

Review

by M. G. Cimino

The Invisible Woman is available at bookstores (support your local feminist bookstores, grrls!), and may also be purchased directly from Gurze Books for \$14.95 plus \$2.50 shipping and handling. To order call 800/ 756-7533.

The *Invisible Woman* by W. Charisse Goodman is a book with its heart in the right place. Subtitled "Confronting Weight Prejudice in America", the book does an excellent job of doing that through the use of quotations, examples, and the author's personal experience. The use of quotes, from various diet books, medical journals, and fat-acceptance literature is extensive and exhaustive. While serving as a good source of ammunition to fight fat phobia, the continuous quoting made me wonder why I didn't just go back and reread *The Beauty Myth*. The quotes from Naomi Wolf's classic were profound and summed up in a sentence or two what Goodman then discussed for pages.

This is not to say the book doesn't have value. In fact, simply having a new, updated book about fat phobia and prejudice released is a wonderful step forward. And it is certainly a great introduction to the issue for women who have not yet been exposed to the idea that they can throw away their diet books and take a sledgehammer to their scale. But fat women who have already made these decisions and lived through fat prejudice will find little they did not already know, think, or feel.

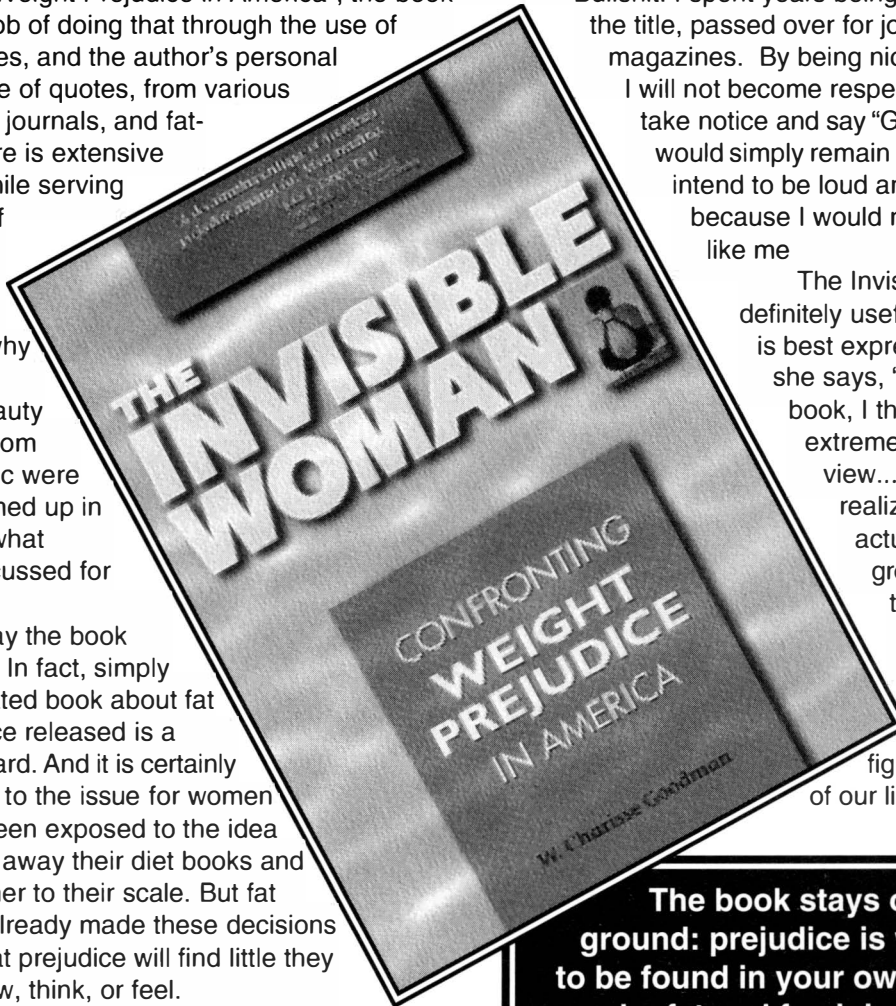
Some of the author's use of personal experience seemed repetitive and did little to aid her argument. She talks about forcing herself to watch what thin women order and eat in restaurants. She seems stunned that many ingest more food and less healthy food than she does. She also talks about "healthy" fat people trying to debunk the myths that fat women are unhealthy, vast quantity consumers. But as a fat woman who enjoys eating and has no idea what her cholesterol is, I found myself alienated. Healthy or not, pretty or not, intelligent or not, a fat person should not be discriminated against. Period.

But my biggest disappointment came in the final chapter, entitled "Invisible No More: Learning to Be Seen and Heard." The book stays on safe, simple ground: prejudice is wrong, beauty is to be found in your own mind, and you can be fat and feminine. The only radical notion in the book is one I violently disagree with. In the one and a half pages devoted to what to do with the anger and self-hatred a fat woman finds herself with, the author urges us to behave like Christ, Ghandi, and King. To be better than thin people, to

show through our higher morality and refusal to return pain for pain, that we fat women are better than them.

Bullshit. I spent years being the "Invisible Woman" in the title, passed over for jobs, unseen in movies and magazines. By being nice, upstanding and patient, I will not become respected. Thin women will not take notice and say "Gosh, I've been bad." I would simply remain invisible to them. No, I intend to be loud and angry and pushy because I would rather others see me than like me

The *Invisible Woman* is a decent, definitely useful book. But its weakness is best expressed by the author where she says, "When I began writing this book, I thought I was promoting an extremely radical point of view...Now, though, at the end, I realize that my arguments actually represent the middle ground." (p 197). And there's the rub, by being a proud fat woman in this society we are already radical. There can be no middle ground because of the fight we must fight, every day of our lives.



The book stays on safe, simple ground: prejudice is wrong, beauty is to be found in your own mind, and you can be fat and feminine.

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