

Evaluate the postmodern discourse concerning cosmetic surgery and the
'mask of aging' Western Societies.

Grogan, Sarah (1999) *Body Image: understanding body dissatisfaction in men, women and children*. London and New York: Routledge

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Body Image: The picture of our own body which we form in our mind, that is to say, the way in which our body appears to ourselves. (Schilder, 1950: 11)

- (25) Slimness is seen as a desirable attribute for women in prosperous western cultures, and is associated with self-control, elegance, social attractiveness and youth...women have always been encouraged to change their shape and weight to conform to current trends. Through the ages women have undergone pain to attempt to conform to the current ideal. This is clear in relation to procedures such as foot binding and the wearing of restrictive corset, where women suffered discomfort and immobility in the name of particular fashions. In Western society in the 1990s we have replaced these practices with strict diets and cosmetic plastic surgery...
- (49) The 1990s saw a significant increase in the numbers of women receiving cosmetic surgery in Britain and the US, especially liposuction and breast augmentation procedures. More and more women are turning to plastic surgery to change the shape of their bodies.
- Not a recent phenomenon.... Not until the mid-twentieth century that cosmetic surgery (i.e. aesthetic purposes) emerged. Naomi Wolf (1991) traces the beginnings of what she calls the 'surgical age', where cosmetic surgery became a mass phenomenon. Today cosmetic surgery accounts for about 40 percent of plastic surgery, mostly performed on women who are dissatisfied with the way they look.
- Why? The question of why women undergo unnecessary surgery to make their bodies more pleasing may help us to understand the nature of body dissatisfaction in women.
- Feminist viewpoint...
- Women as active and knowledgeable agents who make decisions based on limited range of available options. Women see through the conditions of oppression even as they comply with them. Women making free choices, although these 'choices' are limited by cultural definitions of beauty and by the availability of particular surgical techniques. The 'choices' need to be placed within a framework which sees women's bodies as commodities.
- A way to re-negotiate identity through changing the appearance of the body.
- Kathryn Morgan (1991) → more mainstream feminist view. She argues that although women may feel that they are making a free and informed choice, they are not really free to make a genuine choice because of patriarchal cultural pressures on them; that, although women may say that they are creating a new identity for themselves, they are really conforming to traditional (male dominated) ideologies of how women's bodies should look. She argues that women who believe they are somehow taking control over

their bodies by opting for plastic surgery have really been coerced by family, friends, partners and indirectly by the medical professions.....

Gilman, S.L. (1999) *Making the Body Beautiful: a cultural history of aesthetic surgery*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

- In a world in which we are judged by how we appear, the belief that we can change our appearance is liberating. All of us harbour internal norms of appearance.

BEAUTY & AGE

- If the size and shape of body part come to be a measure of the boundary between the erotic and the unerotic, the perceived age of the body comes to have analogous importance. How does one “pass” as “young”? Age was understood by the Enlightenment as a disease analogous to ‘fat’. The aged body is unaesthetic, unerotic and pathological. (The magic flute)
- A ridge boundary between youth and age is not universally present across cultures and across history, but at the turn of the twentieth century, the number of individuals who desired to ‘pass’ as youthful began to increase. Medicine began to strive to fulfil patients’ desire and make them more youthful. What had been the stuff of myth became the material of the clinic and laboratory.
- 2 classic models of overcoming age – rejuvenation and aesthetic surgery.
- The desire of rejuvenation in the west is as old as myth...

“PASSING” AS HUMAN

- Change has now become the mantra of modernity.

Welton, Donn ed. (1998) *Body and Flesh: A philosophical reader*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Sculpted Bodies: women and the knife: Cosmetic Surgery and the colonisation of women’s Bodies – Kathryn Pauly Morgan

- a silent (if not silenced) topic both in mainstream bioethics and in recent ground-breaking discussions in feminist medical ethics. Apart from some tangential references, there is virtually no discussion, feminist or otherwise, of the normative and political issues that might be raised in women and elective cosmetic surgery. I believe we need a feminist framework and critique to understand why breast augmentation, until recently, was the most frequently performed kind of plastic surgery in North America and why, according to *Longevity* magazine, 1 in every 225 adults had elective cosmetic surgery in 1989. We need a feminist analysis to understand why actual, live women are reduced and reduce themselves to “potential women” and choose to participate in anatomising and fetishizing their bodies as they buy “contoured bodies,” “restored youth” and permanent beauty”.
- In the face of a growing market and demand for surgical interventions in women’s bodies that can and do result in infection, bleeding, embolisms,

pulmonary edema, facial nerve injury, unfavourable scar formation, skin loss, blindness, crippling, and death our silence becomes a culpable one.

- Topic situated in the larger framework of the contemporary existential technologizing of women's bodies in western culture. We are witnessing a normalisation of elective cosmetic surgery. As the author of an article targeted to homemakers remarks "For many women, its no longer a question of whether to undergo cosmetic surgery – but what, when, by whom and how much" (McCabe, 1990).
- Not only is elective cosmetic surgery moving out of the domain of the sleazy, the suspicious, the secretively deviant, or the pathologically narcissistic, it is becoming the norm. The shift is leading to a predictable inversion of the domains of the deviant and the pathological, so that women who contemplate not using cosmetic surgery will increasingly be stigmatised and seen as deviant...
- Deeper epistemological and metaphysical dynamics of the field of CS...
- "Just the facts in America Ma'am"
- From Artifice to artifice: the creation of robo woman?
- Listening to the woman
- Paradoxes
- Are there any politically correct feminist responses to cosmetic surgery?

Poole, M and Feldman, S (ed) (1999) *A Certain Age: Women growing older*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin

Garner, J. and Mercer, S.O. ed. (1989) *Women as they Age: challenge, opportunity and triumph*. New York and London: The Haworth Press.