

There is nothing feminist *per se* about all of the therapeutic approaches in this book. The therapists often adopt approaches that are compatible with feminism. Some authors use hypnosis, and one author is a Jungian. Malmo, for example, when speaking of the use of hypnosis, states, "The feminist values and beliefs about equality, about women's need for personal power and control, and about the importance for women to learn to attend to and trust their own experiences and abilities are compatible with naturalistic hypnotherapy." Further, the feminist perspective often alters the approach and imbues it with a uniquely feminist orientation. The last article in the book is a good example of this alteration. Malmo adapts ego-state therapy to fit a feminist framework using three distinct parts to represent different ego states: the big sister, the little sister and the spirit guide. The use of spirit guide seems to be one which many of the contributors to this book find useful. The spirit guide is the persona of wisdom and strength within the individual. Since wisdom and strength are characteristics with which few women can identify or own, feminist therapists seem to recognise the importance of building a recognition of every woman's power and capability within herself as part of the healing process.

To summarize this book is not easy so I have not attempted to do so. What I hope this review has illustrated is the richness and importance of the text. I found reading it not only intellectually interesting but also profoundly moving. It engaged both my cognition and affection and did so in ways that were not always pleasant but nonetheless significant. *Healing Voices* is an important contribution to feminist thought and feminist action. Laidlaw and Malmo are to be commended for putting together such a valuable work.

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Fat Oppression and Psychotherapy: A Feminist Perspective. Laura S. Brown and Esther D. Rothblum (eds.). Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press, 1989, Pp. 103 hardcover.

Fat Oppression and Psychotherapy: A Feminist Perspective is a collection of articles that challenge readers to examine the oppressive attitudes and biases that they hold with respect to women and weight. The

collection includes personal accounts of the experience of being fat which are interspersed with a series of articles addressing issues of concern to therapists working with clients. These essays attempt to heighten awareness of internalized fat oppression, and present strategies for identifying covert fat oppressive attitudes and eliminating them. The book is successful in this area, drawing on an empirical knowledge base concerning etiology, social stigma and medical implications. Research findings are presented to challenge stereotypes of fatness, such as fatness represents gluttony and obsessive eating. The research methodology of studies purporting to demonstrate that fatness equates with poor health is challenged, as are the findings. There is an excellent discussion of physical exercise and its appropriate role in fitness promotion, as opposed to weight control.

The notion that sexism and misogyny are at the root of fat oppressive attitudes is certainly not new. Orbach and Chemin addressed these issues a decade ago, by identifying how these attitudes are manifested even in feminist therapy. Furthermore, the feminist analysis is quite different. Most of the current treatment strategies, even those that are predicated on feminist analysis, assume that most fat women eat compulsively as a way of dealing with other issues. This publication represents a significant, if extreme, departure in this regard.

Chrisler's article is of particular interest. As someone who has done weight loss counselling, she has examined first-hand many of the mixed messages therapists give clients, such as advising them on the importance of feeling healthy and not choosing ideal target weight, while simultaneously weighing them and reinforcing or consoling them depending on the outcome. This is just one of the many articles that challenges the medical establishment's claims about weight and medical illness and highlights the dangers of weight loss as opposed to weight *per se*.

Indeed, it is in this area that the book lives up to the promotional literature's claim of being controversial, but the book sidesteps many issues by intentionally not including articles on disordered eating, maintaining that fat is simply a variant of human size. This assertion raises many questions. Does everyone who weighs more than 500 lbs. do so merely because that is his or her "setpoint"? Is an 80 lbs. anorexic, at the other end of the continuum, merely a variant in size? What about

a forty-eight year old woman who has had unsuccessful operations on her knees, because they are unable to support her body weight? Are we to believe that there are no medical implications of weight? The important points made about the fitness industry and medical studies are lost when our credulity is strained, and we are caught in a tautological argument; to question any of the premises is to demonstrate fat-oppressive attitudes.

Notwithstanding, most of the articles address issues of concern to therapists. The effect of the process of dieting on metabolism is fully outlined, providing the reader with an understanding of why individuals gain weight despite average or restrained eating following a cycle of weight loss. Many of the articles cite appropriate resources for fat people, including the unique exercise program "Great Shape," such support groups as "Ample Opportunity," and magazines such as *Radiance*. Undoubtedly, this publication is most effective in the way it challenges us to question our non-conscious bias in our therapeutic encounters, and least effective in the way in which it avoids articles which could challenge the underlying premise of "Fat Oppression and Psychotherapy."

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Revelations: Essays on Striptease and Sexuality. Margaret Dragu and A.S.A. Harrison. *London, ON: Nightwood Editions, 1988, Pp. 175 paperback.*

What can one say about a book that begins with the proud statement, "Canada has the best striptease in the world," and ends with a ringing call to consider striptease as "one of the few shrines that exist in our culture for the representation of sexuality"?

Striptease does, of course, represent sexuality. And in this peculiar book, it is the stripper Dragu who explores the intricate ways in which strippers try to represent themselves or their experience of female sexuality, while male customers and bar managers imagine that they are getting "raw" sex, unmediated by culture. Dragu's tight and poetic prose evokes a world in which women attempt to use a sexist institution for their own purposes — to gain access to men's "entertainment" dollars while asserting their own style in fashion and in sexual gestures.

She carefully distinguishes among different stripping styles; for instance:

the New Waver wants to annihilate all the things the Burlesque Queen is dedicated to preserving. But as fast as she is smashing traditional aesthetics, she is presenting new ones. Anti-gracefulness and anti-beauty veer to an obsession with a signature sneer... Ultimately, the radically opposed camps of the Burlesque Queen and the New Wave stripper meet in an obsession with fetishistic symbols and props. Opposite camps meet at the icon supermarket.

The non-stripper amateur sociologist Harrison, by contrast, works not with individual strippers or distinct styles, but with the simple categories of puritanism versus liberation, clothed versus naked. Harrison merges the wonderful women we meet in Dragu's sections of the book into one abstract Stripper who, in turn, is but a signifier for Sexual Freedom. Making no distinction between the interests of male bar managers and owners and those of the female employees, she praises the institution of striptease for taking sexuality out of the pre-freudian cave of repression. She breathlessly proclaims, "astonishing as it may seem, sexuality in women is one of the biggest taboos of our civilization." For her, the public acceptance of striptease would be a sure sign of women's sexual emancipation.

Without explicitly theorizing the stripper's nakedness as a form of dress, Dragu suggests that taking off one's clothes on a stage does not give the public access to the essential truth about sex and the body. She criticizes "hippie" strippers who refuse high heels and pretend to be "natural," and revels precisely in the "artificial" (stiletto heels, glitter, velcro). By contrast, Harrison imagines that the point of stripping is to reveal a natural "truth" through nakedness. Not understanding that nakedness, especially ritualized public nakedness, is as much of a cultural construction as a business suit, she cannot tell us why strippers begin with lots of clothes on, or what might make certain acts affirming or demeaning for the stripper.

The sex trades in Canada have received very little attention from both scholarly and popular writers. Readers interested in the world of stripping may well want to buy this book. The chapters authored by Dragu are well worth it.

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