



# Three Faces of Beauty: Casablanca, Paris, Cairo

*Susan Ossman*

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## **Three Faces of Beauty: Casablanca, Paris, Cairo** Susan Ossman

*Three Faces of Beauty* offers a unique approach to understanding globalization and cultural change based on a comparative, ethnographic study of a nearly universal institution: the beauty salon. Susan Ossman traces the images and words of the beauty industry as they developed historically between Paris, Cairo, and Casablanca and then vividly demonstrates how such images are embodied today in salons located in each city.

By examining how images from fashion magazines, film, and advertising are enacted in beauty salons, Ossman demonstrates how embodiment is able to display and rework certain hierarchies. While offering the possibility of freedom from the tethers of status, nation, religion, and nature, beauty is created by these very categories and values, Ossman shows. Drawing on hundreds of interviews, she documents the various rituals of welcome, choice-making, pricing practices, and spatial arrangements in multiple salons. She also reveals ways in which patrons in all three cities imagine and co-opt looks they believe are fashionable in the other cities. By observing salons as scenes of instruction, Ossman reveals that beautiful bodies evolve within the intertwining contexts of media, modernity, location, time, postcolonialism, and male expectation.

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