

Ms. Core King, editor
Book World
The Washington Post
1150 15 St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20071

3/7/92

Dear Ed. King,

If you have no further interest in the "conspiracies" controversy, this may inform you for the future. In my letter you published today I addressed John Leyden's competence.

The one that follows addresses his honesty:

John G. Leyden does not reply to my criticism of his review of JFK assassination books that he limited to those espousing ^{conspiracy} theories rather than presenting facts. (Book World, Mar. 7)

He says of the first of ~~my~~ ^{my} six, all ignored, that "Whitewash was omitted because it is difficult to find and even more difficult to read."

No book listed in "Books In Print" is "difficult to find."

If in fact he found it difficult to read he has a comprehension problem not shared by thousands literally who with a high school or less education, hundreds with less education, wrote me about it.

His alleged reason for making no mention of Anthony Summers' Conspiracy is that he "seemed to accept the basic Warren Commission findings, but then drew his own conclusions."

This is an accurate description of Jim Moore's trashy "~~is~~ stupid, irrational exploitation" that he did mention.

Most books published more than 25 years ago, as Whitewash was, (it was completed less than five months after the Warren Report was published, less than three months after its 26 volumes of appendix were published) have long since disappeared. Today it is the only ^{available} book on the Warren Report and the JFK assassination that does not present a conspiracy theory as a "solution" to that crime.

Leyden's non-reply does not really explain his omitting ^{mine} it in his supposed review of the books available.

Harold Weisberg

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Will the Real . . .

IT'S NOT surprising that S. Schoenbaum's *Shakespeare's Lives* was reviewed (Book World, Jan. 19) by Martin Gardner, another Stratford orthodox—they hold each other's hands, unable to hold up their side of legitimate debate.

Gardner follows the contours of Schoenbaum's flat earth, pointing out how Baconians fell over the edge, with similar hope that those who support Edward de Vere, the earl of Oxford, will drop out of sight. Gardner's prize syllogism is that the Oxfordians' mentor was named Looney; therefore they are. What other reply can Stratfordians provide when their man was demonstrably illiterate? There is no evidence that he penned *anything* except to autograph a few legal documents, letter by painful letter, yet still misspelling his own name.

The case for Oxford's authorship is long, detailed and cogent, but not nearly so as that against the bumpkin Schoenbaum and Gardner enshrine as their Shakespeare. They admit that hardly a scintilla of biographical data exists about their man. And why not? should have been their first question, but it is never asked, much less answered.

So it is for lovers of the greatest English poet to ask that question. The best place to start is an excruciatingly objective study that Schoenbaum labeled "madness": Charlton Ogburn's *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*. The arguments therein convinced the likes of Bismarck, John Bright, Dickens, Disraeli, Palmerston, Freud, Henry James, Walt Whitman and Mark Twain. The last, no doubt, had particular empathy for non-Stratfordians because he wrote under a pen name himself. But of course he, like the others mentioned, was mad.

THOMAS H. TAYLOR
 Washington

IN A sidebar to Martin Gardner's review of S. Schoenbaum's *Shakespeare's Lives*, Gardner notes

ability of authentic experts. It gave John G. Leyden a full page, more than it devotes to a major review, for an obvious exploitation and commercialization of the subject diguised as a review of the literature, untainted by consultation with such standard sources as "Books in Print."

His quick-buck pseudo-scholarship, flawed in almost every conceivable way, misleads your readers in representing that there are and have been only conspiracy-theory books, supporting or criticizing the Warren Report.

Conspiracy is a matter of fact, not of theory. Beginning with the first book, the first of my "Whitewash" series, all still available and unmentioned, there has never been a time when readers did not have access to non-theorizing books.

Also unmentioned when he devotes so much space to obvious trash are Sylvia Meagher's magnificent *Accessories after the Fact* and Howard Roffman's excellent *Presumed Guilty*, two of the earlier works, both entirely factual, with no conspiracy theorizing.

If Leyden actually read the books about which he writes rather than paraphrasing the opinions of others, his judgment is childishly incompetent, as in describing Jim Moore's *Conspiracy of One* as a "point-by-point" rebuttal of books critical of the Warren report. In fact it is a stupid, irrational exploitation that rebuts nothing.

Political assassinations are much too important in a representative society for their exploitation and commercialization, whether from the Oliver Stones or the Leydens or Moores and their ilk, to be treated with respect, especially when the works that do not theorize conspiracy and are entirely factual are ignored.

HAROLD WEISBERG
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