



Rebecca Gibson

The Corseted Skeleton

A Bioarchaeology of Binding

- Presents the first bioarchaeological investigation of skeletal changes due to corseting, using data drawn from skeletal remains from 1700 to 1900
- Challenges popular consensus on corsets by demonstrating that corseting at times promoted female agency and provided a means of self-protection
- Provides a multidisciplinary consideration of the corset bridging anthropology, history, fashion studies, gender studies, and other areas

Unpacking assumptions about corseting, Rebecca Gibson supplements narratives of corseted women from the 18th and 19th centuries with her seminal work on corset-related skeletal deformation. An undergarment that provided support and shape for centuries, the corset occupies a familiar but exotic space in modern consciousness, created by two sometimes contradictory narrative arcs: the texts that women wrote regarding their own corseting experiences and the recorded opinions of the medical community during the 19th century. Combining these texts with skeletal age data and rib and vertebrae measurements from remains at St. Bride's parish London dating from 1700 to 1900, the author discusses corseting in terms of health and longevity, situates corseting as an everyday practice that crossed urban socio-economic boundaries, and attests to the practice as part of normal female life during the time period Gibson's bioarchaeology of binding is the first large-scalar, multi-site bioethnography of the corseted woman.

1st ed. 2020, XV, 290 p. 45 illus., 44 illus. in color.

Printed book

Softcover

24,99 € | £22.99 | \$29.99

^[1]26,74 € (D) | 27,49 € (A) | CHF

29,50

eBook

21,39 € | £17.99 | \$19.99

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