

The Conscience of a Self-Confessed Fraud

—WASHINGTON—

My literary reputation is made! *The New Yorker* magazine has likened me to a member of the Communist Party U.S.A. You might remember that not so many years ago, for a writer or actor to be recognized as a communist by *The New Yorker* was to be recognized as very progressive. If you were a writer, it went without saying that you were an exquisite writer and probably a humanitarian and advocate of early child schooling. All that talk about Soviet prison camps and general repression was presumed to be a lot of anti-Communist hysteria. Communists were essentially soft-hearted folks or “liberals in a hurry,” as the phrase had it. So now it is official; I am a moral and literary colossus.

My sudden literary recognition in the venerable *New Yorker* comes in an adulatory review of David Brock's new book, *Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative*. The reviewer is Hendrik Hertzberg, who rose to literary prominence many years ago as a poet in President Jimmy Carter's speech-writing stable. Jimmy is the fellow who campaigned on the slogan, “If I ever lie to you don't vote for me.” He presided over an administration that saw American international prestige and American economic vitality sink to a post-World War II nadir while he transformed the presidency into a soap box. Naturally the American people thought he was lying and did not vote for him in 1980; electing, instead, Ronald Reagan, a man whom Hertzberg and the other Carterites will still tell you was a dreadful failure.

From the literary plateau of the Carter White House, Hertzberg has vaulted from literary Himalaya to literary Himalaya, and now at *The New Yorker* he is touting Brock as heir to Arthur Koestler, author of *Darkness at Noon*, and a writer in the vanguard of the anti-Communist literary movements of the 1940s. In our day Brock himself is in the vanguard of our era's cutting-edge literary movement. He stands with Doris Kearns Goodwin, Stephen Ambrose, Michael Bellesiles, winner of the Bancroft Prize for history, and—I would guess—scores of other writers in employing such heretofore uncelebrated literary techniques as plagiarism, fic-

titious citations, made-up reportage, and bold fraud. Brock's fraud begins in his book's title, in the phrase *The Conscience of...* So replete is his book with fabrication that Brock obviously has no conscience.

Hertzberg, writing in his usual spumoni of confusion, is not all that clear as to whether it is he or Brock who has likened me to a Communist, but I am not alone in receiving this gratifying accolade. His *New Yorker* review likens all conservatives and most Republicans to members of the Communist Party U.S.A. That means nearly half the citizens of the United States are Communists. Who says the Cold War is over? We Reds may win yet. “Yuppies, you have nothing to lose but your chains.”

There is more confused writing in Hertzberg's testimonial that touches upon me personally. For instance, he claims that *The American Spectator's* “Troopergate” story (which along with a *Los Angeles Times* story quoted Governor Bill Clinton's bodyguards as having pimped for the governor) is now “discredited.” This weasel word may mean many things, but “discredited” does not mean refuted. In fact, Clinton's subsequent behavior has only validated “Troopergate's” gravamens that he is a sexual predator and abuser of power. His perjury, obstruction of justice, contempt of court, and abuse of the pardoning power came later.

Hertzberg's confusions continue. In *The New Yorker* he seems to be saying that at *The American Spectator* I commissioned “the story” that White House deputy counsel Vincent Foster “had been murdered by or at the behest of the Clintons, who were orchestrating a monstrous cover-up.” I never commissioned or published such a story. The piece is a concoction of Brock's literary art. Both he and Hertzberg are misrepresenting a 1995 review by Ambrose Evans-Pritchard of Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's report on Foster's death. Evans-Pritchard's actual piece concludes thus: “It is not the purpose of this article to explain what happened to Vincent Foster on July 20, 1993. I do not have any answers.” *The American Spectator* never claimed Foster was murdered and eventually lost the financial support of a major donor for ridiculing a book that argued that Foster was murdered.

Hertzberg, apparently still under Brock's spell, goes on to repeat Brock's equally fictional claim that the present solicitor general of the United States, Ted Olson, wanted

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BY R. EMM



the nonexistent *Spectator* piece published, telling Brock that the imaginary piece “was a way of turning up the heat on the administration until another scandal was shaken loose, which was the *Spectator's* mission.” Had Hertzberg asked Olson before publishing this balderdash, Olson would have told him, as he has said repeatedly of Brock's claim, that as a lawyer it was not his responsibility to interfere with or second-guess the editorial judgment of the *Spectator's* editors.

Now, of course, Brock is a self-confessed liar. In fact, he is a self-confessed fraud; he boasts of having published fraudulent claims about Clarence Thomas. He is the first member of this rising literary movement to draw attention to his arty technique. Perhaps Hertzberg aspires to become the New Charlatan's Professor Lionel Trilling. His next rave review will be for Doris Kearns Goodwin whose plagiarisms have stirred the country.

Calling All Pundits: Enron Alert

—WASHINGTON—

Is there not anyone out there among America's famously outspoken pundits willing to utter a kind word for Enron? Whatever happened to our columnists' vaunted iconoclasm? What about their compassion or their readiness to champion the underdog? Surely, those woebegone Enron execs trooping up to Capitol Hill practically in chains are underdogs. Who among the bigmouth pundits will stand up and say “Wait a minute. Hold it. Give the guys a break!”

SANCES

RELL, JR.



Are they waiting for the intercession of Human Rights Watch?

This is a perfect time for the brusque, beefy, no-nonsense Jack Germond to prove his stuff or for *The Washington Post's* Richard Cohen once again to display his talent for "independence." Or how about the inimitable Maureen Dowd publishing a playful and girlish column at her venerated site on the op-ed page of *The New York Times*? Surely she could tap out a clever column about the Enron executives' neat haircuts or their membership at posh golf clubs or something about Rodeo Drive. Typical of her, it would have the Light Touch. It would bring in all manner of knowing detail about the typical Enron executive's lifestyle, his wife's lifestyle, his pedicurist's lifestyle or that of his highly pedigreed dog. It would be another of Miss Dowd's "Makes-you-think" pieces. Surely I am not the first to observe that she is more than a writer of occasional columns; she is a sociologist-like Flaubert!

Or if not compassion, how about one of their famous "contrarian" pieces arguing that, contrary to received opinion, Enron was actually a brilliantly conceived modern corporation, very progressive and—what would they call it?—New Democrat. I suppose *The New York Times'* Dismal Science columnist, Paul Krugman, already wrote this piece. At least I thought I saw such a piece written by him some time ago in, I believe it was, *Fortune*. Now Mr. Krugman is leading the lynch mob against his former Enron heroes.

His indignation against Enron seems to have developed after it was revealed—not by

Mr. Krugman, mind you—that he had received \$50,000 for being a member of a mysterious Enron advisory group of pundits, most of whose members we now know have last names that begin with the letter *K*. There is Mr. Krugman and pundit William Kristol, to name but two. Only one other paid advisor has been identified, but there must be more. Possibly Senator Ernest Hollings of South Carolina will expose the rest of them, and that detail about their last name's beginning with *K* ought to raise the curiosity of the cornpone senator from the Senate Commerce Committee.

But to return to Enron: its executives paid these pundits lavishly. Is it possible that the country's other pundits have also been on the take? Does that explain why not one has come forward with a good word for Enron? Perhaps they are following the Krugman tactic of heaping contempt on Enron to prove their own probity.

Well, it is all very disappointing. Doubtless, as time goes on, some of my conservative colleagues will leap to Enron's defense. It is just a matter of the conservatives' waiting until Enron's plight becomes absolutely hopeless. Doubtless then, Pat Buchanan will heave up a column, perhaps arguing that Enron is a 100 percent American company with a lineage going back to the Mayflower. Cal Thomas will discover that Enron is a deeply Christian corporation. Arianna Huffington will see Enron's empty pension funds as examples of "compassionate conservatism." Or is she working some other angle these days?

Boys Will Be Boys, But This Is Getting Eerie

—WASHINGTON—

All Washington is convulsed in debate over whether pugilist Mike Tyson should be allowed to perform in this famous city. The infallible *Washington Times* reports that a fight between Tyson and the delicious Lennox Lewis could bring the city \$150 million in revenue and a much-needed bounce to the tourist business that has fallen off dreadfully since 9/11. Tyson is possibly the most controversial of all heavyweight champions, having spent three years in the calaboose for sexual assault and yet another year for road-rage assault. He is under investigation even

now for two more alleged rapes. Feminists call him a "sexual predator" and want him banned from the fight game. Yet fight fans want to see him in the ring.

Well, he may be a fine fighter, but there is something eerie about him. It is not just that after years of run-ins with the law—usually involving the abuse of women—he remains in the public eye, free to erupt at any time. It is that there are at least three other famous men in the same very public situation, each with his own claim to talent and his own alibis and complaints to being victimized. The first that comes to mind is O.J. Simpson. He remains at large after beating one particularly grisly rap and after several other serious displays of violence.

The other two public men who travel the country with lurid charges filed against them are a former president and an embattled United States congressman. In the case of the former president the charges of abuse of women (one is a rape charge) have not been wholly substantiated. He was, however, been found guilty of contempt of court; and he was impeached for perjury and obstruction of justice. Few would argue with the claims that he is a repeated perjurer and obstructor of justice. Some just say the claims do not matter. The most lurid charge against the congressman remains unsubstantiated; though at this writing it appears he will be defeated because of the charge, which is in fact very serious.

The former president is an amusing fellow, and it is said that he has not done the country much harm. He has, however, served as a role model for some very unsavory figures: for instance the congressman, who has torn a page from the ex-president's game book and now claims that one of the best reasons for re-electing him is that it will help criminal investigators maintain public interest in the whereabouts of Chandra Levy's body. I am not kidding. Congressman Gary Condit said that to a *New York Times* reporter.

As I say, the continued presence of these men in public life strikes me as eerie. Tyson may be champion of the world again. Simpson is starring in a documentary of his life. Clinton is a celebrity—admired here, booed there—all await his next scandal. And Condit is, well, he is a politician who now uses Clinton's tactics to remain in Congress. Once out, perhaps those tactics will help him remain a celebrity. I find all that eerie. ↘

STUDY FINDS SEXISM RAMPANT IN NATURE

SAN DIEGO—According to a University of California—San Diego study, sexism is rampant throughout the natural world, particularly among the highest classes of vertebrates.

“When we first decided to examine attitudes and behaviors toward gender roles among nonhumans, we were wholly unprepared for what we would find,” said Jennifer Tannen, leader of the UCSD research team, a joint venture between the school’s zoology and women’s studies departments. “Females living in the wild routinely fall victim to everything from stereotyping to exclusion from pack activities to sexual harassment.”

Nowhere is the natural world’s gender inequity more transparent, Tannen said, than in the unfair burden females assume for the rearing of offspring.

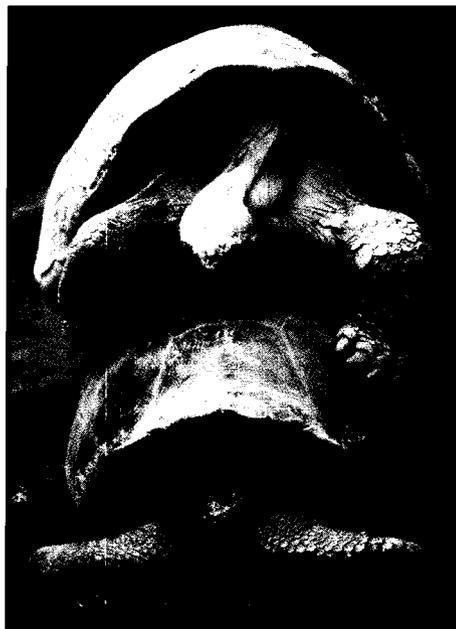
“Take the behavior of the ring-neck pheasant,” Tannen said. “After mating, the male immediately abandons the hen, leaving her responsible for the total care for the chicks. For the single mother-to-be, there is no assistance, either in the form of a partner or child support. It’s despicable.”

Tannen said pheasants are typical of the natural world, where a mere 5 percent of animal species mate for life. Among species that do form lasting pairs, the situation barely improves: Females must remain close to the nest to incubate eggs, nurse and keep watch over the burrow while males are free to go off hunting and fishing with their friends.

“The sexist attitude that childrearing is ‘women’s work’ is prevalent throughout nature and has been for generations, probably since reptiles first developed mammalian characteristics in the Triassic period,” Tannen said. “Sadly, most creatures never pause to challenge these woefully outdated gender roles.”

More seriously, in addition to an unfair division of labor, nature is rife with sexual abuse and harassment. The UCSD study estimates that in 2001 alone, more than 170 trillion cases of abuse occurred in the world’s forests, grasslands and oceans—all of them unreported.

“During the act of mating, the female moose is subject to excessive biting, nipping



and herding,” Tannen said. “The male has no qualms about using sheer brute force to overpower his sex partner, and the female, accustomed to this sort of rough treatment after millions of years of it, doesn’t even realize there’s something wrong.”

Adding insult to injury, Tannen said, the bull moose then heads off to mate with dozens more females over a period of two to three weeks, justifying his behavior as “part of the Mardi Gras-like atmosphere of ‘mating season.’”

With other species, darker situations unfold.

“To mate, the male Galapagos tortoise simply immobilizes the female with his weight, which, as far as I’m concerned, qualifies as nonconsensual sex,” Tannen says.

When female animals refuse to play along with prescribed gender roles, Tannen said, they are demonized. For example, female foxes, known throughout the animal kingdom for their aggressiveness, are labeled “vixen.”

“We’ve all heard the lurid tales about the female black-widow spider, who kills and eats her mate,” Tannen said. “The truth is, male spiders encourage their partners to kill them because it increases the time spent mating and, thus, the number of eggs fertilized by his sperm. But no one condemns the male for his part in this destructive relationship.”

UCSD researchers identified 24 distinct male behaviors designed to perpetuate gender inequity and preserve the prevailing power structure. Among these dominance-asserting behaviors are chest-puffing, plumage-spreading, and antler growth.

The UCSD study is not without its detractors. Glen Otis Brown, author of *Forced To Strut: Reverse Sexism In The Animal World*, countered that male animals are victims of “the beauty myth” as much as females.

“When given a choice, female green tree frogs gravitate toward males that call the loudest and most often,” Brown said. “Female *Poecilia reticulata* [guppies] go straight to the most brightly colored males. But when males evolve exaggerated secondary sexual traits to attract the opposite sex, suddenly they’re the bad guys.”

Annie Secunda, a Boston-based female-rights advocate, said swift action must be taken to address the problem of sexism within the animal kingdom.

“We need to provide tigresses, hens and all other females in nature with outreach programs and support networks,” Secunda said. “We also need to impose standards through intervention. The males of all species need to hear loud and clear the message that this kind of animal behavior is not acceptable.”

Secunda conducts numerous workshops aimed at creating female-friendly biomes and promoting a positive self-image of females on both land and in the sea. She also strongly advocates the legalization of infanticide, which would enable females to devour their newborn offspring when resources are limited.

Secunda spent much of 2001 in the Amazon rainforest, working to create safe spaces for female animals. These efforts, however, yielded mixed results: Females have avoided the lighted walkways she built in several dangerously dense areas, and leaflets encouraging females to learn how their own bodies work were ultimately used to line dens for the rainy season.

Far from discouraged, Secunda said she plans to embark on an intensive study of the sexuality of flora.

“Multicellular plants alternate sexually reproducing and asexually reproducing generations, with each plant producing both male and female gametes,” Secunda said. “It seems many plants have moved past conventional notions of male-female gender altogether. It’s so liberating, I can’t help but have hope for all those so-called ‘higher’ species of animals.”

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