



## American Monroe: The Making of a Body Politic

*S. Paige Baty*

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Marilyn Monroe is alive and well in the American imagination. She is the stuff of memory, living as icon, mysterious suicide, transgressive goddess—a character that tells the story of America itself. *American Monroe* explores the ways we remember Marilyn—from playing cards, books, and fan clubs, to female impersonators, political conspiracies, and high art, her ubiquitous presence informs our cultural common ground.

Finding in Marilyn a "representative character" of our time, Baty explores some of the cultural lives she has been made to lead. We follow "the mediatrix" from the biographies by Mailer and Steinem, to the shadowy Kennedy connection, to the coroner Noguchi's obsession with the body of the dead star. Representations of Marilyn, Baty shows, displace neat categories of high and low culture, of public and private, male and female. She becomes a surface that mirrors everything it touches, a site upon which to explore the character of the postmodern condition.

*American Monroe* is an innovative, scintillating look at the making and remaking of popular icons. It explores the vocabulary of memory as it moves the reader past vistas of American political culture. It seeks to understand Marilyn's enduring power and how, through our many-layered rememberings of her, we come to understand ourselves and our shared history.

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