

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
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Authors Ask Editors to Treat Fay Weldon's New Work as an Ad, Not a Book

A group of 20 authors sent letters today to 85 book review editors asking them to treat Fay Weldon's new work "The Bulgari Connection" as what it is -- an advertisement for the Italian jewelry firm of that name. The text of the letter follows.

Dear [book review editor]:

As you know, Fay Weldon recently produced a written work called "The Bulgari Connection." Ms. Weldon received a substantial -- but undisclosed -- sum of money from the Bulgari jewelry company to feature the company in the written work.

The question now is how you and others in the media will treat this written work. Is it a novel to be reviewed, or is it an advertisement to be commented upon in the business pages?

Many complex issues confront us all these days. Fortunately this is not one of them. When a corporation pays a writer to produce copy that features the corporation's product, the result is called advertising. Weldon herself acknowledged this when she called her work a "good piece of advertising prose."

She should know. In the 1960s she worked as a copy writer for the Ogilvy and Mather advertising agency.

The issue here is not the supposed purity of literature or of writers. It is not about the taint of commerce. The issue is simply calling things by their right names. This is one of our first responsibilities as journalists and writers, and it is what we urge you to do in this case.

"The Bulgari Connection" is like a Kodak Moment or a Budweiser Whassup! It is an advertisement; and we should call it that and deal with it accordingly. As a copy writer, Ms. Weldon is entitled to all the accolades and esteem available to the members of her profession. She should be eligible for a Clio. She can receive offers from other clients. Her future in advertising probably is bright.

Ms. Weldon will have her due rewards. But she should not expect to be treated as an author, any more than the producer of magazine ads for Nike or Marlboro expects to be treated as an author. That her copy promotes a high class jewelry store, does not somehow lift it into the realm of literary art.

If a copy of Ms. Weldon's work arrives on your desk, we urge you to send it to the business editor. Save your book reviews for writers whose poems and plots were not bought before they were imagined.

Sincerely,

Kenny Ausubel, author
Peter Barnes, author
David Barsamian, author
Mark Dowie, author
Todd Gitlin, author
Lewis Hyde, author
Sut Jhally, author
Jean Kilbourne, author
Robert Kuttner, author
Frances Moore Lappé, author
Bill Lueders, author
Robert McChesney, author
Mark Crispin Miller, author
Todd Oppenheimer, author
Hugh Rank, author
Jonathan Rowe, author
Juliet Schor, author
Sam Smith, author
John Stauber, author
Frank Wilson, author