



Hollywood Catwalk: Exploring Costume and Transformation in American Film (International Library of Cultural Studies)

Tamar Jeffers McDonald

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The High School outsider takes off her glasses, puts on a dress, and becomes the Prom Queen; the dowdy woman has her hair done, buys some chic new clothes and starts to attract the men. Cinderella and Pygmalion stories still provide inspiration for the plots of Hollywood romantic comedies, dramas, and even action films. Their perennial use prompts a series of questions: is, for example, male agency necessary to effect the transformation, or can the woman change herself? Can she ever change him? Most pressing, what do these images of change and transformation, of improvement and transcendence tell us, the viewers, about what we should be doing?

Investigating these questions, this book examines a key but frequently overlooked aspect of film style: the costume. Across all the films discussed, costume and the body it covers becomes the crucial element in the transformation scene, exemplifying the “before” and “after” of the successful change. Exploring the fantasies of transcendence and transformation sold through these films and exemplified in the costumes, this book examines 'Calamity Jane', 'Midnight Cowboy', 'Clueless', 'The Long Kiss Goodnight', 'The Devil Wears Prada', and many other examples from both classic and contemporary Hollywood.

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