

clearly defining all the terms used. She did not assume that the reader had read all of the fairy tales or knew anything about disability studies or the history of fairy tales. She supplied summaries and definitions so the reader could follow the information being discussed. While each chapter can stand alone, they flow nicely from one into the next. This for some may seem like a little thing, but I genuinely appreciate it when an author takes the readability of their book into consideration. If one writes clearly and uses simple language, then the reader can follow what is being said, engage with, and think about it. Throughout the book, Leduc discusses disability studies theory, fairy tales, the history around fairy tales, the Disneyfication of fairy tales, popular culture, and the social and political impact fairy tales have had. All of this is eloquently connected with her own personal narrative of being a disabled woman who has struggled with her mental, social, and medical understanding of her body.

While reading the book I could tell that she had done extensive research and used multiple sources in compiling her information. The book reads as part literature review on disability studies and fairy tales, content analysis, and history, all woven together with her personal narrative. I think this was done in an attempt to give the reader a comprehensive understanding of how disability narratives in fairy tales are socially impactful on both children and adults. The common belief is that fairy tales are harmless, and Leduc has the reader questioning this. Fairy tales and Disney imply that “good” disabled people will be healed or will overcome their disability, while bad people will have to live forever with being disabled. For many disabled people, like Leduc and myself, disability is not about being “cured” or “overcoming,” but it is something

we live with every day. Leduc wants readers to realize that there is a need for more stories that tell disability narratives in a “positive” or more realistic light.

While I know this book was not meant to be an exhaustive exploration of the topic, I do have a critique that there was no feminist research used. There is some research available on the intersection of disability and gender, which Leduc does not seem to consider. The addition of feminist research on gender and fairy tales could have added to her research and narrative.

I think that Leduc’s book would be good for those interested in learning about disability in fairy tales or in the genre of memoir. For those who are knowledgeable about the topic, Leduc’s narrative is also powerful and brings the research to life. For myself, this book was enjoyable and enlightening to read.

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YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN FAT

Virgie Tovar

New York: Feminist Press, 2018

REVIEWED BY JENNY ELLISON,
PHD

You Have the Right to Remain Fat is part introduction to radical fat activism and part self-help guide. Author Virgie Tovar interweaves her personal experiences with sharp observations of American diet culture and accessibly written insights from the academic field of Fat Studies. The book follows Tovar through her childhood, into her experiences with dating and fashion, and her introduction to fat activism. Tovar’s pitch isn’t only that we all have a right to remain fat, but that we will achieve liberation by “centering the eradication of oppression” and focusing on “collective freedom” (104). Tovar distills complicated concepts with great impact. The author adopts an effective narrative approach and tone we’ve seen before in feminist and fat activist texts. We go with Tovar on a hero’s journey. First, Tovar delightfully describes herself as a child, quirky, playful, and comfortable in her body. Her confidence was undermined by “one toxic idea,” that her body was wrong. This idea is at the heart of this book, as Tovar describes her encounters with men, family, and the socio-cultural structures that normalize fat oppression. Radical, anti-assimilationist fat activism transforms Tovar’s story, fuelling her personal transformation and public engagement. For Fat Studies scholars, this book should look familiar. It stands on the shoulders of sixty-five plus years of activist writing on fat oppression. We can trace the contours of fat activism through this genre of texts, from Vinne Young’s 1953 self-help book *It’s Fun to Be Fat*, to

Llewellyn Louderback's classic *Fat Power* (1970), which challenged the medical literature on fat, through explorations of femininity like Marcia Millman's *Such a Pretty Face* (1980), critiques of diet culture like Shelley Bovey's *Being Fat Is Not a Sin* (1989), Dr. Cheri K. Erdman's *Nothing to Lose: A Guide to Sane Living in a Larger Body* (1995), and contemporary takes on fat activism like Marilyn Wann's *Fat!So?: Because You Don't Have to Apologize for Your Size* (1998), Wendy Shanker's *The Fat Girl's Guide to Life* (2004), and Kate Harding and Marianne Kirby's *Lessons From the Fat-O-Sphere: Quit Dieting and Declare a Truce with Your Body* (2009).

Books like these have introduced countless readers to fat activism and/or the more general idea that it is okay to be fat. Tovar's book is more focused on intersectionality than those of earlier authors in this genre. While intersectionality and the discussion of race is not new in the context of activism, blogging and scholarship, readers unfamiliar with the links between diet culture, misogyny, and white supremacy will get an effective introduction from this text. Through anecdotes and personal stories, Tovar shows that cultural anxieties about weight are built into existing power structures. She also notes that diet culture "maps seamlessly onto the preexisting American narrative of failure and success as individual endeavors," obscuring the reality that attitudes toward gender and embodiment are socially constructed (37). Fat activism disrupts this narrative and deeply entrenched ideas about gender differentiation.

Tovar concludes the book with a long chapter critiquing body positivity. When she came to fat activism around 2010, she recounts, the movement was radical, anti-assimilationist and liberationist. Body positivity has begun to eclipse the radical branch of

the movement, according to Tovar, who says that the approach is driven by cis-gender women who are seeking to appease men and are afraid of confrontation.

As a historian of fat activism, I struggle with such absolute statements about different approaches in the movement. There are many ways to be fat and an activist. The movement has taken many forms over the last sixty years, and groups have rarely been divided on strict ideological lines. I would have liked to hear more from Tovar on the radical future instead of a take-down of other approaches to liberation.

While not everyone will embrace the movement with the same power as Tovar, this book will inspire readers to reflect on their lives in a meaningful way. It is a valuable contribution across the genres of fat activist self-help guide, memoir, and heroic journey, written to appeal to contemporary readers.

DISRUPTING BREAST CANCER NARRATIVES: STORIES OF RAGE AND REPAIR

Emilia Nielsen
Toronto: University of Toronto
Press, 2019

REVIEWED BY DIANE DRIEDGER

This book resonates with me as a breast cancer survivor. It is an excellent book for anyone interested in the power of the stories that women tell about our experiences. Emilia Nielsen, through the study of women's narratives, unpacks the mainstream breast cancer narrative in Western societies. That is, that a woman with breast cancer should always be upbeat, cheery, courageous, hopeful, a survivor, never a downer. Nielsen

paints the picture of the supposed true breast cancer patient, one who goes along with the medical professionals who will "cure" them so that their lives will be happy and the same as before they had cancer. This book discusses women's breast cancer narratives that upend the mainstream, feminine trope. Nielsen mines print, blog, film, and television narratives to present an analysis that disrupts the usual talk about breast cancer.

The American Cancer Society started The Pink Ribbon initiative to raise awareness and funds for breast cancer prevention and treatment. The "pink washing" of the breast cancer story that we all see in the media is promoted and supported by the same corporations that may also be causing the breast cancer epidemic through their own profit-making operations that pollute the environment. In fact, Nielsen's narrators tell us that our society does not really want a cure for breast cancer, as there is too much money to be made in treating cancer.

When I had breast cancer almost fourteen years ago, I noticed the pink ribbons, pink ribbon Barbies, pens, pins, ads. I thought, *this is interesting. Let me collect these while I have breast cancer and build an art installation in my study. Surely, this will make me feel comforted about the treatment, and I will feel that I am not alone.* Interestingly, the installation grew to cover a third of the floor of my room, but it did not make me feel better. In fact, I could hear its hollow ring every time I entered my study. After cancer treatment, I dismantled it, seeing no artistic or personal meaning to it—after all, what did it really mean to me?

Nielsen's narratives tell us that all the pink is about consumerism. That is, women are traditionally seen as the buyers, and it is supposed to make us feel better to be able to buy pink stuff. It didn't make me feel any better.