



Cosmetic Surgery Narratives: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Women's Accounts

Debra Gimlin

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This book examines British and American women's narratives of cosmetic surgery collected between 1995 and 2007, with particular attention to what those narratives say about the contemporary status of cosmetic surgery and 'local' ideas about its legitimate and illegitimate uses. The book argues that British and American women employ justificatory strategies that normalize aesthetic procedures by aligning them with nationally-specific notions of 'appropriate' medical treatment. Consumers' narratives are also informed by 'global' discourses that portray cosmetic surgery as a lifestyle choice and a tool for holding one's own in the competitive marketplace of employment or heterosexual romance. Such meanings are in turn reworked by women in their own accounting, at the same time that accounts are limited by culturally-available symbolic resources and institutional structures. Where the general and specific are incompatible – as is more often the case in the British context – women respond by stressing the power of externally-imposed appearance mandates and their entitlement to self-care.

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