

BOOK REVIEW/ COMPTE RENDU

Hugh, Tony, *Faces Inside and Outside the Clinic: A Foucauldian Perspective on Cosmetic Facial Modification*. Burlington, Ashgate, 2013. 192 pp., \$109.95 hardcover (978-1-4727-1219-9)

Although critical, social science and humanities analyses of cosmetic surgery date back at least 25 years, there appears to be a bit of a revival in the field these days. Recent books include Bernadette Wegenstein's *The Cosmetic Gaze: Body Modification and the Construction of Beauty* (2012), Jane Megan Northrup's *Reflecting on Cosmetic Surgery: Body image, Shame and Narcissism* (2014), Debra Gimlin's *Cosmetic Surgery Narratives: A Cross-cultural Analysis of Women's Accounts* (2012) and Wen Hua's *Buying Beauty: Cosmetic Surgery in China* (2013). These discuss the complexities of identity, culture, self, and the normal in more nuanced ways than some earlier contributions. So does the book which is the subject of this review, but it is unusual in at least three respects: it focuses on the face, which allows it to make some novel contributions; it says surprisingly little about women and gender; and it was written by a cosmetic surgeon who teaches periodontics and oral plastic surgery. Empirically, McHugh's book is based primarily on his own professional experience, supplemented by some investigation of the clinical cosmetic surgery literature. From his experience, McHugh draws fascinating examples. As I read the book, I wondered how broadly his own experience applies across cosmetic surgery given McHugh's specific focus on periodontic surgery and the minimal consideration of the possibly idiosyncratic nature of his experience and speciality. Excerpts from interviews with other surgeons would have enriched the book, which is sometimes autobiographical, even anecdotal, in its method and engages far more with social theory than with primary research material. I was less convinced of the applicability of McHugh's representations of clinical practices, discourses, and patients across plastic surgery, than I was of the value of McHugh's theoretical analysis, which consumes most of the book.

It is hardly unusual for a book in social studies of medicine to adopt a Foucauldian theoretical approach, but this one makes an unusually sophisticated and broad use of Michel Foucault. It strikes me as a potentially useful exemplar for graduate students working on research related

to the body, aesthetics, clinical practice and patienthood, and especially those wishing to combine Foucault with other theorists. That said, despite McHugh's careful attempts to elucidate Foucault and provide examples from clinical practice to illustrate his ideas, this book would be a difficult read for those unfamiliar with Foucault's work. I wonder whether McHugh's expressed hope that other cosmetic surgeons will read the book is optimistic. The prose is quite dense, even for those used to theoretical jargon.

The first three chapters of the book treat Foucault's works and their applicability to analysing McHugh's clinical field in quite some detail; the fourth uses Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu to fill in some gaps in the Foucauldian corpus concerning the experiencing, material, agential body. Many other social theorists make guest appearances, including Judith Butler, Drew Leder, Donna Haraway, Julia Kristeva, Erving Goffman, Iris Marion Young, Chris Shilling, Paul Ricoeur, Jacques Lacan, Susan Bordo, George Herbert Mead, and Linda Alcoff, among others. At some points, useful connections among theorists' concepts were drawn to add dimension to arguments and clarify difficult ideas; at others, this seemed repetitive, analytically unnecessary, and bordering on name-dropping.

Chapter 1 asks, What is a face? It provides a captivating discussion (drawing on Ludwik Fleck and Thomas Kuhn, as well as Foucault's early work on disciplines and forms of knowledge) of orthodoxies concerning the face within the paradigm of cosmetic surgery. It explores the field's understanding of surface and depth, and of "correct" facial proportions, and its application of evidence-based medicine to lend a veneer of objectivity to historically situated aesthetic judgments. McHugh's problematisation of these understandings poses important questions about the normalising and moralising effects of this field. Chapter 2 begins, as does Foucault's *The Order of Things*, with an analysis of Diego Velázquez's painting *Las Meninas*, in order to consider how the discursive regimes of the Renaissance, the Classical Age, and Modernity change the ways that faces are seen and known, judged and worked upon. The face, then, is situated in time and space. McHugh is particularly interested in how, under the clinical gaze, the face comes to be surveyed and normalised in the Modern period—and how cosmetic surgery patients come to be recruited to their own normalisation. In Chapter 3, McHugh draws on Foucault's discussions of Classical Greek forms of knowledge (episteme, techne, phronesis, and metis) and of technologies of power, sign systems, production, and the self to explore the relationship between disciplinary knowledge, care of the self and other, and the material body. He discusses only briefly the preponderance of women among cosmetic surgery patients, and the feminist debates about the pos-

sibility of choice, agency, and self-determination in cosmetic surgery in a patriarchal context. In response to critiques that Foucault's body is too abstract and discursively determined, McHugh argues for the potential use of Foucault to theorise fleshy, material, socially situated bodies with agency. To develop this potential, in Chapter 4 he turns to Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu in a suggestive attempt to integrate these three theorists' insights about intersubjectivity, lived embodiment, power, and the structure-agency problem—one which deserves more elaboration, I think. He again turns to art history and criticism to illuminate medical practice and the surgeon-patient relation. Finally, he poses some interesting questions (though not, I think, adequate solutions) about the ethics of cosmetic surgery and what it means to care for the Other (in this case, the patient) from the point of view of a cosmetic surgeon. I would have appreciated further discussion of these questions in light of McHugh's earlier discussion of the feminist debates, particularly as he sides with Kathryn Pauly Morgan's position that what seems to amount to "choice" in cosmetic surgery is often a reflection of conformity with patriarchal norms of beauty. McHugh rejects as disingenuous and ethically irresponsible the claims of some surgeons that they are just doing what patients ask; he points out that cosmetic surgeons materially benefit from, participate in, and reinforce these norms, and he carefully analyses surgeons' power to anatomise, normalise, and discipline patients. Yet, in the end, he seems to suggest that the burden of responsible decision-making in cosmetic surgery lies principally with clinicians; and that ethical conduct and "excellence" for surgeons consists in caring for the patient and acting in accordance with their own and their patient's particular values and experience. It is not clear to me that this responds adequately to his critique of his profession's investments and interests in the (highly gendered) field of power in which patients "choose" surgery.

This thoughtful, stimulating book will be of potential interest not just to those interested in the substantive topic who have some familiarity with Foucauldian approaches, but also to those wanting to amend Foucault with other theorists, the better to account for material embodiment, agency, and lived experience. The experience of the author contributes some fascinating insights to his analysis of the face in cosmetic surgery; further rigorous research on this topic would suggest how broadly those insights might extend.

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