



Amending the Abject Body: Aesthetic Makeovers in Medicine and Culture (SUNY series in Feminist Criticism and Theory)

By Deborah Caslav Covino

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Examines the implications and meanings of the makeover and aesthetic surgery industry in American popular culture.

Feminist theorists have often argued that aesthetic surgeries and body makeovers dehumanize and disempower women patients, whose efforts at self-improvement lead to their objectification. *Amending the Abject Body* proposes that although objectification is an important element in this phenomenon, the explosive growth of "makeover culture" can be understood as a process of both *abjection* (ridding ourselves of the unwanted) and *identification* (joining the community of what Julia Kristeva calls "clean and proper bodies"). Drawing from the advertisement and advocacy of body makeovers on television, in aesthetic surgery trade books, and in the print and Web-based marketing of face lifts, tummy tucks, and Botox injections, Deborah Caslav Covino articulates the relationship among objectification, abjection, and identification, and offers a fuller understanding of contemporary beauty-desire.

"Looking at cosmetic surgery and, more generally, aesthetic transformations of the body through the lens of abjection is a novel approach that yields an interesting and profound understanding of the beauty culture. Covino skillfully and successfully applies this perspective to a wide variety of phenomena within medicine and popular culture. She uncovers our culture's deep-seated fears of the abject body and presents a wonderful vision of a culture where we might live with—or develop partnership with—abjection. This is an important contribution to cultural studies on the body and body modification." — Kathy Davis, author of *Reshaping the Female Body: The Dilemma of Cosmetic Surgery*

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Editorial Review

Review

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About the Author

Deborah Caslav Covino is Associate Professor of English at California State University Stanislaus.

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