



The Female of the Species: Cultural Constructions of Evil, Women and the Feminine (At the Interface)

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From Alien Queens to prostitutes, 'phallic' mothers to child-murderers, evil women proliferate across cultural productions that span millennia. This collection explores the perennial question of 'evil' and its relationship to women and femininity. Taking as their starting points material as diverse as Greek mythology, nineteenth-century medical texts, Elizabethan drama and contemporary cartoons, and informed by various theoretical perspectives, the authors scrutinise the construction of the feminine as evil, and vice versa. Throughout these essays, recurring anxieties of female agency, reproduction and the appropriation of patriarchal power are identified and explored. As the writers reveal, these anxieties are not always situated within the anatomically or genetically 'female' (or even human) body, but rather in culturally-constructed and pervasive concepts of femininity - which is at once recognisable and abject, necessary and disavowed. These essays reveal the strategies of construction and maintenance upon which the reification of feminine evil are based.

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