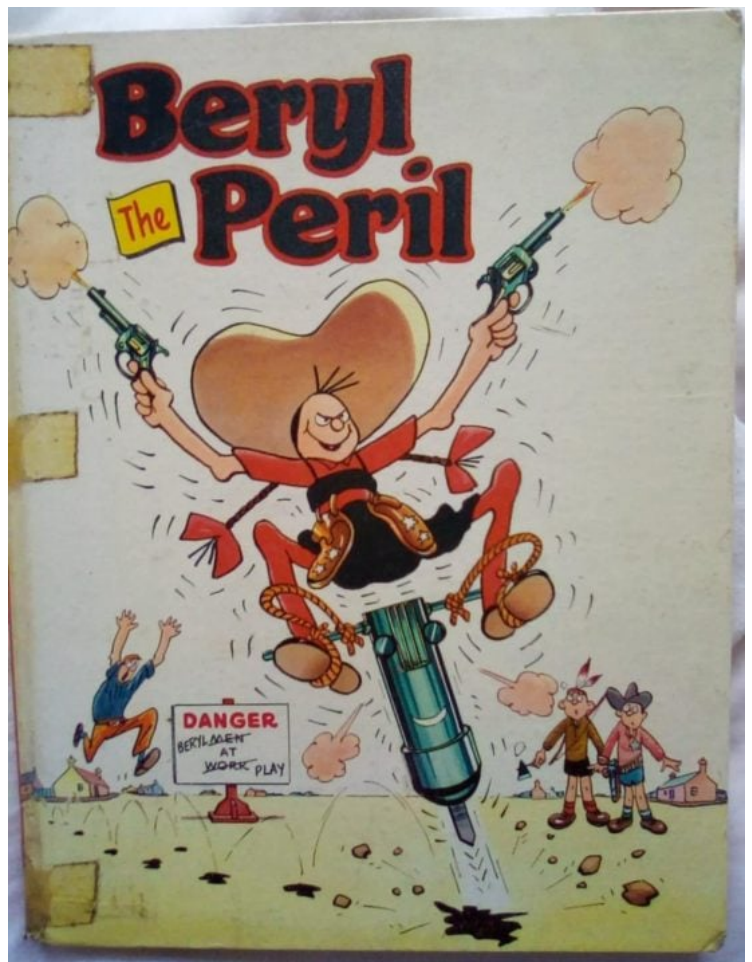


Trouble Is My First Name

By Phyllis Chesler

In the beginning, my 1970s pioneering work on feminism got me in trouble at my university (but, thank God, due to a rising movement, not with publishers). However, my more recent *radical* feminist work on pornography, prostitution, gender as a primary identity, and the trans issue also got me in trouble.

Trouble, trouble, always knows how to find me.



For the last twenty-five years, my work on antisemitism, Israel, Islam/jihad, and on Islamic gender apartheid and on femicide (honor killing) has been what's gotten me in trouble.

I knew I was doing something right, but the price kept getting higher and higher—my earlier much-praised work was

“disappeared,” forgotten, and my ongoing work was censored or cancelled; I was increasingly disinvited.

Well, ho-hum.

But who would ever have thought that a piece about opera by a music and opera lover (that would be me) would lead to one Substack subscriber, whom I do not know, cancelling me? Whoever she may be, she felt obliged to tell me that she'd done so.

True, I praised the production of *Aida* at the Metropolitan Opera and condemned the politically correct reviewers that had damned the production as “Orientalist,” exploitative, and as yet another example of “the West’s artifactual rapaciousness.”

I felt so strongly about the superb performance at the Met that I tried to move heaven and earth to obtain contact information for Peter Gelb, the Met’s General Manager, and for each and every member of the cast and crew. It was a desperate fool’s errand but I did finally get one contact address, and after several phone calls, I received a promise that they’d get it to Gelb’s office.

I asked him to share the letter with every member of the cast and crew, who deserved only praise, not condemnation.

Please understand: I do not feel badly about this at all. Those who are Old Time aficionados, not only of fine art and poetry but also of classical music, wrote very informed and therefore supportive emails and comments at Substack.

One aficionado said: “You are so right! This woke attitude towards art is despicable. But then, how many critics are qualified to review a work of art on its own merits? Personally, I hate the updated contemporary productions of opera. They are so misguided. Old opera was written for and in its time...there is no objective reason to transplant it to modern times...it should be done in the period represented in

the opera.”

Another art lover and author wrote: “I saw the performance. Had tickets as soon as I knew Elina Garanca was appearing after a 5-year absence from NY. She was, as you know, spectacular in her interpretation....Someday when fact and truth are there, we will have a reckoning with the Ottoman Empire—its murderous subjugating of every other civilization it conquered and extracted payment from in all the worst ways. But woke folks won’t go there.”

She is talking about Islamic imperialism, colonialism, and conversion via the sword as well as gender and religious apartheid.

This next comment is witty.

“Does no one recall what an Arab said when the story of Aida was explained. ‘Why did the Khedive (Radames, set to rule Egypt with the Pharoah’s daughter) go through all that anguish over Aida? He could have simply made her his concubine.’”

The Biblical Pharoah in Abraham’s time was ready to kill God’s chosen in order to add our foremother, and Abraham’s sister-wife, Sarah, to his harem.

Circling back to the issue of political correctness invading the precincts of art. And here I am about to court trouble, my old and endearing friend yet again.

I actually do not think that the great soprano Anna Netrebko should have been exiled from the New York stage because she failed to condemn Putin. Who knows how many relatives she has back in Russia?

I am very torn about the very understandable dismissal of the great conductor James Levine, because indeed, credible evidence was found to exist in the matter of his use of power to harass and sexually abuse or exploit younger musicians. Had

it become a criminal matter, one tried by a judge and jury—absolutely yes—but this was not the case. Like so many priests, Levine preyed on young and vulnerable men—but in Levine’s case, they were not underage.

As a rule, I try very hard to separate the art from the artist. So many of the greatest novelists and poets were philanderers, scoundrels, and misogynists. Dickens was beyond cruel to his wife, Catherine, and took up with the actress Ellen Ternan. Tolstoy forced his wife, Sophia, into lifelong celibacy while he busily impregnated the female serfs on his estate. Rimbaud became a slave trader and a rum runner. Lord Byron was a regular Don Juan. Flaubert—a brothel hopper in Egypt.

And yet: Would we really want to censor *David Copperfield*, *War and Peace*, *Le Bateau ivre* or *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, or *Madame Bovary*?

Here’s the point. So many men behave badly and in similar ways. But they do not grace us with great works.

I am not urging us to lower our moral standards for Great Men—but just to wrestle with this problem.

In closing: I’ve just been assured that my review is well on its way to Manager Peter Gelb’s office.

[Click this link to hear a Blues rendition of Trouble](#)

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