

Extremism carried to its logical conclusion

By
Karen Selick

Ordinarily, I avoid self-published books. I've found in the past that if no established publisher is willing to take a chance on a book, there's usually a good reason.

So it was with some hesitation that I sat down to read the review copy of *Fair New World* by Lou Tafler that appeared, unsolicited, in my mail box. It didn't take long to discover, however, why the author had had to publish this book himself: it is so outrageously politically incorrect that most publishers would probably be afraid to put their imprint on it. This is high praise, indeed.

Fair New World is a satire. The title, of course, is reminiscent of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. The story is set in the year 2084, one century after Orwell's *Nineteen Eight-Four*. Like both of those novels, it creates a disutopia—in fact, it goes one better and creates two disutopias—to warn its readers about the dangers of current trends in society. Along the way, it manages at times to be hilariously funny. I laughed out loud many times as I read it; when I later gave it to my husband, he also burst into fits of guffawing and chortling from time to time.

The fact that *Fair New World* can appeal to the sense of humor of both males and females is a good sign. In fact, it will be crucial to the book's survival, since the focus of its satire is the foibles of—who else?—men and women.

Portions of the story are set in a country called Feminania, where today's radical feminist agenda has reached both the pinnacle of its irrationality and the pinnacle of its power. Women are in complete

control. In fact, the proportion of males in the population is strictly limited to ten percent.

From time to time, the action moves to the country of Bruteland, where political trends have taken a diametrically opposite course. In Bruteland, only men can be citizens. Women are chattels, to be owned or rented for recreational or breeding purposes.

There is also a third country, Melior, where men and women are political equals. Author Tafler admits candidly that Melior is no paradise; however, it is certainly (as its Latin name suggests) better than the other two countries.

Feminania and Bruteland engage in a form of international commerce which dates back to prehistoric times: sex is traded for material goods, but no-one admits publicly what they are doing. Eventually, this exchange breaks down and the countries go to war.

However, the strengths of the novel do not lie in this central plot. To be honest, I haven't come across a plot this thin since the last triple-X adult video I saw. However, as in an adult video, the good bits are the stuff that's sandwiched in between the skeletal plot.

Tafler delights in extrapolating some of today's sillier political and philosophical trends to their ultimate absurdity. Affirmative action comes in for a well-deserved share of ridicule. In Feminania, the alpha-numerically challenged are particularly encouraged to apply for a job editing textbooks. What matters is not one's qualifications for the job, but one's status as a victim of some past injustice.

In real life, Tafler is not just a novelist, but also a philosophy professor. In the novel, he can't resist some biting commentary on the trends in his own profession. Feminanian philosophy pro-

fessors are selected from among those who are "immune to infection by concepts... [and] truly in touch with their feelings." Logic and linear reasoning have been abolished because they are devoid of feeling.

One literary device I particularly enjoyed was Tafler's use of question marks at the ends of sentences spoken by female characters—even sentences that were not questions. This parodies the real-life tendency of some women (and far more rarely, some men) to raise the pitch of their voices, rather than lowering it, at the ends of declarative sentences. This habit makes the speaker sound as though she is either unsure of what she is saying, or else is desperately trying to get the listener to agree. Before reading *Fair New World*, I was only vaguely conscious of this phenomenon. However, since reading it, I have been amazed to observe how many people speak this way, and how it strips them of any air of authoritativeness. It's a great lesson for anyone who does public speaking.

Perhaps this book will serve as a wake-up call for those who have been complacent about the direction we have been heading in. Maybe it will make the proponents of these trends laugh at themselves and come to their senses. Or maybe we will just continue drifting into an exquisitely gender-sensitive totalitarianism in which all copies of *Fair New World* will be consigned to the bonfires along with textbooks in mathematics and logic.

Fair New World is available at the campus bookstores of a few universities, and can be ordered for Cdn. \$19.99 from Backlash Books, P.O. Box 18178, 2225 West 41st Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V6M 4L3.



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Karen Selick. Ms. Selick practices law in
Belleville, Ontario