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### For one drop of blood

*Virginity, sexual norms and medical processes in hymenoplasty consultations in the Netherlands*

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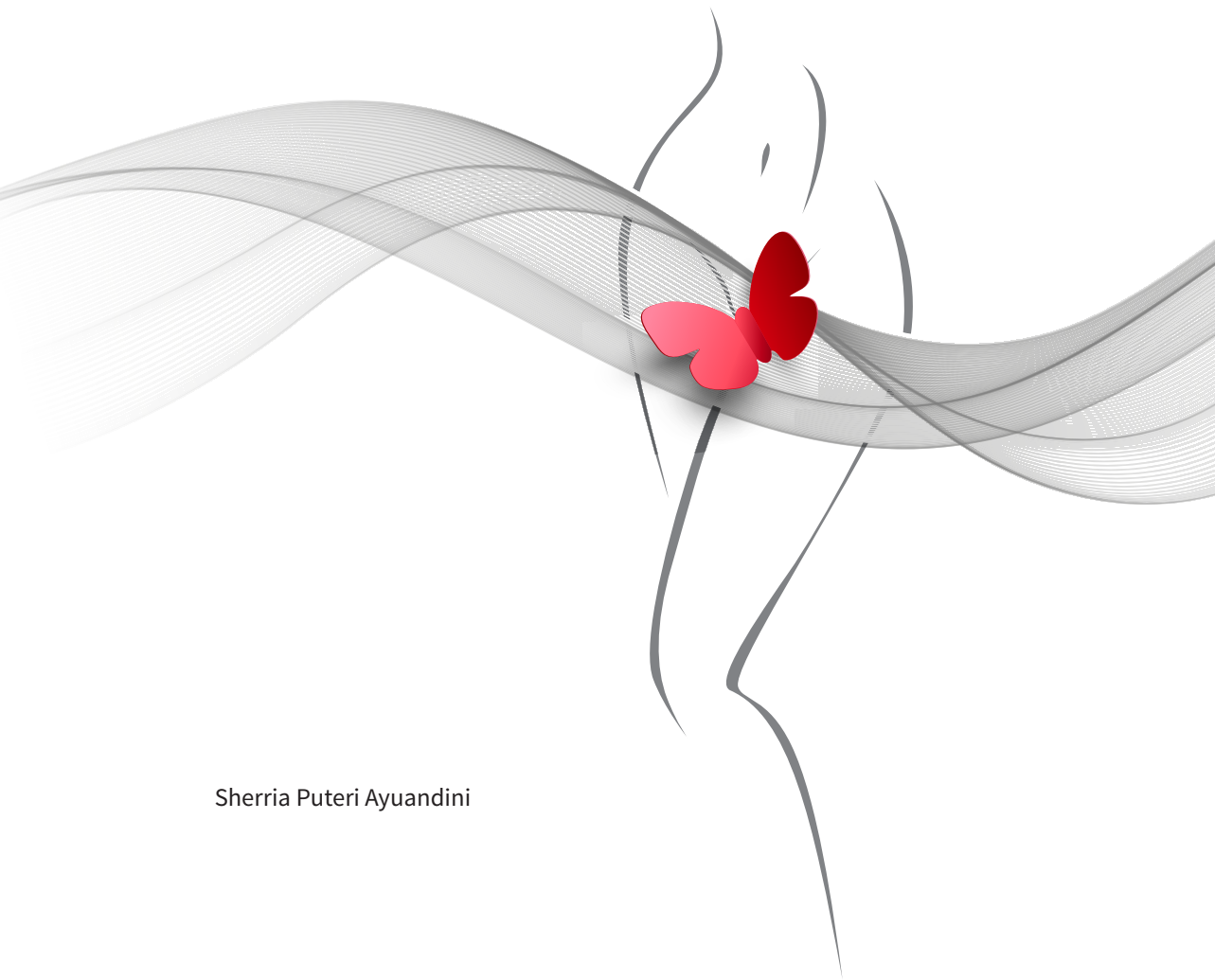
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# For One Drop of Blood

**Virginity, sexual norms and medical processes  
in hymenoplasty consultations in the Netherlands**



Sherria Puteri Ayuandini

# For One Drop of Blood

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in hymenoplasty consultations in the Netherlands**

Sherria Puteri Ayuandini

to Iwan Tjitradjaja

He who laid eyes on an engineer and saw an anthropologist

**For One Drop of Blood:**  
Virginity, sexual norms and medical processes  
in hymenoplasty consultations in the Netherlands

## **ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT**

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor  
aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam  
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus  
prof. dr. ir. K.I.J. Maex  
ten overstaan van een door het College voor Promoties ingestelde commissie,

in het openbaar te verdedigen in de Agnietenkapel  
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This thesis was prepared within the partnership between the University of Amsterdam and Washington University in St. Louis with the purpose of obtaining a joint doctorate degree. The thesis was prepared in the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences at the University of Amsterdam and in the Department of Anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis.

*Dit proefschrift is tot stand gekomen binnen een samenwerkingsverband tussen de Universiteit van Amsterdam en de Washington University in St. Louis met als doel het behalen van een gezamenlijk doctoraat. Het proefschrift is voorbereid in de Faculteit der Maatschappij- en Gedragwetenschappen van de Universiteit van Amsterdam en de Department of Anthropology van Washington University in St. Louis.*

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**For One Drop of Blood:**

Virginity, sexual norms and medical processes  
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by

Sherria Ayuandini

A dissertation presented to The Graduate School of Washington University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy

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## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Hymenoplasty is a medical procedure done to alter the shape of the hymen membrane. Dutch women of predominantly Muslim migrant ancestry resort to the surgery to maintain the appearance of premarital virginity. This dissertation research studies hymenoplasty as a social phenomenon. It asks: how do the interconnecting issues of gender, religion and migration play out during interactions between doctors and Dutch patients of migrant ancestry in the medical and institutional context of hymenoplasty in the Netherlands? Findings were collected from 2012 and 2015 through participant observations of 70 hymenoplasty consultations in medical establishments in the Netherlands. These observations were complemented with interviews with hymenoplasty providers and patients as well as with people of similar ancestry with the surgery seeking women. Written as a collection of journal articles, this dissertation addresses the issue of variability of treatment, demedicalization of the 'broken' hymen, patients' rhetoric of religion, national identity as medical recommendations, and women empowerment as topics of analysis. By closely paying attention to exchanges between hymenoplasty seeking women and medical professionals, this study posits that patients' identity markers shape the course of interactions between them and the doctors. Ultimately, differences between doctors and patients, including gender, religion and migration history, are not only brought to light during hymenoplasty consultations in medical institution, but they are also specifically addressed and treated as integral aspects of both patients' motivation for the operation as well as the cornerstones of their problems which, when dealt with, will lead to the surgery seeking women's 'salvation'.

# Table of Contents

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>DISSERTATION ABSTRACT</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background of Research and the Main Research Question of the Study	1
1.2 The Method and Process of Data Collection	3
1.3 Chosen Form of Writing and Objectives of Each Article	6
1.4 The Ever-Present Backdrop to the Study	8
1.5 Terms and Definitions	10
1.6 The Chapters of the Dissertation	12
The First Article: Variability of Hymenoplasty Recommendations	12
The Second Article: Religion and Hymenoplasty	14
The Third Article: Demedicalization of the ‘Broken’ Hymen	16
The Fourth Article: Enacting Dutchness in Hymenoplasty Consultations	18
The Fifth Article: Women Empowerment and Hymenoplasty	19
1.7 Bibliography	21
<b>CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>27</b>
2.1 The Timeline of the Study	27
2.2 The Sites of the Study and Hymenoplasty Procedures at Each Site	28
The Hospital	28
The Clinic	30
Profiles of Physicians	32
2.3 Data Gathering Method	33
Participant Observation of Hymenoplasty Consultation	34
Follow-up Interviews with Patients	34
Interview with Providers of Hymenoplasty	36
In-depth interviews with women of patients’ age	37
In-depth interviews with women of patients’ mother generation	37
Interviews with Dutch young men of migrant background	38
2.4 Addressing Invisibility – A Word on Access	38
2.5 Data Analysis	41
2.6 Limitation of the Study	41
2.7 Protecting Privacy and Ensuring Confidentiality	42
2.8 Bibliography	44

<b>CHAPTER III: VARIABILITY OF HYMENOPLASTY RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>46</b>
3.1 Article Title	46
3.2 Abstract	46
3.3 Introduction	47
3.4 Methodology	49
A hospital and a clinic: the sites of the study	49
Data collection	49
Data analysis	50
3.5 Findings	50
The procedural set-up of the consultation	50
A cultural motivation for the operation	51
Philosophy of the consulting doctors	52
The purpose of question and answer	52
Questions about bleeding after the first penetration	53
The aim of the gynecological examination	55
3.6 Discussion	57
Similar but fundamentally different	57
Addressing the financial gain	58
Study Limitations and Future Work	59
3.7 Conclusion	59
3.8 Bibliography	60
<b>CHAPTER IV: RELIGION AND HYMENOPLASTY</b>	<b>65</b>
4.1 Article Title	65
4.2 Abstract	65
4.3 Introduction	66
Islamic Jurisprudence on Hymenoplasty	68
4.4 Methodology	69
4.5 Findings	71
No Mention of Bleeding in the Qur’an	71
Blame it on Culture	73
Performing Virginit	75
Valuing Virginit, Seeing the Loss as a Mistake	75
Psychological Need for Hymenoplasty: Not to Purge One’s Sin	76
4.6 Discussion—Defending Religion	78
4.7 Conclusion	79
4.8 Bibliography	81

<b>CHAPTER V: DEMEDICALIZATION OF THE ‘BROKEN’ HYMEN</b>	<b>85</b>
5.1 Article Title	85
5.2 Abstract	85
5.3 Introduction	86
Medicalization and Demedicalization	86
The Role of Physicians in Demedicalization	88
5.4 The ‘Broken’ Hymen: A Medical Perspective in the Case of Hymenoplasty in the Netherlands	89
5.5 Methodology and the Context of the Study	90
5.6 Findings	91
Demystifying an ‘Intact’ Hymen	91
The Role of the Pelvic Muscles and the Absence of Bleeding	93
Cultural References and Cultural Solutions	94
Medicalizing to Demedicalize	96
Culturally Informed, Medically Manufactured	97
5.7 Discussion and Concluding Thoughts	98
5.8 Bibliography	100
<b>CHAPTER VI: ENACTING DUTCHNESS IN HYMENOPLASTY CONSULTATION</b>	<b>106</b>
6.1 Article Title	106
6.2 Abstract	106
6.3 Introduction	107
6.4 Methodology	110
6.5 Findings	111
Patients of Migrant Background	111
Hymenoplasty and Patients’ Ancestry	111
Incompatibility Between Being Dutch and Hymenoplasty	113
Always Connected to ‘Foreign’ Roots	115
Assumed Characteristics of Dutchness	117
Advising, Worrying, Praising	119
To be Modern	120
Empowering Patients through Consultations	122
Other People See Patients as Dutch	122
Responding to Dutchness	123
6.6 Conclusion: Being Dutch as the State of Flux	124
6.7 Bibliography	126

<b>CHAPTER VII: WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND HYMENOPLASTY</b>	<b>131</b>
7.1 Article Title	131
7.2 Abstract	131
7.3 Introduction	132
Empowerment as Process – A Brief Overview of Theories of Empowerment	133
7.4 Methodology	136
7.5 Findings	137
Compelled to Help	137
Educating Women of the Hymen and Virginity	138
Knowing Your Body	142
Men Do Not Know	145
Talk to the Man	147
Change the Expectation	150
Shaping Future Generation	151
Empowering Migrant Women	152
7.6 Discussion—Shaping the Women Subject	153
7.7 Conclusion	159
7.8 Bibliography	160
<b>CHAPTER VIII: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>169</b>
8.1 Identity Markers in an Institutional Context – Conclusions and Summaries of Articles	169
8.2 Looking Ahead – Possible Future Research	173
8.3 Extending the Scholarship – Final Thoughts	175
8.4 Bibliography	177
<b>DISSERTATION SUMMARY</b>	<b>179</b>
Variability of Hymenoplasty Recommendations	179
Religion and Hymenoplasty	180
Demedicalization of the ‘Broken Hymen’	180
Enacting Dutchness in Hymenoplasty Consultation	181
Women Empowerment and Hymenoplasty	182