

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 malestream 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 The mainstream psychological theories Grogan associates with BI are outdated, fail to stem from critical social perspective, and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*

Nineteenth-Century France, attributes the "demise of biography" in the post-Second World War period to a shift in emphasis by leading historians away from "acts by major figures in public life to external forces identified as shaping influences on the actions and choices of agglomerated individuals," and describes a contemporary resurgence in interest in biography amongst academic historians, as well as within the general reading public. Using notions of the constructed self borrowed from other disciplines, notably psychology, gender studies and literary criticism, Margadant and her collaborators in this project present biographical analyses of eight celebrated nineteenth-century French women, including George Sand, Flora Tristan and the Duchesse de Berry. Each essay discusses the performance of femininity by its subject or subjects as a conscious and deliberately subversive act; the Duchesse de Berry at the beginning of the nineteenth century, for example, is described as embracing the role of mother to further political ends in much the same fashion that Nelly Roussel, a self-described "apostle" of birth-control, does a century later.

This emphasis on the performance of aspects of femininity as a deliberately subversive political strategy bears examination. Because it enables the practice of the abnormal, it is paradoxically the performance of stereotypical femininity rather than the performance of non-typical female roles that is considered subversive throughout these papers. There seems to be an underlying assumption that the subjects of these essays can pick and choose which aspects of their own culture they will embrace; that having cast off ideas of what is appropriate women's work, for example, they have therefore intellectually cast off the entire monolithic structure of nineteenth-century femininity. Is it not possible that having chosen their spheres of dissent, the rest is simply left

unexamined? The assumption throughout the essays, regardless of authorship, seems to be that gender performance is deliberate. To describe femininity as strategy arguably implies a consciousness of subversion that may or may not be justified.

The collection as a whole is designed with the undergraduate in mind, and the papers are accordingly both interesting and accessible to the non-specialist in history (such as this reviewer). There are, however, inconsistencies and inaccuracies to which some of the essayists fall prey. In Whitney Walton's essay "Republican Women and Republican Families in the Personal Narratives of George Sand, Marie d'Agoult, and Hortense Allart," for example, the political implications of naming are explored. Walton states that Aurore Dupin and Marie d'Agoult chose masculine pseudonyms (George Sand and Daniel Stern, respectively) to legitimize their writing, and as "declarations of independence from the subordinated and silent status of wives." Despite this similarity, throughout the essay Dupin is referred to by her more familiar pseudonym, while d'Agoult is consistently referenced using her legal rather than chosen name. Given that the essay problematizes the act of naming, its own inconsistent naming conventions should not pass without comment. Elinor Accampo's essay "Public Image, Private Life" deals with the contrast between Nelly Roussel's maternal public image and her "escape" from maternity within her own life; while the subject is of interest, its inclusion in a text devoted to the nineteenth century is problematic simply because Roussel's career dated from 1901 to 1922. A justification of the extension of the century is surely in order. A more serious problem arises in Mary Pickering's paper "Clotilde de Vaux and the Search for Identity," which seems to occasionally model itself on fictional rather than biographical

practice. Pickering describes de Vaux's novel *Lucie*: "what de Vaux would have liked to have said but felt she could not is that woman has no power to eliminate the injustice created by man." This may be a reasonable interpretation of de Vaux's letters, but it is an interpretive act nonetheless, and should be marked as such. Contemporary historical theory may have blurred the boundaries between literature and history, but the presentation of interiority as fact remains the domain of fiction.

Margadant defines the subject of biography as "no longer the coherent self but rather a self that is performed to create an impression of coherence or an individual with multiple selves whose different manifestations reflect the passage of time." Although the collection is flawed, the essays in *The New Biographies* succeed in presenting the public and private personae of its subjects as performances by complementary selves. Whether or not one accepts the thesis that the performance of femininity by these women is a subversive act, or that gender is deliberately constructed to further political ends, the arguments are indeed thought-provoking, and the individual biographies make fascinating reading.