Harper's BAZAAR
October 2007 £3.70

Cosmetic surgery is the ultimate way to transform ourselves, and in the UK last year the number of procedures shot up an astonishing 31 per cent. But to what extent are we at the mercy of the aesthetic whims of a surgeon? If we visited a clinic famous for boosting the assets of WAGs, would we automatically leave with a pair of double-Ds? *SHARON WALKER* goes undercover to find out how different surgeons would offer to 'fix' her

UNDER THE KNIFE UNCOVERED

I have never been totally happy with the way I lo
There was one brief moment, the summer of
(or was it 1986?), when I simultaneously disco
aerobics and was dumped by my boyfri
four years. My weight dropped to eigh
and finally even I could see that I d
too different to those glossy girls in
magazine. Patsy Kensit's boyfrien
even asked if I was a model (
happened before – or since); I
voilà! – transformation com

Had this heartbreak happen
different the story might have been.
once the cosmetic surgeon's office w
the realm of glamour models, celebrities, the super-rich and the
super-vain, a little nip-and-tuck has become the first port of
call for many women – and it is mostly women – in need
of a boost to their self-esteem.

And so it is with this in mind that *Harper's Bazaar* has opted to send me on a mission to 'revitalise my marriage' – or perhaps I am 'recovering from a messy divorce'. No matter, I am a woman in need of cheering up, a new beginning, a transformation. And so I find myself in Dr Chout's waiting room at Queen Anne Street Medical Centre, a red-brick building a stone's throw from Harley Street. My *Cinderella* moment has come. Except that it hasn't, because I don't actually get to go through with this transformative bonanza; I am simply to

had recommended putting them underneath), and guarantee them for five years.
Despite having been talked out of the facelift and warned to concentrate on a few things at a time, I've still come away with a shopping list of possibilities: Botox, boobs, fillers, lips, lipo and possibly a tummy tuck, which would come to a grand total of £11,964 – although with Transform, discounts are always available. I can even borrow up to £15,000 interest-free for 12 months. Transform's hard sell wasn't nearly as bad as I'd been led to believe, yet I leave feeling part of a production line. The experience didn't feel personal.

For a more 'sympathetic' approach, the next surgeon I consult is a woman. The number of female surgeons has risen by more than a fifth in the past few years, due in part to market demand: according to research, women prefer to visit a female surgeon for more 'sensitive' procedures such as breast work and vulvoplasty. Even before I have met her, I like Dr Angelica Kavouni. Her card includes a quote from Mae West: 'It is better to be looked over than overlooked.' The tiny Harley Street waiting room is full of smart-looking women in their fifties and sixties, and the atmosphere is one of girlie camaraderie, like the changing-room at the gym. 'She's the best,' says the deeply tanned blonde sitting next to me.

'That's quite a challenge,' says Dr Kavouni when I show her Cruz's breasts, 'to go from an A to a double-D. Boobs are a minefield. Often, women are in two minds: we want them bigger and more sensual, but we don't want a 'porn breast'. It's a bit of a conundrum. She offers to introduce me to some of her patients, so I can see and even feel what a boob job looks like. Dr Kavouni is easy to talk to, and I rattle through my now well-honed


CHOICE CUTS
From far left, writer Sharon Hollier, visiting various plastic-surgery clinics

list of complaints. 'Are you sure you want all that?' it's a bit drastic,' she says. She wouldn't recommend lipo for my stomach: 'the curve is youthful. If you look at young girls, they have a bit of fat. Young girls' tummies are not completely flat.' In any case, my problem is not so much fat, as muscles that have separated and excess skin.

In the end we reach a compromise: a mini tummy tuck and a more subtle boob job – perhaps a small C. 'Less risk, maximum impact. She will insert an implant underneath the muscle in an 'anatomical' tear-drop shape. The bill for the breast augmentation and mini tuck will come to £4,570 (including a £1,320 hospital fee for an overnight stay). I am truly tempted, ready to sign on the dotted line. Dr Kavouni doesn't promise the earth; but what she does promise, I feel sure she would deliver.

I have even higher hopes for Mr Barry Jones: he has been recommended by both Wendy Lewis and Newby Hands as a good safe bet. Mr Jones is my no-nonsense opinion: he is experienced and knowledgeable, and directs the cranio-facial unit at the Great Ormond Street Hospital

www.harpersbazaar.co.uk

Only four days ago, Penélope Cruz's breasts were merely the first nice pair I had come across in a magazine; now I feel cheated as though they really ought to be mine

The scar it transpires, will stretch from hip to hip and curl upwards in a smile. Not great for the beach. But I can't be a bikini-ready body are cruelly-snatched away? Nope. In order to achieve an acceptable shape in short scar, not-so-great shape. Hmmm. Although, if someone else says they can deliver a short scar and a flat stomach, he wouldn't challenge them. Medicine is a matter of opinion, not fact.' That's when he breaks it to me: he would not be happy to operate on me. It's not a criticism, he says, just that I have unrealistic ideas. I can't achieve what you want', he says. 'I'm not interested in your money; I'm interested in your welfare.' And that is the end of that.

The good news is that I've saved several thousand pounds, and possibly a lot of heartache. On the other hand, I feel strangely deflated. I have a strong compulsion to go on seeing more and more surgeons, but I doubt this will help. Nor does canvassing the opinion of my husband or friends; after all, it's my body. Part of me feels disdainful, and that it's not right to fake it any way, that surgery is moving the beauty goalposts in not so subtle, or indeed desirable, ways – surgically enhanced beanpoles with their full round breasts are becoming the norm, and not only in magazines. Which leaves all of us in a dilemma. It seems we're damned if we do and damned if we don't. One thing is certain, though: there's more than one way to cut a cloth, and the same goes for a body. ☐

...k perfect, among them models, dancers and actresses.
...art Lipo?' I ask, telling him I've read about it in magazines.
...unchtime-lipo, Smart Lipo is a new procedure during
...s delivered through very thin tubes before being
...ody.) He waves a dismissive hand: 'Marketing.'
... good shape. 'They are not sagging,'
...rove his point. I want them fuller,
...fier implants, 'you could
...ht, of course – were
...never felt

...osmetic surgeons, says that if
...eon in America, it is doubtful
tried to talk me out of any of
...women generally want more
...counterparts,' she says. 'They
'the idea of looking different,
...yone knowing they have had a
...liami and Dallas, women wear
...oits like a badge of honour.
American surgeons are therefore less inclined than classically trained European surgeons to talk women out of certain procedures, or doing several things in one stage. American women are all about convenience; time and money have great importance. It's common in New York to have a facelift, eyelid surgery, a brow lift and a chemical peel in one go. British women want to do separate things in stages, or do one small thing at a time.'

The next day, I'm at the central Manchester branch of Transform. According to its website, Transform has 'improved the lives of 175,000 people' over the past 30 years: 'Be shapely. Be stunning. Be you. Transformed!'



...though ravaged
...cost will be £6,000
...at the same time.
...h a spring in my step –
...ts – when out of the blue
...ns to damage our budding
...r: he weighs me. Not only
...scales that are clearly wrong.
...ained four kilos (women who
...andidates for lipo, apparently).
...out to storm out of his office
...sulk, he redeems himself by telling
weight. Any more than a few kilos,
might ruin my 'healthy' cheeks.
... (I walk all the way), I am drawn back
...bsite (www.philippechout.com). Those
...and-after pictures are strangely addictive.
girl-porn. I try taking a photo of my breasts
...d examine them. I am beginning to think of
...my body as a series of bits to be improved.

What needs 'fixing', of course, is only a matter of opinion. Wendy Lewis, a sort of personal

It is tucked away inside a faceless corporate building at the back of a Toni & Guy hair salon. I had anticipated a waiting room bustling with WAGs; instead, it is empty, with just a few glossy magazines and several stacks of the company's treatment brochures. Elaine, Transform's clinic manager, pops her head around the door: she is a petite bottle-blonde wearing a lavish amount of diamond jewellery.

I tell Elaine I've been given some money by my grandmother and want to treat myself, although I'm not sure what I need. But Elaine is not a surgeon and does not examine me. She can't say if I need lipo or a tummy tuck; these are decisions the surgeon will help me make. She's not impressed by Smart Lipo – it doesn't give 'the wow factor' and is only good for small areas, like a double chin. She thinks Lipo Soft could suit me, as it is not as aggressive and uses a smaller tube and extra fluid. It costs an extra £300 an area.

I trot out the story about my break-up, and she is so sympathetic that I almost weep. 'You probably feel awful about everything right now,' she says, steering me away from the facelift and down the path of fillers, Botox and facial peels. Not satisfied, I whip out a picture of Anne Hathaway and point at the lips, but in Elaine's opinion, my mouth is too small to have such full lips.

On the subject of boob jobs, Elaine is pretty upbeat. An E-cup is 'really big', she says, and she wouldn't recommend going up more than two sizes (pre-childbirth, I was a B; currently, I am an A), making a D-cup ideal for my size and shape. They would put the breast on top of the muscle (this is confusing, as Dr Chout