

Shakespeare's Dark Lady -- John Hudson (review disguised as fiction)

by Mathew Paust

[I found inspiration from Bon Iver's "Holocene" while writing this piece. Makes a good soundtrack for reading it, too.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWcyIpul8OE>]

I've borrowed "Prof. Pecksniff" from Dickens as a repository for the plethora of loathings aroused in me by John Hudson's better-late-than-never tribute to William Shakespeare (a surname that meant "wanker" back in the day, by the way) for sticking his neck out for the woman whose life he undoubtedly saved by sticking his name on her plays. Hudson's book, ***Shakespeare's Dark Lady***, details this magnificent Elizabethan sacrifice.

The Pecksniffian legions dismiss Hudson's tribute for various reasons I shall get to shortly (some can be found in Amazon's amateur "review" section--"laughable drivel," is one). Their objections reflect the sort of tenacity seen more recently in a conviction that refuses to die blaming the ongoing yearlong COVID pandemic on a global myth managed from her Deep State bunker by Nancy Pelosi to discredit a Falstaffian character resembling the literary version conjured by Amelia Bassano Lanier, the "Dark Lady" in question. In each instance, curiosity and critical thinking take a back seat to inertia and the more pressing concerns of self interest.

Michael Posner tells us, "For the vast Shakespeare community at large — the worlds of academe, publishing, the theatre, tourism, merchandising (a multimillion-dollar annual industry) — there simply [is] no Shakespeare authorship question to debate. People who [think] otherwise must therefore be either half-cocked

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conspiracy theorists or literary snobs — somehow incapable of believing that a mere country lad from the Midlands with a grade six education could be capable of writing the plays...”

Academia's approach is pragmatic, Hudson contends, "rather than taking a rational approach to investigating evidence. In part, a commitment to the status quo makes it easier to get grants and lucrative positions: announcing that you don't believe Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare will not only fail to secure grants, it will make you unwelcome in English departments. Dr Ros Barber, for instance, recently described the subject as 'completely taboo' since if she wanted to do serious research on the subject it was made clear to her that '[she] would not be allowed to research it at a British university at all'."

Prithee! Tempest in a teapot, I say. I mean, who really gives a big cahoot who wrote the greatest literature the world has ever known? Does it *really* matter if the plays came from the pen of Willie Wanker or a highly educated Jewish Italian lass who spent a decade mistressing the queen's illegitimate cousin whose realm included the entire British theatre? I daresay! Isn't it vastly more important to know Mr. Wanker gallantly allowed his name to appear on the cover of plays that promoted feminism and parodied Christianity, for which England would have executed their author had her identity been proven, albeit the lesser risk of the shallow Lord Dunsdon penetrating the sophisticated subtlety of their deeper meanings? Couldn't some little smarty pants courtier have run to the Queen squealing. "Your Highness, Your Highness! Guess what those lines in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* really mean??" Oh sure, Wanker, known as a finagling, money-lending con man with a dashing goatee, might have wriggled his way out from under the executioner's axe, I give you that. Yet even with a wee bit of risk, such a man of such shady reputation must deserve *some* credit for calling upon even the tiniest shred of noble inclination in such a dicey situation. Not quite a *Tale of Two Cities* sacrifice—I'm not reaching that far, perhaps an extra garland on the man's grave, which, by the way, is rather ornate, beflowered and royal-looking, whilst the Dark Lady is buried

without so much as a plaque in the parish church of St. James in Clerkenwell. Serves her right, some might say, for making fun of the Holy Trinity.

Amelia died in relative poverty, while her literary protector left a rich estate, altho, oddly, including no manuscripts or books or anything remotely resembling literature by anyone. More importantly, are their souls resting peacefully? I would say yes. I *do* say yes! The wealthy Wanker with the insouciant eternal joy of having pulled off one of the greatest hoaxes in history; his Dark Lady with the sublime satisfaction of having contributed a supreme celestial gift to the mind of humanity.

I trust you aren't expecting me to prove any of this, to persuade you to join in my celebration of Truth at last. Truth ultimately. Truth with a capital "T." I put this little fiction scenario together to lure you into the pages of John Hudson's book so you can decide for yourself. Go ahead, stick your neck out. Make your day.

Prof. Pecksniff be damned. But keep in mind that all's well that...oh, you know what comes next. Sing it!

