

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/shakespeare-scholar-disputes-decision-reversal-by-journal/2015679.article>

Shakespeare scholar disputes decision-reversal by journal

Memoria di Shakespeare's new editors backtrack on acceptance of Oxfordian academic's paper

September 11, 2014

By [Matthew Reisz](#) matthew.reisz@tesglobal.com Twitter: [@MatthewReiszTHE](#)



Source: [Sam Goldwyn/Renaissance Films/BBC/Kobal](#)

Ado in academia: one of the journal's editors claimed that the professor's paper on Shakespeare was 'unscholarly'

A major spat has broken out within the world of Shakespeare studies.

In January this year, the editors of the Italian journal *Memoria di Shakespeare* asked Richard Waugaman to revise his paper titled "The psychology of Shakespearean biography", which they described as "absolutely pertinent" to a 2015 issue on Shakespeare's biography.

A clinical professor of psychiatry and "faculty expert on Shakespeare" at [Georgetown University](#) in Washington DC, Professor Waugaman is also an "Oxfordian", believing there is evidence that the poems and plays were written not by "the man from Stratford" but by Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford.

His paper, he explains, examines this case but also explores "the conscious and unconscious psychological factors behind the taboo against openly discussing the authorship question", citing examples from the history of science "where new discoveries that ultimately lead to paradigm shifts are often bitterly opposed by adherents of traditional theories". All seemed to be proceeding to publication and the parties had reached the stage of discussing minor editorial details when, on 17 August, Professor Waugaman received an email from Rosy Colombo, senior professor of English at the [Sapienza University of Rome](#).

The email, seen by *Times Higher Education*, explained that the previous editors of *Memoria di Shakespeare* had stepped down and that she and her new fellow editor, Gary Taylor – distinguished research professor at [Florida State University](#) – had "decided against publishing an article that has come out already". Professor Waugaman responded that it seemed like "a breach of good faith with contributors" for "an article that was invited by a journal's co-editors, be rejected by the next co-editors".

This generated an almost immediate reply from Professor Taylor, saying that his agreement to take over as co-editor had been "conditional on rejection of certain contributions, like yours, which seem to me profoundly unscholarly, and which would have the effect of undermining the credibility and status of other contributions to the volume.

"I simply find your reasoning, and your evidence, as unconvincing as those of Holocaust deniers, and other conspiracy theorists," he added.

Answering with biting sarcasm, Professor Waugaman noted that he could "only assume your emotions have over-ridden your common decency. I know one fellow Oxfordian who lost more than 70 relatives in the Holocaust, and he finds that comparison especially disgusting."

Asked to comment on Professor Waugaman's claims, Professor Colombo told *THE* that "it is not at all unusual for editors and publishers to reject something after it has been written, or even revised... Until you have a contract signed by both parties, it is entirely acceptable for the publisher/editor (of a book or a journal) to change their minds."

Professor Taylor, meanwhile, reiterated his belief that "work like Waugaman's is fundamentally unscholarly, irrational and illogical. I compared it to the work of Holocaust-deniers not because the damage to Shakespeare is comparable to the damage to the millions of people killed by the Nazis, but because Waugaman's work depends upon the same kind of conspiratorial claims. You cannot reason with such claims, because they dismiss empirical evidence as just another conspiracy. The idea that anti-Stratfordian zealots are 'censored' is ridiculous."

READER'S COMMENTS (10)

#1 Submitted by ED BOSWELL on September 11, 2014 - 6:59am

I question Mr. Taylor's expertise on this subject. Surely he knows that Oxford's in-laws were the dedicatees of the First Folio, and that Oxford was known as the "Italianate Earl" after his grand tour of Italy, which was to every city used in the Italian set plays. He also had first hand knowledge of the law, (Gray's Inn), the military, the royal sport of hawking, and was married to the Lord Chancellor of England's daughter. They were the keepers of the records, and pretty much removed Oxford from the official history of the time, because of his "lewd" participation in the stage (Oxford's Boys) and his squandering of a vast fortune. Mr. Taylor's cognitive dissonance on the subject only proved Dr. Waugaman's point, that killing a myth can cause people to go nuts. Let the subject be discussed rationally. The very thought of someone making up the Shakespeare canon off the top of his head w/o real experience, is absurd.

#2 Submitted by psi on September 11, 2014 - 6:09pm

*Professor Taylor's reflexive need to slander scholars such as Georgetown scholar Richard Waugaman with comparisons to holocaust deniers supplies a perfect illustration of the tendency, described as long ago as 1985 in the Folger Library's *Shakespeare Quarterly,* in an article by the then Director of the Library's public education program Richmond Crinkley, as a form of "bizarre form of mutant racism," for orthodox Shakespeareans to answer their critics with bogus tomfoolery and derogatory ad hominem. Needless to say, when the orthodox side in the "discussion" feels compelled to offer such forms of argument in order to justify outright censorship, this does not inspire confidence in the credibility or durability of orthodoxy. Real scholars do not require such imperious language or pander to such vulgar comparisons. Professor Taylor's emperor is showing some skin. If he should like to have a real debate, I'm sure that can be arranged.*

#3 Submitted by geoffrey_green on September 11, 2014 - 10:17pm

I feel compelled to compliment Matthew Reisz for the courage and willingness to write this article exposing an issue which, for many, is all too easily ignored. I have no idea what Mr. Reisz thinks about the Shakespeare Authorship Question and that's perfectly appropriate when the real issue here is academic freedom and the honesty of scholars.

#4 Submitted by Gregkoch on September 12, 2014 - 2:01pm

Dr. Taylor seems unable to let any sleeping dog lie, and lodges himself way too far up a critic's nose. I recently read through his "Macbeth and Middleton" in which he shared his pattern analysis of the stage directions in the First Folio as Thomas Middleton's. He does the classic blunder of placing Middleton before Shakespeare, instead of Shakespeare before Middleton. I was indeed shocked at how unscholarly his arguments were, yet Norton published them. Norton publishes critical opinion on every great author who walked the Earth.

#5 Submitted by Ebor Asencia on September 14, 2014 - 9:40pm

Good to see Prof. Taylor exercising some strong initiative on this silly question. I wish he'd been as sagacious in at least one editorial decision that comes to mind, viz., the matter of the number of days Lear gives Kent to get his "banished trunk" out of Albion. Shakespeare makes the figure paramount: 10. In one of their early editions, Wells-Taylor apparently decided this number was irrelevant. John Jones in Shakespeare at Work (2000) takes them to task for this decision, and Jones was correct to howl, since the source of the significance of Shakespeare's choice of this specific number is found in Lambarde's Eirenarcha. It's one thing to act as the self-proclaimed 'unrepresentable other of the author,' and another to re-write him:

<http://twitdoc.com/upload/masterquickly/tenne-daies.pdf>

#6 Submitted by TheOxfreudian on September 15, 2014 - 12:53pm

The invited, accepted, then rejected article is here--

https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B9YH_poTOlrbRGo0RVjuVk9zTmc/edit

#7 Submitted by Mark Johnson on September 15, 2014 - 6:47pm

The article was never accepted for publication and any indication to the contrary is not accurate. The academic journal in this case did not retract an agreement to publish a paper. In fact, the article had not already been accepted for publication by Memoria di Shakespeare. Dr. Waugaman has previously acknowledged that he had specifically been informed that acceptance of the paper was still contingent upon approval by the editorial board and then upon the approval of peer reviewers. To say that the paper had been accepted, or was even well on its way to being accepted, is not supported by the facts. Let me state here that I Believe Professor Taylor was quite wrong to use the methods of Holocaust deniers in describing the methods of the Shakespeare deniers. I believe that his conduct trivializes the horrors inflicted in the Holocaust and should never be used to describe people who reside in a harmless fringe group, no matter how misguided their beliefs may be. The use of the Holocaust in this fashion is wrong and should be soundly condemned. It would be similar to Oxenfordians comparing their alleged plight to the struggle of African-Americans to achieve civil rights in this country and throwing around accusations of near-racism when criticisms of their methods are made.

#8 Submitted by psi on September 16, 2014 - 10:21pm

Mark Johnson claims that Richard Waugaman's article was "never accepted for publication." In fact, anyone reading the original communications of the case will be aware that the intent of the editors was clearly to accept

*the article. Their comments made it clear that in their view the peer review process was at that point pro forma. Perhaps more to the point, Dr. Waugaman never did receive any peer review comments on the paper. Instead he got a slap in the face from Professor Taylor, someone who is not even listed on the publication's editorial board (<http://ojs.uniroma1.it/index.php/MemShakespeare/about/journalSponsorship>), even as an "adviser" to the journal. Clearly professor Taylor was called in by those of more delicate sensibility to deliver the pronouncement that Professor Waugaman's essay was "unscholarly." He has never defined this term or explained its applicability to the case in question. As Mr. Johnson is well aware, if has read the comments above, the author of the comparison of orthodox Shakespeareans to racist bigots was first put forth in a *Shakespeare Quarterly* review of Charlton Ogburn's *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* by Richmond Crinkley, then the educational director of the Folger Shakespeare Library. In my experience of more than twenty years studying, researching, and writing about the authorship question, the analogy is - all too often -- entirely pertinent and justified.*

#9 Submitted by TheOxfreudian on September 20, 2014 - 3:03pm

Professor Gary Taylor claimed the idea that post-Stratfordians "are 'censored' is ridiculous." Lest trusting readers take his disavowal at face value, I will share two earlier experiences with other publications that also left me with the strong impression that I was censored because of the taboo against publishing evidence unfavorable to the Stratfordian authorship theory. In 2011, The Shakespeare Newsletter sent me a book to review. After they received my review, I was initially unable to get a reply as to when the review would be published. Finally, its co-editor, Thomas Pendleton wrote to me: "The Shakespeare Newsletter does not publish reviews of works espousing the Oxfordian (or anti-Stratfordian) hypothesis, which fairly characterizes [the book I reviewed]. Nor do we publish pieces that argue that the Oxfordian (or anti-Stratfordian) hypothesis deserves more attention or more impartial evaluation or more credence, which, I think, fairly characterizes your own comments on [the book]. In 2009, I sent a manuscript to the English professor and Shakespeare scholar Peter Rudnytsky, when he edited a journal of applied psychoanalysis (American Imago). I asked him whether my article would be suitable for his journal. He replied the same day, "I consider the 'anti-Stratfordian' argument to be comparable to a belief in UFOs, and it will take a lot to convince me that the piece is one I would be prepared to publish." Eight days later, he rejected it, with the statement, "[I]t is out of the question that I could accept your flight of fancy for Imago...I have to tell you in all sincerity that you... are in the grip of a delusional belief." Many impartial people would consider these stories to be evidence of the sort of ideological censorship that Professor Taylor practices but attempts to deny.

#10 Submitted by eddieever on March 26, 2017 - 12:22am

"Taylor, meanwhile, reiterated his belief that "work like Waugaman's is fundamentally un scholarly, irrational and illogical." Unlike this scholarly, rational response. Unlike every attempted refutation of the Oxford theory. Unlike every biography of Shakespeare ever published!