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*BOOK **REVIEWS***

The Dark Romance of Dian Fossey by Harold T. Hayes. Simon and Schuster, 1990, 351 pp., $21.95 hardback.

Gorillas in the Mist by Dian Fossey. Houghton Mifflin, 1983, 326 pp., $19.95 hardback.

Walking with the Great Apes: Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, Birute Galdikas by Sy Montgomery. Houghton Mifflin, 1991, 280 pp., $19.95 (c), 1992, $13.95 (p).

Woman in the Mists by Farley Mowat. Warner Books, 1987, 380 pp., $19.45 (c), 1988 $10.95 (p).

My daughter's sixth-grade science project this year was to investigate a scientist and show how this individual illustrated the scientific method. Inasmuch as I am a born-again believer that no one scientific method exists, I was happy that she chose an ideal candidate to reinforce my views. Given the tenor of our times, her teacher suggested that the children select a female and/or a person from a minority group. Needless to say, the "and" portion of that suggestion presented difficulties beyond the capabilities of twelve-year-olds and most of her classmates ignored the "or" as well and fell back upon the usual and oft-written about such as Newton, Einstein, Darwin and Galileo.

Becky picked Dian Fossey, who it turns out is a most unlikely candidate for a scientist role-model of any gender, color or religion. Her scientific credentials when she started were virtually nil — "her grades in science in her first two years at the University of California at Davis were too low to qualify her for veterinary school" according to Hayes' book. Things hardly got better in graduate school at Cambridge where "Something called the Mann-Whitney U-test, which she considered statistical jabberwocky, was driving her crazy."

Fossey was chosen by the famous archeologist, Louis Leakey, to be the second jewel in his crown of unusual females to be put into unusual situations. The first was Jane Goodall (chimpanzees) and the third was Birute Galdikas (orangutans). His scientific motivation for sending them into the bush was, according to Becky, "He had an idea or hypothesis that he wanted to test. Could modem primates tell us something about ancient humans?" But why women and especially women who weren't particularly well-trained, indeed, not trained at all? Hayes writes, "Women, he argued were more patient, more sensitive to mother-infant relations, and less likely to arouse aggression in males. He liked them untrained because trained scientists tended to see too much." Which has a ring of plausibility about it, particularly to anyone who

isn't a scientist and considers the Mann-Whitney U-test as superfluous to human endeavor.

It would be uncharitable to claim that Leakey chose them solely because he was a lecher. However, his amorous ways in his youth are well documented and Montgomery writes, "Whether his love for Dian was ever physically consummated is not known but... Louis showered love letters upon his 'dearest love' for the next three years." This was after they first met. At their initial meeting, "she fell down a ravine, broke a precious fossil with her fall, and then nauseated by the pain of her sprained ankle, vomited on the specimen."

What Fossey lacked in scientific background, she attempted to compensate for in tenacity and sheer will-power. To say that she was a determined individual is a complete understatement. She had her appendix removed because Leakey suggested it would be better to have it done in the U.S. when she was healthy rather than in the field when she wasn't. Galdikas, who is no slouch when it comes to determination and is evidently far more of a scientist than either of the other two, had her appendix *and* her tonsils removed before she went to Borneo.

But Fossey also was a chain smoker, an emphysema sufferer, a very heavy drinker, had bad teeth, was a rape victim during a civil war in Zaire and as you might suppose, an exceedingly difficult person to work for. That she wasn't murdered earlier than she was is nothing short of amazing. Nevertheless, she captured the public's imagination with the *National Geographic* photos of her being accepted by the mountain gorillas. The skill of the photographer — who was also her lover during the time they were together — masks the lack of science. Becky put it this way:

> Society didn't benefit from Dian's work as a scientist, but they did benefit from her effort to save the gorillas. One of the main reasons Dian is famous is because she died for a cause to save mountain gorillas. Actually she was murdered by one of the students that came to study there. Her dying out in the wilderness made a big impact on people. It showed that she really meant that she wanted to save the gorillas.

Primates are a tricky bunch to observe because unlike laboratory rats, there is a lot of variability so that generalized conclusions are hard to come by and because primates live too long relative to the human observers. Fossey's camp is now a victim of the Rwandan civil war and God only knows what has happened to the gorillas she was so attached to. Although one of Fossey's students, Wayne McGuire, was convicted *in absentia* of murdering her, it is not at all clear that he did it. Hayes says, "They said he killed Fossey in order to steal her notes. But that made no sense to anyone who knew anything about Dian Fossey and her research. There was nothing there to steal." One of her students said, "You just can't treat other people in the way that she did, without at least wondering whether somebody is going to take revenge, if not necessarily expecting it."

The *Rashomon* aspect of Fossey's life can be seen by looking at the two books I haven't mentioned yet. Mowat is quite sympathetic to Fossey while Fossey's book is, in Hayes' view, not very reliable history. As a personality, she exemplifies the cliché that truth by a goodly margin is stranger than fiction. Becky concluded her report in this manner:

> Dian was an interesting person to learn about. She didn't demonstrate a lot of science, but then I learned what kind of science was right and wrong. Her character was a weird one to write about. She seemed to go a little mad at times and have a strong temper. By doing this 'research a scientist' project, I learned that science isn't always doing research in a laboratory, which is what most people believe.

Well, as much as I enjoyed bonding with my daughter, maybe most people don't believe that a laboratory is the only place a research scientist inhabits. Observation, however, while a legitimate endeavor, is a far cry from a controlled experiment; perhaps scientists and science writers ought to make this distinction clearer and more frequently in order that the general public understands that different techniques are employed resulting in different expectations. Fossey made an extraordinary number of contacts with the gorillas but in the end, science made little, if any, progress because while she was emotionally committed to the animals, she just wasn't very scientific in the boring, conventional sense of keeping good data. The photographs made for good cinema and not much else.

Quite coincidentally, while Becky and I were immersed in Dian Fossey's life, Jane Goodall came to town to give a public lecture to raise funds for her work. Montgomery's book devotes equal time to each of the three women and to my dismay, Goodall was repeating to a packed audience, as if they were fresh insights, the very same stories that appear in this 1991 publication. By now, one would hope for new primate revelations but theater is more appealing to a lay audience than the dull, everyday work of science. There is, to be sure, more than one scientific method, but the Mann-Whitney U-test just doesn't sell very well.

Paul Alper
University of St. Thomas
St. Paul, MN 55105

Women and Parapsychology by Lisette Coly and Thea A. White, Ed. New York: Parapsychology Foundation, Inc., 1994.

In 1991, the Parapsychology Foundation celebrated its 40th Anniversary in Dublin, Ireland, with a conference devoted to "Women and Parapsychology." At that time a notable group of women and men gathered to discuss the relationship of science to the field of parapsychology and how feminist thinking can benefit parapsychology. While men attended the conference, only women presented papers. Topics ranged from "The Relevance to Parapsychology of a