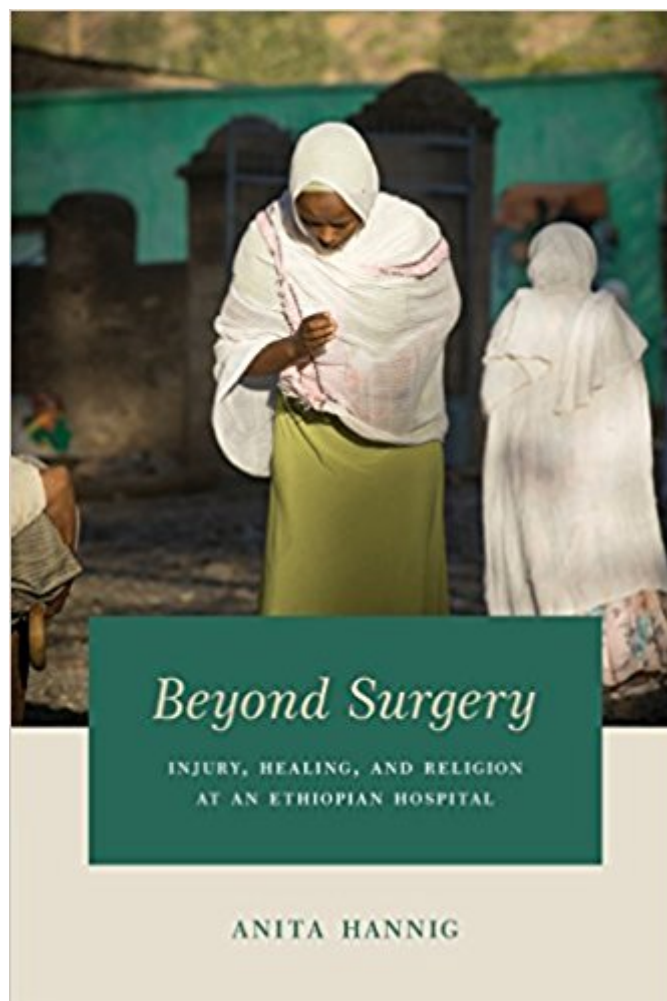


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Beyond Surgery: Injury, Healing, And Religion At An Ethiopian Hospital



Synopsis

Over the past few decades, maternal childbirth injuries have become a potent symbol of Western biomedical intervention in Africa, affecting over one million women across the global south. Western-funded hospitals have sprung up, offering surgical sutures that ostensibly allow women who suffer from obstetric fistula to return to their communities in full health. Journalists, NGO staff, celebrities, and some physicians have crafted a stock narrative around this injury, depicting afflicted women as victims of a backward culture who have their fortunes dramatically reversed by Western aid. With *Beyond Surgery*, medical anthropologist Anita Hannig unsettles this picture for the first time and reveals the complicated truth behind the idea of biomedical intervention as quick-fix salvation. Through her in-depth ethnography of two repair and rehabilitation centers operating in Ethiopia, Hannig takes the reader deep into a world inside hospital walls, where women recount stories of loss and belonging, shame and delight. As she chronicles the lived experiences of fistula patients in clinical treatment, Hannig explores the danger of labeling “culture” the culprit, showing how this common argument ignores the larger problem of insufficient medical access in rural Africa. *Beyond Surgery* portrays the complex social outcomes of surgery in an effort to deepen our understanding of medical missions in Africa, expose cultural biases, and clear the path toward more effective ways of delivering care to those who need it most.

Book Information

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: University Of Chicago Press (April 24, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 022645729X

ISBN-13: 978-0226457291

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #101,718 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #4 in Books > History > Africa > Ethiopia #20 in Books > History > Africa > East Africa #56 in Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Internal Medicine > Obstetrics & Gynecology

Customer Reviews

“The genius of ethnography often involves finding a practice or idea the examination of which conjures up unexpected larger insights. Hannig finds just this kind of topic in fistula repair

surgery in northern Ethiopia—both for the cultural worlds of women patients and foreign missionary doctors. *Beyond Surgery* is a major achievement of writing and analysis. (Donald L. Donham, University of California, Davis) “In this incisive and immensely insightful study, Hannig moves beyond the hype of heroic surgery to examine the complex social, moral, and aesthetic landscape—the interplay of science and sanctity, loss and recovery—that comprises the intricate work of care, here as everywhere. (Jean Comaroff, Harvard University) “Hannig has written an important and deeply touching testament to the practical importance of long-term careful ethnographic research in global health. *Beyond Surgery* has profound implications for debates on global health disparities. It deserves to be read by anthropologists and practitioners alike. (Stacey Langwick, Cornell University)

Anita Hannig is assistant professor of anthropology at Brandeis University, in Massachusetts.

“*Beyond Surgery* is imminently accessible and has the intellectual vigor necessary to keep you engaged. I found the critical and intimate lens through which Hannig examines the danger of single-story narratives incredibly illuminating. In doing so, she asks us to question other commonly known, however misleading, stories in medicine and development. Her approach is refreshing and offers up a humbling perspective. It was a very enjoyable read, and I have recommended the book to many friends. A must read for people interested in broadening their minds and gaining a more well-informed, global perspective.

This book has had a huge effect on my understanding of obstetric fistula. Hannig is fearless—she challenges the prevailing narrative surrounding fistula and refocuses our attention on the important, and often overlooked, cause of this medical condition: poor access to healthcare. The book is engaging and powerful—a must read for all who are interested in understanding the cultural roots and consequences of this, and similar, health challenges for women worldwide.

This is such an important book! It opened my eyes to the complexity of obstetric fistula in Africa and really challenged my perspective on biomedical intervention. The writing is riveting, and the content sparked a lot of conversation in class. I would highly recommend for anyone interested in anthropology, social sciences, global health, or development. I know I will be returning to this book

again and again, not only for rich insight it brings to this issue, but also for the pleasure of reading it!

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