



Such a Pretty Face: Being Fat in America

Marcia Millman

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We are a fat-obsessed society. Four out of every ten Americans are clinically overweight. Being fat, especially for American women, holds a special significance and is laden with symbolism. Low-fat foods, dieting programs, and diet books, few of which make a lasting difference, are the basis of a multibillion-dollar industry.

Yet, despite this obsession with weight control, there is little serious discussion of the deeper meaning of obesity. In a way, obesity is as powerful a taboo as sexuality was for the Victorians.

This book argues that the effort to lose weight should be secondary to an understanding of the mythology of fat. Being fat is seen as much more than a physical condition. Fat women are stereotypically viewed as unfeminine, either in flight from sexuality or sexual in some forbidden way, intentionally antisocial, out of control, hostile, aggressive.

Using case studies, moving, sometimes painful, autobiographical accounts, and observing such organizations as a fat rights society, Overeaters Anonymous, and a children's diet camp, Marcia Millman reveals how people live with the burden of these stereotypes and explores the truth or falsity of them.

This book proves the humanness, the defiance, vulnerability, self-doubt, courage, and even the beauty of those who violate our arbitrary standards of physical beauty. It sees them as whole people, to whom attention must be paid.

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