

#Whyareyoutellingmethis

My mother told me that the word bowdlerised was derived from the actions of Thomas Bowdler, who was famous for rewriting the works of Shakespeare in a way he deemed appropriate for 19th century women and children. In his *The Family Shakespeare* (1807), he edited out any bad language, references to sex, murder or anything and anyone else he deemed unsuitable for family reading.

‘It’s a scary thought isn’t it?’ my mother concluded. ‘That everything you think you know has had most of the content taken out, and all the stories in your head are just designed to protect you from the realities of human nature?’ I answered that I didn’t find it scary, and she said that she knew I didn’t because I was a big brave boy.

‘But now you’re all grown up,’ she continued, ‘I thought I should come clean and admit that I bowdlerised some of the stories I told you in accordance with my belief in the free market. I did it because I felt this was the best way to protect you, but now you’re older I worry that these oversimplifications of human behavior have affected you adversely.

‘I’m fine,’ I replied, confused as to why she was making such a fuss about nothing. She looked at me, concerned, then asked if I could remember the story of the Trojan Horse, which was my favourite growing up.

‘Of course I remember,’ I replied.

‘Well, the version I told you is not the version most people know. I bowdlerised the story so much that it wasn’t really the same story anymore.’

‘Why are you telling me this? Of course I know that,’ I answered, perplexed.

‘I know you know, but let me finish. When I told my Trojan Horse story to children after you, I realised that I should change the title because the version of the story I told was so different from the original one that they could get confused. So I called my version *The Aspirational Horse*.

‘OK.’ I answered, as naturally I didn’t mind what she called it.

‘So the Trojan Horse and *The Aspirational Horse* are in fact different stories.

‘Why are you telling me this?’ I asked again. ‘Of course I know the difference between your Trojan Horse and the Trojan Horse.

‘And you know all the bits about the Trojans looking in awe at the aspirational horse is not in the version of the Trojan Horse most people know.’

‘Yes of course I know that,’ I answered, beginning to lose my temper, but she carried on regardless. ‘And the way the aspirational horse conquered all those hearts and brought the Greeks and the Trojans together. That’s just *The Aspirational Horse*.’

‘Mum!’ I snapped in disbelief, ‘I’ve read books since I was a child and I know what

happens in the original Trojan Horse story.’

‘So you know I changed what happens?’

‘Yes! I’m a big boy.’ I enunciated, loud and clear.

‘Oh that’s such a relief to hear,’ she replied, ‘I don’t know why I was sure you didn’t.’

*-Oliver Corino, 2018*

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