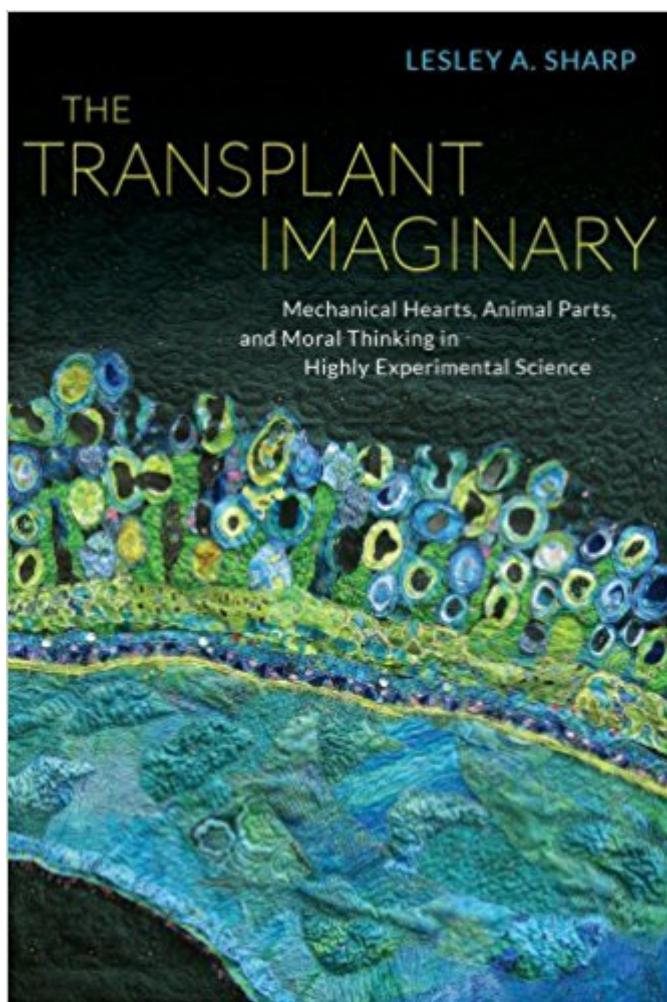


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The Transplant Imaginary: Mechanical Hearts, Animal Parts, And Moral Thinking In Highly Experimental Science



Synopsis

In *The Transplant Imaginary*, author Lesley Sharp explores the extraordinarily surgically successful realm of organ transplantation, which is plagued worldwide by the scarcity of donated human parts, a quandary that generates ongoing debates over the marketing of organs as patients die waiting for replacements. These widespread anxieties within and beyond medicine over organ scarcity inspire seemingly futuristic trajectories in other fields. Especially prominent, longstanding, and promising domains include xenotransplantation, or efforts to cull fleshy organs from animals for human use, and bioengineering, a field peopled with "tinkerers" intent on designing implantable mechanical devices, where the heart is of special interest. Scarcity, suffering, and sacrifice are pervasive and, seemingly, inescapable themes that frame the transplant imaginary. Xenotransplant experts and bioengineers at work in labs in five Anglophone countries share a marked determination to eliminate scarcity and human suffering, certain that their efforts might one day altogether eliminate any need for parts of human origin. A premise that drives Sharp's compelling ethnographic project is that high-stakes experimentation inspires moral thinking, informing scientists' determination to redirect the surgical trajectory of transplantation and, ultimately, alter the integrity of the human form.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The *Transplant Imaginary* is an important contribution for those who follow anthropological literature on transplantation from one of the most eminent scholars working on the topic."

"In this superbly crafted ethnography Lesley Sharp exposes unexamined moral thinking embedded in the highly experimental worlds of xenotransplantation and mechanical hearts. Involved scientists believe that use of donated human body parts, eternally in short supply, will cease due to their work, thus eliminating organ scarcity and hence moral issues associated with transplantation. But Sharp's insightful probing reveals critical moral concerns that individuals living with body parts of non-human origin must confront in their lives."¹Margaret Lock, author of *Twice Dead: Organ Transplants and the Reinvention of Death* "Lesley Sharp's exploration of the moral ground and quandaries of experimental xenografting and bioengineering brings together current interests in the ethnography of ethical life and of working science. I read this lucid and compelling account in a single go."²Michael Lambek, Canada Research Chair, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto Scarborough "Anthropologists have always sought out frontiers³and in this compelling new work Lesley Sharp takes us to the frontiers of transplantation, where the engineering of animals and of cunning devices promises to solve the shortage of organs. In telling a tale of 'virtuosity and virtue', Sharp is an incomparably astute, sensitive and observant guide."⁴Michael Banner, Dean and Fellow, Trinity College, University of Cambridge ⁵This book is based on groundbreaking and timely research in new realms of biomedicine. The human body is a critical juncture of personal experience, social meanings, and significant boundaries. Sharp deftly engages with these different frameworks taking readers through contested terrains of experimental medicine while keeping focus on querying desires for a better life that is shared by patients and the scientific community.⁶Nancy Chen is Professor of Anthropology at UC, Santa Cruz, and the author of *Asian Biotech: Ethics and Communities of Fate* ⁷This book addresses a timely and fascinating topic from a novel and anthropological perspective. An exciting, timely piece of work.⁸Janelle S. Taylor, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Washington

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