

Lucy Doesn't Love Sensitivity Readers

In 1953, Lucille Ball's character in *I Love Lucy*, Lucy Ricardo, gave birth to Ricky Ricardo Jr., bringing an end to perhaps the most famous television pregnancy ever. The episode, *Lucy Goes to the Hospital*, saw [44 million viewers tune in](#), covering nearly 72 percent of all American homes which owned a television.

The saga of Lucy's television pregnancy was concurrent with the real life birth of Ball's son. When they discovered they were pregnant, Ball and Desi Arnez, her husband and co-star, fully expected the show to be canceled. Instead, [their producer convinced](#) them to incorporate it in the show's plot.

CBS and several sponsors had reservations, however. They finally agreed as long as every script of every episode for the entirety of Lucy's pregnancy was reviewed for sensitive content by a priest, a minister, and a rabbi.

Religion interfering in artistic expression? Horrors! Surely such a practice would no longer be considered in our enlightened and open-minded age. Surely artists should be free to practice their craft, and no one would dream in today's world of imposing such dogma upon their right to self-expression!

But they do. And while this process isn't led by a pastor, priest, or rabbi, it is still steeped in religiosity and moralism. Today, these censors are called sensitivity readers.

Rather than looking to ensure moral stances on social issues, these sensitivity readers are looking to enforce politically correct depictions of people on issues of race, gender, sexuality, and other identity politics issues. An extension

and professionalization of cancel culture, sensitivity readers are [sometimes hired](#) at author or publisher request. Many times, however, people without any intent of helping an author take it upon themselves to protect the public from allegedly racist, sexist, Islamophobic, transphobic, or misogynistic writings.

This leads to some rather ironic situations, especially since complaints that publishing is "[still hideously middle-class and white](#)" are rife. One would think these arbiters of virtue would celebrate minority authors, perhaps even tolerate a few faux pas where privileged, white, middle-class authors would be excommunicated.

Not so. This brand of cancel culture knows no boundaries, and thus works against other aims of the diversity crowd.

Twenty-six-year-old Amélie Wen Zhao is an example of this. In 2019, Zhao was getting ready to publish her debut novel, "Blood Heir," a book which [earned a six-figure advance](#). Instead, a storm of angry commentators overwhelmed this young, immigrant woman of Asian descent, and Zhao told her publishers to [cancel the scheduled June release](#). The cancel culture crowd claimed (many without having ever read the novel) that the book dealt with race and slavery in an insensitive manner.

Taking time to reread her novel, Zhao decided her critics were incorrect in their attacks. "[Blood Heir](#)" was released in November with only minor revisions by Zhao.

One of Zhao's leading critics, sensitivity reader and author Kosokso Jackson, fell victim to a [cancellation of his own](#). Jackson, a queer black writer, wrote "A Place for Wolves," which was to be a gay romance novel featuring American teenagers, set in the midst of the Kosovo War.

Somehow creating an Albanian Muslim villain and setting a romance story in the midst of a genocide was not the most popular choice for sensitivity readers, or for the mob that

inhabits Twitter. Jackson pulled his novel from publication.

Novels and other art forms today may not have the priest, pastor, and rabbi ensuring compliance like “I Love Lucy” did, but they’ve picked up censors which hold to their own religion of political correctness. All they care about is the sense of power they get from enforcing an arbitrary dogma upon others. That arbitrariness is where modern censors are so much more dangerous than those of America’s past.

While the writers of “I Love Lucy” roughly knew what lines to toe with regard to Lucy’s pregnancy, today’s writers are subjected to ever changing rules of what constitutes gross and minor violations of politically correct views.

Such an environment must be terrifying to work in.

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