a scoundrel and is always picking fights in pubs...we almost came to blows once over what started as a peaceful pint. Ben Jonson is of course a sweetie (you can interpret that any way you want if it helps your thesis). Of course I don't know about Moliere or Chekhov because they haven't been born yet, but I am troubled by the notion that Chaucer might have not liked women as much as his work suggests. Is there something you know about him that I don't?

Truly, Socrates was a thorn in the side of the Greek authorities and a bad influence on young men in one way or another, but they dealt with it appropriately, at least from their point of view. However, Thucydides seems to me to be quite impartial, and I have never heard rumors about any mistreatment of women. I do heartily agree that slavery is repugnant though since most of the slaveholders will be born in the future, and the ones from the past are all dead, I don't see what we can do about them because, let's face it, if I or another writer started moralizing like you want us to, I think we'd turn off a lot of readers and where would the literature canon be in four hundred years?

I commiserate with you over the fact that you cannot punish those nasty writers and others who are dead....a lost opportunity to teach them a moral lesson. But you are very creative in castigating them anyway, I have to give you credit for that. Here's a thought: you should join forces with the Jews who won't play or listen to Wagner's music. He definitely hated Jews.But again, he's dead and you missed your chance to teach him a lesson, by about 134 years. I wish I could think of some way you could but I can't. Sorry.

By the way, that Shylock fellow was never a real person. None of my characters were real either. I just wanted to let you

know.They are just fictional representations of various types of human beings, some nicer than others. I hear that some critics in the 21st century now have evidence that I slandered Richard III and that he was not the evil brute that I portrayed. I stand corrected. But I have to laugh at how many of my future readers and critics are still arguing about Hamlet's motives.....not to mention my existence. Whatever keeps them busy.....they could be into worse mischief otherwise....now that I think of it....

LOL,

Will

Stratford-on-Avon

PS: I wasnt being mean by leaving Anne my second-best bed. That is the usual practice because the best bed is always reserved for guests and would bring in more money for her when she auctions off our furniture.