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Oprah Winfrey is the protagonist of the story to be told here, but this book has broader intentions, begins Eva Illouz in this original examination of how and why this talk show host has become a pervasive symbol in American culture. Unlike studies of talk shows that decry debased cultural standards and impoverished political consciousness, *Oprah Winfrey and the Glamour of Misery* asks us to rethink our perceptions of culture in general and popular culture in particular.

At a time when crises of morality, beliefs, value systems, and personal worth dominate both public and private spheres, Oprah's emergence as a cultural form--the Oprah persona--becomes clearer, as she successfully reiterates some of our most pressing moral questions. Drawing on nearly one hundred show transcripts; a year and a half of watching the show regularly; and analysis of magazine articles, several biographies,

O Magazine, Oprah Book Club novels, self-help manuals promoted on the show, and hundreds of discussions on the Oprah Winfrey Web site, Illouz takes the Oprah industry seriously, revealing it to be a multilayered "textual structure" that initiates, stages, and performs narratives of suffering and self-improvement that resonate with a wide audience and challenge traditional models of cultural analysis. This book looks closely at Oprah's method and her message, and in the process reconsiders popular culture and the tools we use to understand it.