

Shakespeare Cometh

by Matt Manochio

Editor's note: Media sources reported in early March 2025 that Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust is "decolonizing" the Bard's hometown museum. The Trust owns several buildings in Shakespeare's hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon, England and some of the Bard's personal items. The ghost of Shakespeare, utilizing artificial intelligence, responds below to the intention of the Trust to "create a more inclusive museum experience" by removing language that could be deemed offensive from its collections.

U pon mine birth in the year of our Lord, 1564, a scourge didst alight upon me. Not a true plague, borne by foul vermin that didst slay countless of mine countrymen, but rather a malady of unchangeable skin hue.

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, which doth possess sundry edifices in mine own homeland of Stratford-upon-Avon, and doth care for a trove of mine own manuscripts, doth strive to "forge a more embracing museum experience" by pledging to discard words of race, of sex, or of love that may be deemed offensive by the learned denizens of Harvard's faculty lounge from mine own writings, which in some manner serve the tenet of white European supremacy.

In sooth, this Trust—comprised of charlatans I know not and would ne'er have granted mine own stewardship unto, for, to speak plainly, they doth

seem a throng of frenzied Karens—doth wish to decolonize mine own museum.

Mine sonnets and plays did ne'er offend the living when penned in mine era and hundreds of years thereafter, yet now, alas, they dost vex a band of souls who, lacking better plight, do take up petty grievances.

Forsooth, for a better portion of modern humankind's annals—commencing when mine plays were brought forth to light and concluding but five years hence—schools and universities did impart mine works and held me in esteem as the preeminent scribe of the English tongue.

If thou art 50 years of age this day, 'tis likely thou wert compelled to peruse, say, *The Tempest*, in thy scholarly years, and perchance didst voice thy lament unto thy teacher, proclaiming that thou hadst nary a notion of what any soul did utter. (That is what the scribe, feigning to be I, doth recall.)

Today, however, schools have foregone the teaching of mine works, for pearl-clutching progressives do perceive them to be rife with misogyny and racism.

“Shakespeare was a tool used to ‘civilize’ black and brown people in England’s empire,” quoth Ayanna Thompson, a scholar of the Bard and professor of English at Arizona State University, in a 2021 interview.

Whilst perchance not a corporeal shrew, yet truly sounding as such, Thompson found herself not solitary in her incapacity to sever the art from the artist. Teachers also need to “challenge the whiteness” of the assumption that Shakespeare’s works are “universal,” did insist Jeffrey Austin, who doth head a Michigan high school’s English literature department, as quoted in the *New York Post*.

In times past, a teacher of public schools in Washington, Claire Bruncke did declare to the *School Library Journal* in the same *Post* tale that she hath banished the Bard from her classroom to “stray from centering the narrative of white, cisgender, heterosexual men.”

Take Othello, a Moor of noble bearing, who doth encounter discrimination by Iago’s words and machinations. To brand me a racist, when I but commented upon the relation of English society with race through characters of mine own creation, doth bewilder the mind.

The contemporary white scribe, Stephen King, doth sprinkle the “N-word” upon his writings as if it were the topping upon ice cream, yet none doth as-

sign the stain of racism unto him. Perchance he did strive to render wider truths concerning the bane of racism. Top of Form

For what cause am I thus singled out as a loathsome creature of race-baiting? Top of Form

These unbidden critics dost proclaim I seek to cloak the realm in white dominion. Are they mad? I was a playwright, not a tyrant, who did satirize and chronicle the world as ’twas, and not as a throng of gender theory scholars did desire it to be.

Perchance, if I couldst find a way to grace the stage of *The View* and endure an inquisition by the learned minds of Whoopi Goldberg and Sunny Hostin, I would elucidate that artists do wrestle with disquieting themes in their creations; yet, in sooth, this doth not serve as a silent endorsement of such disputes. Top of Form

Many a critic doth perceive history as a tale that commenceth with the day of their own birth, deeming all that came before as unworthy of study and destined for ruin. These zealous souls dost vandalize statues and, shamefully, dost rewrite superior works (alas, poor Roald Dahl) to conform to their own sense of moral grander. Who hath died and made them sovereign?

To decolonize a thing doth means to strip it of Western (that is, white) dominion. How one performeth this on that which was never colonized to commence with doth require expounding. The British Empire *did* colonize land that *did* become the United States. It did

not colonize itself. To remove Western influence from that which is innately Western may be likened to the endeavor of ridding African influence from, forsooth, the Maasai. Such a feat cannot be accomplished without the utter destruction of its indispensable nature. Perchance that is the crux.

Matt Manochio is a writer living in New Jersey. His website is www.mattmanochio.com.
