

providing an overall bibliography, in standardizing format, and in insisting some authors update their material. Esther Greenglass's, "A Social-Psychological View of Marriage for Women" uses statistics that end in 1979. Given students' penchant for believing that relations between the sexes have turned around in the last ten years, and that their feminist teachers belong in a class with Mrs. Grundy for forecasting doom

perspective of the unprivileged. Those with a memory for Montreal history will remember that Grey was a leading figure in the McGill Francaise movement in the late sixties. Perhaps the women on the shop floor at Westinghouse were the beneficiaries of skills honed in earlier struggles of the oppressed.

There is a distinctly personal aspect to the accounts of the male authors, and unlike so many of

criticize it is the ideology and practice of romantic love. Kathryn Morgan's article extends de Beauvoir's existential critique of romantic love onto broader theoretical terrain, and also finds that it obstructs personal growth and the taking of responsibility. Like the other articles in this book it leads students, not always gently, towards a critique of patriarchal society.

In its conventional form — a big fat anthology with a nice glossy photograph on the cover — this book is deceptive. For between its covers is the counter-hegemonic ideology of feminism, in all its rich diversity. Such ideologies, as Gramsci pointed out, and as Mary O'Brien has recently reminded us, are fundamental to the struggles to transform society. In Nemiroff's words, "not only must ideology precede action and inform it with both consistency and meaning, but it is only through the discipline of a shared ideological base that the 'powerless' may become empowered to assume rightful control over their own lives." (P. 531).

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**CAMBODIA:
A BOOK FOR PEOPLE WHO
FIND TELEVISION TOO SLOW**
Brian Fawcett
(Vancouver: Talonbooks,
1986) pp. 207.

"My metaphor is either the Global Village or the Trojan Horse, I am trying to see one through the other." This may be one of the more telling quotes from Brian Fawcett's new book *Cambodia*, which, as the subtitle implies, is not meant for the idle postliterate reader accustomed to the essentially slow speed at which one receives information from television.

Cambodia is not conventional fiction as there is no plot or sustained dialogue. What there is, is a series of "investigative fictions" which, among other things, probe discomfiting truths about life in the Global Village. The history of Cambodia under

the Khmer Rouge reign of terror is the physical subtext for these stories, which runs throughout the book on the bottom third of every page. Against the subtext of Cambodia, Fawcett counterposes thirteen satirical chapters that explore modern life under the impact of the mass media. So there are, in this rather unusually organized book that purports to make its subtext visible and palpable, a number of overlapping narratives. The reader ricochets between the Global Village, a wasteland of tawdry diversions in which fleeting impressions are mistaken for information, and the Khmer Rouge, who aspired to build socialism in Cambodia from the rice roots upward only to create murderous lunacy in its stead.

Engaging the reader with a two-tiered text is admittedly dicey, but Brian Fawcett is a forceful writer who shapes his material with skill, humour, considerable bravado and some fine investigative work. His essay on the Khmer Rouge and Cambodia is arguably one of the better detailed summaries of that debacle. Fawcett's analysis may lack the authority of those Khmer scholars like Michael Vickery and Ben Kierman, but it is more pertinent and imaginative. The literary imagination often fails when it confronts evil so grotesque and senseless. Fawcett, however, never loses his ability to rouse the reader. The strength and beauty of this book lies in Fawcett's ability to create a troubling juxtaposition between the attempts of the Khmer Rouge to tribalize Cambodia and the tribalizing tendencies of the Global Village. Fawcett, who consciously echoes the sentiments of Joseph Conrad, argues that what went on in Cambodia involved the release of a tribal violence of the type that occurred in the Congo nearly a century ago. Between 1890 and 1910 the Belgian administration in the Congo allowed colossal tribal brutalities to take place in order to suppress rebellious natives who were interfering with the expansion of rubber plantations. When it was over, 15 to 40 million Africans had died either by massacre or starvation: a conservative figure puts the slaughter at 25 million. In Cambodia, a group of petty bourgeois intellectuals (Pol Pot, one of the leaders of the Khmer Rouge, had studied radio journalism in France) in a country

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REVIEWS

and penalties, they will assume that 1979 represents medieval history, and that the analysis, therefore, has only arcane value. There are some very interesting articles by men in this volume which help answer the question that Ann Hall raises in her excellent article, "Knowledge and Gender: Epistemological Questions in the Social Analysis of Sport": can male researchers (some of them convincingly feminist) comprehend and interpret women's experience? As Hall points out, a feminist epistemology is grounded in the assumption, that one can see "more" from the bottom looking up, an assumption shared by marxists. A most engaging article by Stan Grey on integrating women on the shop floor in a factory in Hamilton provides evidence that the privileged can choose to see the world from the

their sex who have chosen to see "liberation is for everyone" they begin from the point-view that men are privileged, that they are privileged because they are men, and that they must work towards divesting themselves of that privilege.

That the personal is political is explored by many of the authors, but in a most original way by Nemiroff, Judith Crawley and Arlene Stalker in "Art and Daily Life." This is a wonderful weaving together of their lives as women, mothers and daughters with their artistic production, visual and literary. Crawley's photographs, though strangely unacknowledged, appear throughout the book, not just in this article, and they are wonderfully evocative.

If there is one aspect of our society that students are most reluctant to

devastated by U.S. bombs and American and Vietcong intruders tried to install a primitive version of war communism by mobilizing a politically illiterate peasantry. Within three years of the Khmer Rouge takeover, as many as two million people had died either by execution, torture or exhaustion. Both of these nightmares involved the release of tribal violence. Each country in turn became places without any vision of either future destiny or the horrors of history.

By analogy Fawcett shows that in the Global Village memory is also obliterated. Knowledge about both the Congo and Cambodia has somehow disappeared from public consciousness. It may surface parenthetically when one reads Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, or when watching a movie like *The Killing Fields*, but only to recede all the more quickly as we go about our daily life. That Cambodia, the Congo, Armenia, Auschwitz, and numerous other modern day genocides can be effectively erased from the minds of a large portion of the well-fed and comparatively educated population of the First World seems preposterous, especially since the people who live in this relative comfort zone insist on claiming that the basis of their society and culture has now become information.

Yet the kind of information that is fed to us by the electronic media, says Fawcett, bears a striking resemblance to the historical amnesia enforced by the Khmer Rouge. After having taken the capital Phenom Phen, the Khmer Rouge evacuated a large part of its urban population into the countryside and to certain death. It then proceeded to whitewash every single sign in the city: "traffic signs, advertising, street signs, identity markers of all kinds." These transmitters of non-information were mediums without messages which pointed to the destruction of urban civilization. The analogue of the medium without the message, argues Fawcett, is found in the profusion of information spewed by the electronic media, for here we have signs that contribute to a different kind of mind-numbing darkness. Under the barrage of instant electronic stimuli, the denizens of the Global Village retreat towards constantly expanding areas of forgetfulness as their direct ability to understand the

world around them is replaced by ersatz experience.

Fawcett's satirical chapters are designed to show how the white noise of the Global Village is drowning out the last solitary shreds of public discourse. Each chapter is a vignette, the focus of which is a different aspect of the process of rationalization which, as the chapter on "Malcom Lowry and the Trojan Horse" makes clear, becomes the other major metaphor of the book. The Trojan Horse was the product of duplicitous thinking that prefigures on the one hand the technological domination of nature, and on the other political control through the manipulation of abstractions and the sophistry of images. With the Trojan Horse, one may say, we have the beginning of Western rationality, and with the Global Village we have its triumph: an artificial world of images that constrains the will and confounds the sense of reality.

Some of these chapters are wildly funny. "The Entrepreneur of God," for instance, tells of Marshall McLuhan meeting St. Paul on the road to Damascus and convincing him to use the new medium of Christianity as a form of franchise capitalism. In "The Kerrisdale Mission for Destitute Professionals," Fawcett, who is also an urban planner, envisions a Bentham-like scheme for the management of out-of-work professionals. In the end the mission turns out to be a comfortable Panopticon in which professionals happily live out their unemployment (and presumably their lives) with the company of satellite dishes and their personal computers. Throughout these "investigative fictions" one is constantly deciphering the connections between text and subtext. The contrast between the two can often be stark. Nowhere is this more obvious than with "Universal Chicken," where a comparison emerges between a fast food franchise — the "homogenized, blenderized, humiliation of materiality" — and the carefully processed bureaucratic horror of the Khmer Rouge. Finally, "Fat Family Goes to the World's Fair" offers another disturbing contrast between individuals, like Howard, who are mindful of Cambodia and still remember a world before it was reduced to the facetious insignificance of the spectacle, and those, like the members of the

Fat Family, who are effortlessly integrated into the distractions of the Global Village. Howard commits suicide.

In our own tribalized world, says Fawcett, civilization and memory have been marked for execution, and subjectivity, uniqueness and identity have little hope of survival. What this also tells us is that the proponents of the Global Village failed to recognize the link between mass destruction and tribalization: "that every outbreak of genocide in this century has coincided with the propagandizing of tribal consciousness. Nazi Germany was one, Pol Pot another." Yet there is something flamboyantly wrong with this kind of argument. What went on in Nazi Germany or Pol Pot's Cambodia cannot be easily explained by the large metaphor, "tribalization of consciousness." The idea of seeing civilization as a thin veneer of protection against the atavistic roots of life owes a lot to Conrad as well as Freud, who makes the primal family the source of unspeakable violence, while civilization with its emphasis on control and self-understanding moves us away from the miasma of barbarism. This view of the world highlights the recurrent possibility of disintegration and hence is fundamentally apocalyptic. It also sets a false dichotomy between civilization and barbarism. Such dramatic oppositions, while perfect for fiction, makes for bad history and for bad sociology.

Fawcett counts himself lucky that he is a Canadian colonial, "perhaps the only kind left." He still remembers and can maintain an imaginative relation to the Imperium: "the libraries, museums and galleries of London, New York, Paris — the repositories of Western Civilization's attempts to achieve self-understanding." These too sound like the memories of a sainted past. Indeed, Fawcett treads on very thin ice when he, somewhat self-indulgently, uses the notion of the marginal "colonial" in order to find kinship with the writers of what he calls "the interzone": V.S. Naipaul and Joseph Conrad, to name two. Since all of these writers were or are marginal to the society about which they write, marginality becomes a kind of intellectual high-ground that permits writers to make sense of the disjunction they feel between experience and understanding.

But once again we should be careful of these kind of blanket statements. Marginality is a convenient concept precisely because it is remarkably vague. It can be all things to all people. For some, and Fawcett falls in this camp, marginality is a zone of skepticism and detached objectivity; for others, it is a sanctuary that shelters inaction and voyeurism; for others still, it is a source of frustration and vengeance that creates psychopaths like Hitler or Pol Pot. To be in the interzone, or to take on that posture, does not in any way give one a critical stance. Such a stance probably has more to do with the actions one takes rather than the place in which one stands *vis-à-vis* the power structures.

But Fawcett can certainly be granted this little indulgence, and even his large metaphors, for he has written an outstanding book. His idiosyncratic fiction is still undergoing development, and one certainly hopes that he will continue on the singular path his fiction has taken him. Whatever shortcomings this book may have, in terms of vision and sheer imagination it easily surpasses the predictable conventions of Can Lit. Without a doubt, this book is a necessity for anyone who cares about the state of contemporary culture.

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