

events unfold primarily in the church, in respect to the institution, *The White Ribbon Man* is not reverential. However, there are moments when the reader is subjected to what feels like mini sermons on Dickinson's behalf. For example, upon arriving at the crime scene, Detective Cosser observes the crowd of homeless milling about and laments, "Soon winter will come and one of these men could die of the cold out there."

In the end, *The White Ribbon Man* provides a sobering parable reinforcing lessons on the destructive nature shame can wield over individuals obsessed with hiding past deeds and the blinding influence of hypocrisy.

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PRIESTESS OF MORPHINE: THE LOST WRITINGS OF MARIE-MADELEINE IN THE TIME OF NAZIS

Ronald K. Siegel, Ed.
Port Townsend: Process Media, 2015

**REVIEWED BY ANNA
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"No more seeing, no hearing, no feeling! — I want to tumble into the night, into the dark night," writes Marie-Madeleine in her 1914 prose poem *Morphium*, which laments her husband's death and praises morphine, her reprieve from agony. Paying homage to the feeling and darkness that characterize Marie-Madeleine's writings, Ronald K. Siegel's *Priestess of Morphine: The Lost Writings of Marie-Madeleine in the Time of Nazis* assembles selections

from many of Marie-Madeleine's collections of poems and prose narratives, particularly focusing on those works dealing with morphine. Translated from Fraktur by Eric A. Bye, most of these pieces appear in English for the first time in Siegel's text. As Amy Shapiro writes in her Afterword to *Priestess of Morphine*, "We owe a debt of gratitude to Siegel for gathering and assembling a compelling collection of writings of Marie-Madeleine."

In his introduction to the text, Siegel offers a meticulous biography of the text's heroine. Born in 1881 in East Prussia to a Jewish mother, Gertrud Günther (later pseudonym Marie-Madeleine) became a prolific writer who developed an addiction to and love for morphine. Although she married Baron Heinrich von Puttkamer in 1900 and remained married to him until his death in 1914, her poetry reveals her as a lesbian — "a modern Sappho in Berlin," terms Stephen J. Gertz in his foreword to the text. With the rise of Nazism, the erotic work of the Jewish-lesbian writer Marie-Madeleine was deemed "degenerate art." Admitted to a Nazi sanatorium for her morphine addiction in 1943, she died there under unclear circumstances in 1944.

The poems and prose in *Priestess of Morphine* brim with eroticism, intoxication, desire, pain, jealousy, loneliness, and passion. Siegel shrewdly partitions this collection into three main sections that reflect the time period before, during, and beyond Marie-Madeleine's addiction to morphine: (1) "Opus with Erotica," which takes up the period before morphine, includes poems from Marie-Madeleine's erotic collection *Auf Kypros (On Cyprus)*; (2) "Opus with Morphium," which takes up the period during morphine, includes novellas focused on both others' and Marie-Madeleine's personal morphine use, as well as poems

from the collection *Taumel (Frenzy)*; (3) "Requiem for a Modern Poet," which takes up the period beyond morphine, works to commemorate Marie-Madeleine both through her own poems and a number of poems and images by others.

In the text's preface, Siegel, a psychopharmacologist, explains that he sets out "to investigate the effects, if any, of her [Marie-Madeleine's] drug use on her behavior with particular reference to her words and actions." The editorial comments throughout the text, specifically the introductory and concluding material and the brief notes at the beginning of each of Marie-Madeleine's literary works, complement the works without invading them. In addition, Siegel enriches the text by frequently inserting extra-illustrations: photographs, posters, paintings, sketches that collectively and culturally speak to the time in which Marie-Madeleine writes. The cover illustration, for example, which reappears as the illustration for the poem "Morphium" in *Taumel*, is an 1896 painting by Eugène Grasset titled *La Morphinomane (The Morphine Addict)*. This image depicts a young woman — teeth clenched, hair dishevelled, dress lifted — who is injecting herself with a needle, a vial of morphine on the table beside her. Siegel's inclusion of other arts effectively and fascinatingly situates Marie-Madeleine's work in the historical and artistic consciousness of the time.

This inter-art gesture is particularly striking in the comparison between Marie-Madeleine and the roughly-contemporary Norwegian painter Edvard Munch (Siegel tells us that this comparison was first made by critic Willy Haas). Pairing Marie-Madeleine's prose poem "Morphium" with a number of Munch's paintings, including the renowned *The Scream*, Siegel captivatingly traces the connections underlying

the works of these two artistic figures: pain, death, anxiety, and love. The ending of *Priestess of Morphine* returns to the comparison between Marie-Madeleine and Munch with an inclusion of Munch's series *By the Deathbed*. Although Siegel's instruction "to imagine Gertrud Günther in his [Munch's] place on her own deathbed" comes off as uncomfortably appropriative, Siegel has gifted us with an otherwise powerful and perceptive text.

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SURFACE IMAGINATIONS: COSMETIC SURGERY, PHOTOGRAPHY, AND SKIN

Rachel Alpha Johnston Hurst
Montreal & Kingston: McGill-
Queen's University Press, 2015

REVIEWED BY SYDNEY TYBER

Rachel Alpha Johnson Hurst's *Surface Imaginations: Cosmetic Surgery, Photography, and Skin* is an original exploration into the social and cultural phenomenon of twenty-first century cosmetic surgery. Driven by the visual and ultimately "photographic" rhetoric that her seven female interviewees drew on to discuss their own bodies and cosmetic procedures, Hurst innovatively sutures modern notions of corporeal "flesh" with the material "flesh" of the photograph. Using contemporary feminist theory and (primarily Lacanian) psychoanalysis,

she cleverly illustrates how cosmetic surgery and photography work together to create what she terms "surface imaginations." Although the path to its definition is somewhat convoluted, "surface imagination" is usefully and specifically a phenomenon in which the photograph and the remodeled skin are "collapsed" as part of the fantasy which "offers inspiration to, and proof of, the subject's narrative of care and success in the project of self-creation". She later extends this idea to encompass the understood mutability of all bodies under a twenty-first century, Western biopolitical regime, and those imagined fantasies of identity re-fashioning she argues are so common in a Capitalist society.

While not always seamless in its transgression of disciplinary and methodological boundaries, the ambition in Hurst's project is remarkable as it recruits art history, cultural studies, and medicine, all examined through ethnography and a psychoanalytically-inflected feminism. The result is a series of chapters that offer contributions to all of these disciplines. She begins with a Preface on artist ORLAN that introduces the major tensions explored in the book: the "limitless opportunity" offered by the cosmetic surgery industry to both patients and surgeons. This *limitless-ness*, however, runs up against the always present *limited* agency those same agents face in social, cultural, and biological practices of the surgery itself.

The arc of the study moves through an introduction of her seven interview subjects, followed by a chapter introducing her theoretical paradigms. While Hurst's second chapter sets out to offer a history of Western cosmetic surgery as it connects to psychoanalysis and "psychical work", what it does more successfully is examine the role of the visual image as it pertains to fantasized constructions

of the self in popular culture and medical settings. The third chapter offers the study's most interesting oscillation between the empowering and insidious aesthetic rhetoric and narratives of self-fashioning located within the promises of plastic surgery. The final chapter offers the book's strongest contribution to gender studies by reading the feminine skin "topographically". This chapter compares the skin's tactility and affects to the "flatness" of the photograph, an aesthetic form Hurst argues is integral to cosmetic surgery as a corporeal commodity.

Distinctly, each chapter presents a careful argument that is well-informed by the subject-matter Hurst considers. While the interview subjects tie the book together, the project's interdisciplinarity causes some lack of cohesion in argumentation and logic. A stronger grounding in one discipline would have allowed Hurst to pivot through the others, potentially creating a clearer trajectory for the piece as a whole.

Certainly, though, distinct pieces of the book and the overall idea of the "surface imagination," are useful to anyone working through questions of gender studies and bodies, aesthetics, or medicine. Hurst's interrogation of those positive effects of cosmetic surgery without ever losing a critical feminist lens is precisely the kind of balancing act we need to see more of in the field.

Sydney Tyber is a PhD Candidate in English literature at York University. Her SSHRC-funded doctoral research uses feminist performance studies to interrogate how bodies and "flesh" interact with and across aesthetic modes of women's performance, photography, and literature. She interrogates those tangible surfaces that present and represent women as live and static objects, considering the feminist stakes in object-oriented ontologies themselves.