



Transforming Bodies: Makeovers and Monstrosities in American Culture

Heike Steinhoff

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At the turn of the twenty-first century, American media abound with images and narratives of bodily transformations. *Transforming Bodies* investigates how these representations have become key sites for the negotiation of power. Focusing on the representations of 'extreme' forms of somatic transformations, particularly cosmetic surgery, this book examines iconic popular cultural texts from diverse media and genres. The reality TV show *The Swan*, the TV drama series *Nip/Tuck*, Chuck Palahniuk's (post-)postmodern novels *Invisible Monsters* and *Invisible Monsters Remix*, and Scott Westerfeld's young adult fiction series *Uglies* are read as expressions of the heterogeneous biopolitical discourses that are articulated in the American mediascape. In contemporary American culture, representations of body transformations are often part of a makeover paradigm that presents bodies as 'beautiful,' 'individual' and 'improved' if they adhere to normative constructions of gender, sexuality, class, race/ethnicity, and able-bodiedness. However, *Transforming Bodies* demonstrates that a number of popular cultural texts take up narrative structures, representational strategies and ideological underpinnings of makeover culture in order to re-write them. These texts link makeovers to images, practices, and narratives of monstrosity and thereby challenge cultural norms. At the crossroads of American, cultural, literary, media, gender, queer, disability and governmentality studies, the book presents a timely intervention into critical debates on body transformations and contemporary makeover culture.

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