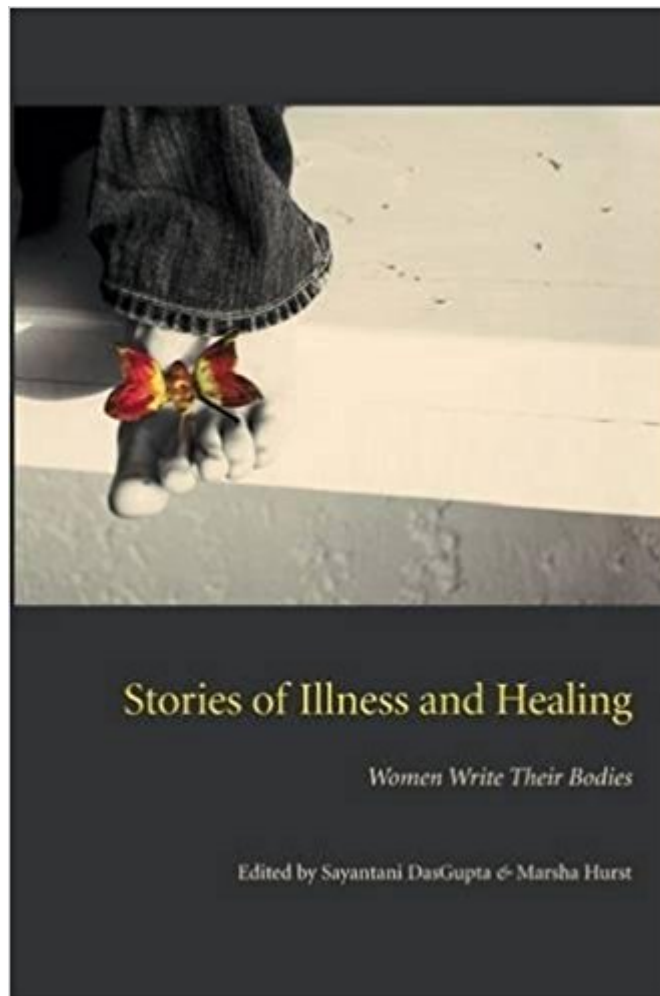




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Stories Of Illness And Healing: Women Write Their Bodies (Literature & Medicine)



Synopsis

A collection of women's illness narratives *Stories of Illness and Healing* is the first collection to place the voices of women experiencing illness alongside analytical writing from prominent scholars in the field of narrative medicine. The collection includes a variety of women's illness narratives—poetry, essays, short fiction, short drama, analyses, and transcribed oral testimonies—as well as traditional analytic essays about themes and issues raised by the narratives. *Stories of Illness and Healing* bridges the artificial divide between women's lives and scholarship in gender, health, and medicine. The authors of these narratives are diverse in age, ethnicity, family situation, sexual orientation, and economic status. They are doctors, patients, spouses, mothers, daughters, activists, writers, educators, and performers. The narratives serve to acknowledge that women's illness experiences are more than their diseases, that they encompass their entire lives. The pages of this book echo with personal accounts of illness, diagnosis, and treatment. They reflect the social constructions of women's bodies, their experiences of sexuality and reproduction, and their roles as professional and family caregivers. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, *Stories of Illness and Healing* draws the connection between women's suffering and advocacy for women's lives.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Sayantani DasGupta, MD, MPH, is a faculty member in the Division of General Pediatrics and the

Program in Narrative Medicine at Columbia University. She teaches courses on illness narratives and narrative genetics at Sarah Lawrence College and is a prose faculty member in an intensive summer seminar on "Writing the Medical Experience." • She is the coauthor of *The Demon Slayers and Other Stories: Bengali Folktales* and author of a memoir of her time at Johns Hopkins Medical School, *Her Own Medicine: A Woman's Journey from Student to Doctor*. Marsha Hurst, PhD, is director of the Health Advocacy master's program at Sarah Lawrence College, where she teaches courses on the history of health care and women's health. She writes and speaks on ethics and advocacy in health care, women's health, and advocacy education. She works with patient advocacy organizations, with individual, professional, and lay advocates, with policy advocates, and with community-based advocacy programs. She is a cosponsor at Sarah Lawrence of "Writing the Medical Experience" and has been involved in research and program development around the importance of narrative in advocacy.

This is a rare and insightful collection of stories that immerse the reader in the often unspoken and unshared thoughts, feelings and experiences of women's acute and chronic illness journeys.

Great

Stories of Illness and Healing: Women Write Their Bodies edited by Sayantani DasGupta and Marsha Hurst is an anthology of stories, essays, and poems all exploring the ways we approach illness and use language to define the healing process, even when the "healing" ends in death. The spectrum of illness and disease is as varied as are the voices of these collected stories. From acute to chronic conditions, terminal and curable, physical, psychological, and beyond, the stories these women share are often touching and provocative, meant to inspire and draw attention to the unique condition of being a woman in a typically male dominated medical industry. Not all of the stories are from patients and the editors make a brilliant decision to include stories by healthcare professionals, including one lone male voice whose own essay addresses the conflict women feel in turning over the ownership of the body to the care of another. The confusion and frustrations of the caretaker are also addressed in the pages of the book. No woman reading this book could possibly close it without seeing a variation of her own story somewhere within. Whether it is the voice of a woman doctor who stands in judgment over her lower-income patient or the woman facing a surgery in another country or even the young woman running naked through her neighborhood during a manic episode, if we cannot identify with the details we are bound to recognize ourselves in the

vulnerability of the voices. I can't think of anyone to whom I would not recommend this book. Men should read it to better appreciate the socio-economic and gender driven dynamic of how women are treated within the medical community. Women should read it to better appreciate that these feelings of vulnerability are not uncommon-and perhaps draw upon this sense of being vulnerable to find strength to be stronger. Each piece stands powerfully on its own while complimenting the others. This anthology is so tightly pulled together, with no single piece standing out as weaker or remarkably stronger than the other. What DasGupta and Hurst have managed to do is nothing less than brilliant and this is a book I am going to eagerly share and recommend to everyone I know and love. And even those I don't know and don't love. It's just that good!

I am a teacher and I thought an empathetic person. I thought my own experiences and ability to self reflect and learn from others enabled me to be insightful, understanding and supportive. I was wrong. So many thoughts are never spoken. So many experiences are not shared. Some of the narratives took me on a journey into familiar territory; giving voice to my personal feelings. How amazing to know that others have felt my feelings. To be part of a sisterhood. To know that I am not alone. Other narratives described pain and recovery; strength and perseverance beyond anything I could have imagined. I am grateful to the authors for compiling these works; for empowering women to speak unspeakable thoughts; for permitting people like me to learn and to grow.

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