

Why I Am No Longer a Canadian Writer

by David Solway



Long ago, in another life, I belonged to the Union of Canadian Writers and was a member in good standing of [Steven Galloway](#), a revered professor, an [Joseph Massey](#), a victim of the #MeToo movement. Rather frivolous allegations of macho-like behavior in his earlier years have cost him dearly – [Reuben, Reuben](#). Massey has lost his appointment in the Creative Writing Program at the University of Pennsylvania, been scrubbed by some of his publishers and deleted from the Academy of American Poets and the Poetry Society of America.

One thinks too of the controversy raging over Pulitzer Prize author [The Telegraph](#) and its cited scholars bizarrely regard as an “act of love”), and for maligning the female sex in *Cymbeline* as “a woman’s fitness comes by fits.” (Indeed, Shakespeare has already surrendered pride of place at UPenn to

black feminist poet [New Pop News](#) asks, "What do you do with a host of classic-but-problematic writers whose lives or art would today be considered beyond acceptable bounds?"

I can sympathize with Galloway, Massey and Diaz, not having fared any better with my quondam colleagues today than I did, lo!, those many years ago. The most disturbing flap involved a short manifesto on music and politics I had completed, originally solicited by an editor at a small Canadian publishing company. It was already in press and set to appear when the publisher (an indifferent poet to boot), who had obviously left the preparation process in the hands of the editor, suddenly twigged to a section in which I denounced thugs like Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown memorialized by the execrable hard-rock band [Reflections on Music, Poetry & Politics](#).

The issue was compounded by the fact that the editor had already submitted the offending portion of the manuscript as an article to [Installations](#) plummeted into a dead silence. Disinvitations to read in various venues around the country arrived like unwelcome guests. No reviews appeared. A harmless article on translation was scrapped by another journal because I had compared translation to the higher transvestism, which somehow made me a male chauvinist and a transphobe as well as a systemic racist.

It soon became clear that I would be lucky to find a Canadian publisher for my work and to this day I have found only one, which for all I know may be temporary. I write mainly for the American conservative press, an institution lacking in this country. So I suspect the *numerus clausus* will remain in force and my days as a Canadian writer have effectively come to an end. But then, this is literary Canada and its ukase is to be expected.

Generally speaking, then, our writers no longer challenge the fashions and superstitions of the day, they defer to them. Our

writing culture has for the most part continued its descent into the politically correct dementia of our historical moment, the latest instance being the pronominal madness that has swept through the universities and entered the larger society. We now live in a world of zhis, zhers, zims and eims. It is no surprise that the current office administrator of the Writers' Union, Valerie Laws, signs off a communiqué with the parenthetical tag "(she/her/herself)." Such silliness has become *pro forma*, and I fear not even the polemical power of a Jordan Peterson can resist it. The problem is not only legally compelled speech, as Peterson says, but socially compelled compliance.

Of course, I have no intention of apologizing for my heinous crimes and earning absolution from a band of literary hypocrites. Apologies are for wimps. Nor do I regret my *non grata* status. To adapt the inimitable Groucho, I wouldn't want to belong to a club that would not have me as a member. And I certainly wouldn't want to belong to a disreputable club, no matter how advantageous, that *would* have me as a member. In any case, the holier-than-thou priggishness and political timidity that have overtaken CanLit are undeniable signs of intellectual weakness and moral cowardice. Why be part of it?

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