

roles in the growing Healthy Community movement. And participatory research is proving to be an effective way to fill in the gaps in our understanding of what healthy communities mean for women. Recognizing the importance of this kind of research, the magazine includes a section on innovative research projects that ask us to "listen to the missing voices." For example the Hitting Home Team is an interdisciplinary Canadian research project that is asking women care-givers about the implications of the growing trend toward community care. An innovative project in Vancouver involves women living with HIV/AIDS as peer-researchers in the development of strategies for improving sexual health and reducing the risks of HIV infection among women.

The issue also contains a section called "In the Field" that profiles several innovative projects and organizations in countries around the world. Included is an article about three women who took on the urban planning establishment in order to build an energy efficient and cooperatively owned straw-bale house in Mississauga (a suburb of Toronto); an article on Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan, a rural women's collective that addresses environmental justice issues in Gujarat, India; and a piece on a grassroots organization in the Pacific Island region that promotes and protects women's traditional knowledge of medicinal plants. There is also a short and informative article on the World March of Women, an international project that is giving voice to women's demands for the elimination of poverty and violence against women. The "Textspace" section includes short and very readable reviews of recent books that are relevant to the healthy community theme and "WE Surf," a new feature, lists over 20 interesting websites that readers can visit for more information on the topics covered in the issue, among others.

"Healthy Communities Through Women's Eyes" contains both excit-

ing success stories about how women have contributed to the movement for healthier communities as well as some caveats against thinking that the New Jerusalem is on the horizon. Although women have had a big hand in designing and leading local community initiatives that are improving the quality of life for many people, it would be a mistake to let these local successes take our minds off the persistence of global "isms" like (hetero)sexism, racism, and neoconservatism as well as increased ecological destruction and corporate control of democracy. Given that so many governments and international institutions have adopted the discourses of healthy communities and sustainable development, women must be ever vigilant not to get duped into serving the profoundly unhealthy and unsustainable agendas of the powerful.

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BODY IMAGE

Sarah Grogan. New York:
Routledge Press, 1999.

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In *Body Image*, British scholar Sarah Grogan seeks to integrate theory and data from psychology, sociology, women's studies, and media studies in order to understand how both

women and men experience body shape, weight, and subsequently develop body dissatisfaction. She quickly asserts that not only is body dissatisfaction (BD) in women normative in western culture, but that body image (BI) is much more than a mere cognitive construct.

Grogan's initial discourse is essentially rooted in malestream psychology and sociological theory. The rooting is clearly Grogan's attempt to make evident her most fundamental argument: that while BI is a psychological phenomenon, it is significantly affected by, if not always determined by, social factors. In reading her work, this initial goal is, in our view, a correct assertion on which to base a text. Unfortunately Grogan's leanings towards traditional psychological theory ultimately pull her away from a structural situatedness of human struggle back to the individual psyche and personality makeup.

To start then, Grogan begins by inviting her readers into a discussion of western culture and the idealization of slenderness. She walks us through the development of body shape ideals including a discussion of the power of insurance companies to dictate so-called healthy weight charts. Grogan then takes us further back to the history of the portrayal of the female body as a clue to the evolution of body-shape preference. Readers can enjoy some of the lush French and Dutch Renaissance paintings, depicting beautiful women reveling in both their own and each others' bodies.

Despite these glorious illustrations, it was at this point that we grew somewhat frustrated. We had not only hoped that this text would be about women's body image, but finally and comprehensively include a thorough analysis of the intersecting impacts of race, age, ethnicity, class, (dis)ability, and sexual orientation. Instead, Grogan builds in—rather adds in—a discussion regarding men's BI, a discussion which is not analogous to women's body image: in western culture, the experiential

context from which and within which this cognitive construct stems is not the same. Grogan cites many male sources, including male scholars theorizing about women's body image. She would have been well advised to root herself in feminist theory and analysis instead.

Specifically, Grogan closes her third chapter by reporting on several interviews and surveys she did with women, and then in Chapter Four goes on to discuss men and BI—citing research she did with men and youth—and closes with a somewhat simplistic summary. If her goal was to make BI discourse inclusive of men as well as women, a better venue would have been a separate text. There, she wouldn't be, due perhaps to space constraints, so tempted to imply hegemony across men and she could explore the diversities in men and how they impact on BI.

Chapter Five discusses, albeit briefly, media effects on BI and again, Grogan slips back into mainstream psychology in her attempt to explain it. She suggests that social comparison theory and self-schema theory help to explain and "predict" that the media has a significant effect on body dissatisfaction. What Grogan fails to do is criticize the theories themselves. Who were the participants in the research on which these "theories" were based? More importantly, who were not? Were lesbians included? Were Asian women, black women, and disabled women included? Here is Grogan's biggest, most troublesome, oversight.

Despite some much needed and well-argued discussion about age, social class, ethnicity, and sexuality in Chapter Six, this attention to diversity when only attended to in a separate chapter perpetuates heterosexist, eurocentric, and middle class bias in research and scholarship. Feminist scholars must seek to weave this discourse throughout all that we write. The mainstream psychological theories Grogan associates with BI are outdated, fail to stem from critical social perspective, and

are never named for what they often are: victim blaming. Locating the cause of BD within the individual exonerates society and creates a notion of mental health hinged entirely on what women do with media and cultural influences.

All is not lost, however. Feminist readers will enjoy Grogan's lengthy discussion in Chapter Six on class differences in BD; the effects of ethnicity on body image; and how the differential pressures on gays and lesbians to be sexually attractive plays out in body satisfaction and image. Grogan's discussion of lesbian women, and the well-researched and increased satisfaction with their bodies, resonated with us as we read this section of the text. She explains that many lesbians suffered from body dissatisfaction and eating disorders before they came out. Grogan suggests that perhaps lesbian subculture serves as a buffer in that it generally does not promote the unrealistic ideals seen in mainstream heterosexual culture, thus leading to less objectification and higher body satisfaction. Our view is that there is also pressure for physical attractiveness in the lesbian subculture, but that this pressure looks and plays out differently. First, physical strength, charisma, and self-confidence are highly valued and rewarded in lesbian subcultures. Second, we believe that in loving a woman, and a woman's body, lesbian and bisexual women come to love themselves and their own bodies. This, in and of itself, is probably the most powerful reason that many lesbian and bisexual women have greater body satisfaction.

In Grogan's final chapters, she reaches some great conclusions, but again fails to adequately look at feminist bodies of literature to understand this important topic. Simplistic in nature, conclusions such as "one group of individuals who could be expected to be unusually dissatisfied with their bodies are those with eating disorders" lent themselves to our continued erosion in confidence

in Grogan's conclusions. Not only does Grogan resort back to victim-blaming and individually-located explanations for BD, but she roots her solutions to BD there as well.

In closing, with solutions that individuals must merely build their self-esteem, believe that they have control over their life and their perceptions, and engage in various psychological techniques, Grogan locates the problem within the individual. In so doing, she unfortunately perpetuates the common scholarly practice of omitting a critique of social structures, practices and beliefs as the true roots of human struggle. We must call body dissatisfaction in women what it truly is: an outcome of western patriarchy. Nothing else. The solution lies not in resilience. The truest and most sustainable solution lies in resistance.

THE NEW BIOGRAPHY: PERFORMING FEMININITY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

Jo Burr Margadant, Ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

BY LESLIE AMBEDIAN

The place of biography within the writing of history has varied greatly according to historiographic fashion. Jo Burr Margadant, in *The New Biography: Performing Femininity in*