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## New York Times' bias in book reviews

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These are grim days for newspapers. Why, editors at The New York Times don't even subscribe to their own paper. No, I don't have the Wikileaks version of the Times circulation list. (Yet.) But I'm pretty confident that Sam Tanenhaus, the editor of the paper's book review section, hasn't been reading the editorial page. Or, at least, paying any attention to it.

Just a couple of weeks ago, Times public editor Arthur S. Brisbane (at most papers, he'd be called an ombudsman) wrote a piece on newspaper ethics. Lest you wonder, he was for them, and said that key among them must be a willingness to accept and even welcome outside criticism. Brisbane approvingly quoted Bob Steele, who teaches ethics at DePauw University: "Journalism shines the light of scrutiny on the powerful. We look at the power company, oil companies, hospitals, universities, government institutions and other corporations. It is hypocritical if we are not willing to be scrutinized by the public for the way we carry out our work."

That's not the way business is done over at the book review, where Tanenhaus has resolutely refused to run a review of **Gray Lady Down: What the Decline and Fall of The New York Times Means for America**. Written by veteran journalist and press critic William McGowan (his last book, on the insidious creep of political correctness into journalism, won an award from the National Press Club), it's a tough-minded but judicious critique of how the Times has declined under the Baby Boom leadership of publisher Arthur Sulzberger Jr.

Sulzberger, the book argues, has replaced The Times historical pledge "to give the news impartially, without fear or favor" with his own promise to "enhance society," particularly by doing away with the "white, straight male vision of events." Sulzberger's embrace of multiculturalism (and, often, counterculturalism) has eroded The Times' news coverage in a myriad of ways, according to *Gray Lady Down*, from a refusal to acknowledge the role of Islamic fundamentalism in terrorist crimes like the Fort Hood shootings to a full-bore holy war against the Duke lacrosse team over the now-discredited rape accusations of a stripper.

The most horrifying part of the book is its catalogue of the huge number of hoaxes by which The Times has been taken in over the past decade. Some are amusing — a laudatory profile of a transgendered, methhead, truck-stop-hooker-turned-novelist who, as it later developed, was neither transgendered, a drug addict, a hooker and hadn't written his own book. Others were appalling, including character assassination of Caroline Kennedy falsely attributed to the mayor of Paris.

You'd think a book like this would qualify as "the light of scrutiny on the powerful" that Times public editor Brisbane invited in his column. Not so, says book review editor Tanenhaus. Though he was hand-delivered a review copy of *Gray Lady Down* shortly before it was published last November, Tanenhaus has not permitted a single word about the book to appear in his section. The purported reason: The review copy was delivered by the author, not the publisher. The Times book review "doesn't accept books from importuning authors," Tanenhaus told the website Gawker. "We deal exclusively with publishers, who verify [publication] dates and supply finished and additional fact-checking copies."

And indeed it's true that Encounter Books, the conservative publisher of *Gray Lady Down*'s publisher, stopped sending copies of its books to Tanenhaus three years ago — because his section never reviewed them. Or virtually any other books from the right side of the conservative spectrum, either. It doesn't matter if they are intellectual blockbusters (*Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB*, by historians John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, which offered evidence that lefty icon I.F. Stone was a KGB agent). Or sales blockbusters on the Times' own best-seller list (*America Alone*, by Mark Steyn, which argues Europe is being buried under a tidal wave of Islamization). Or fiercely topical (*A Slobbering Love Affair*, by Bernard Goldberg, which documented flagrant media worship of Barack Obama during the 2008 campaign). To The New York Times, they're unbooks that simply don't exist.

To be fair, there's a lot of competition for space in the Times book review. And probably it's too much to expect Tanenhaus to make space for a review of James Piereson's fusty *Camelot and the Cultural Revolution: How the Assassination of John F. Kennedy Shattered American Liberalism* when you've got elegant pieces on Toni Bentley's *The Surrender* (a ballerina's encomium to the liberating qualities of sodomy), or Scott Poulson-Bryant's *Hung: A Meditation on the Measure of Black Men in America* (self-explanatory) or Jenna Jameson's *How To Make Love Like A Porn Star* (even more self-explanatory).

Hey, Sam, how many copies of those did you need for fact-checking?