

11 December 2017

I feel obliged to document my experience with the journal *Polar Record* (PR) and its publisher Cambridge University Press (CUP) over the past 5 years.

Please note that every item in the timeline that follows is not only verifiable but *undisputed* by PR & CUP.

- **Mar 2012.** PR editorial board member Janice Cavell publishes a research note in PR about JE Bernier, on whom I had recently published. In it, she claims credit for some of my research. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247411000787>
- **May 2012.** I submit a research note to PR critiquing Cavell's reading of the history. It includes these 2 sentences: "I emphatically deny Cavell's claim in her March 2012 Note in *Polar Record* that she led me to my find. Although we were in contact early in the research process, we ultimately researched and wrote our works independently."
- **Jul 2012.** PR accepts my note for publication. In Sept, we agree on final proofs.
- **Oct 2012.** PR editor gives PR board member Cavell my note "as a courtesy."
- **Nov 2012.** Even before my note's publication, Cavell submits a response to it. (See eventual publication line: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247416000760>)
- **Nov 2012.** PR editor withdraws my note, without warning or explanation. I protest, without effect.
- **Feb 2013.** Cavell submits article on Bernier to PR editor. PR publishes it. (See publication line <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0032247413000466>)
- **Jan 2016.** I learn of Cavell's 2013 article, & protest to PR's board. While it is certainly possible to prove some of her interpretations changed between 2012 and 2013 *in line with* my critiques, it is impossible, of course, to prove they changed *because of* my critiques. So I seek a remedy that will leave it to History/historians to sort this out: "my research note be published in *Polar Record* in the form it was accepted for publication in Sept 2012, down to the 'Received May 2012.' There can be no accompanying editorial note and no rejoinder from Cavell; her article is rejoinder enough."
- **Jan 2016.** On behalf of PR, a new co-editor rejects my complaint.
- **Feb 2016.** When I point out that screen captures of the PR website shows the new co-editor had been promoted from deputy editor in the previous 5 days to deal with my complaint, CUP takes over my complaint.

(Since Jan 2016, neither PR nor CUP has, despite my repeated offers, asked me a single follow-up question or asked me to provide evidence related to this dispute.)

- **Sep 2016.** CUP informs PR, Cavell, & me: PR must publish my research note. CUP's short email concludes that, with that, "this matter will be fully and finally closed. In the interests of moving forward with publishing *Polar Record* and furthering its mission, no further correspondence to anyone at the Press from any of the parties to this long-running and personal dispute will be reviewed or answered." With that assurance, I accept CUP's resolution & sign away copyright.
- **Oct 2016.** Cavell submits "A Response to Alan MacEachern" to PR. PR accepts it. (See publication line <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247416000760>)
- **26 Oct 2016.** My note, with "Received May 2012" publication line, is published in PR 51 months after it was accepted: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247416000681>
- **Nov 2016.** Having taken <2 months to go through peer review & production, Cavell's response is published, first online: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247416000760> Its very 1st sentence criticizes my "Received May 2012" note for not taking her 2013 article into account. It also makes a new claim about the origins of our dispute.
- **Jan 2017.** I learn of Cavell's response & protest to PR & CUP. PR never responds.
- **May 2017.** CUP responds. Its position is that its Sept 2016 resolution did not preclude Cavell's response. However, CUP admits the error of her 1st sentence & will issue a Publisher's Note – the 1st ever in the journal, apparently.
- **Sep 2017.** Eight months after the error was pointed out to CUP, & 4 months after CUP admitted the error & provided the exact text for a Publisher's Note, the Note is finally published: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247417000523>
- **Nov 2017.** I submit the following letter-to-the-editor to PR. I remind PR's editors that PR & CUP are members of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), whose Code of Conduct 14.2 states, "Authors of criticised material should be given the opportunity to respond."
https://publicationethics.org/files/Code%20of%20Conduct_2.pdf

Dear *Polar Record* editors:

In 2012, with my research note "J.E. Bernier and the Historical Record" having been accepted for publication in *Polar Record*, the editor at the time sent it to editorial board member Janice Cavell as a courtesy. If the present editors had extended me the same courtesy before publishing Cavell's "Canada's Arctic Sector Claim in Historical Perspective: A Response to Alan MacEachern," I could have helped prevent two significant errors from being published:

- First, Cavell's opening sentence criticizes my note – finally published in October 2016, with the "Received May 2012" publication line still intact – for not having taken fully into consideration evidence cited in her other publications, including a *Polar Record* article published first online in 2013. That is, Cavell not only fails to mention she had access to my 2012 note when writing her 2013 article, she

criticizes my 2012 note for not taking her 2013 article into account. It is especially troubling that this error, in Cavell's very first sentence, apparently escaped the notice of *Polar Record's* editors, because it is an error that muddies and misrepresents a chronology that reflects poorly on *Polar Record* as well as Cavell. (I thank Cambridge University Press for acknowledging the seriousness of this error by issuing a Publisher's Note - <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247417000523> – but its Note appeared almost a year after Cavell's response, and is separate from it, so most future readers, including those who download Cavell's response, will likely miss it.)

- Second, Cavell states that in early 2010 she informed me by email of being published in *Polar Record* on the same topic on which I was working. This is deemed so important a point that it rates her response's only endnote. But in autumn 2009, having received a series of increasingly angry emails from her, I asked her not to contact me again, and spam-blocked her. If she emailed me in early 2010, I didn't receive it. And if her email bounced back, she knows this.

I have already said in my research note all that I need to say about the origins of Cavell's dispute with me.

As for our historical debate on Canadian explorer J.E. Bernier, I will leave that to readers to judge. Just read *Polar Record* board member Cavell's 2010, 2011, 2013, 2014, and 2017 Bernier pieces in *Polar Record*, compare them to my 2016 piece, and decide for yourselves whose interpretations seem more reasonable and trustworthy.

Sincerely yours,

Alan MacEachern
 Professor, Department of History
 The University of Western Ontario

PR & CUP refuse to print the letter. PR does not explain why. CUP states, "it is not the place of *Polar Record* or Cambridge University Press to judge the merits of your long-running disagreement with Dr. Cavell."

That is as disingenuous as it is self-interested. *Polar Record* clearly "judged the merits" of this disagreement long ago. And as a result it has made decisions so outrageous that Cambridge University Press has twice in the past year had to step in and override them. The Press is right to be tired of doing so. But the fact that my scholarly integrity has been maligned multiple times in the journal does not *lessen* my right to defend my integrity there, or lessen the journal's and publisher's responsibility to allow me to do so.

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