



The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny (Ideologies of Desire)

Terry Castle

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The work of leading scholar Terry Castle, called by the *New York Times* "always engaging...consistently fascinating," has helped to revolutionize eighteenth-century studies. *The Female Thermometer* brings together Castle's essays on the phantasmagoric side of eighteenth-century literature and culture. Taking as her emblem the fanciful "female thermometer," an imaginary instrument invented by eighteenth-century satirists to measure levels of female sexual arousal, Castle explores what she calls the "impinging strangeness" of the eighteenth-century imagination--the ways in which the rationalist imperatives of the age paradoxically worked to produce what Freud would later call the uncanny. In essays on doubling and fantasy in the novels of Defoe and Richardson, sexual impersonators and the dream-like world of the eighteenth-century masquerade, magic-lantern shows, automata, and other surreal inventions of Enlightenment science, and the hallucinatory obsessions of Gothic fiction, Castle offers a haunting portrait of a remarkable epoch. Her collection explores the links between material culture, gender, and the rise of modern forms and formulas of subjectivity, effectively rewriting the cultural history of modern Europe from a materialist and feminist perspective.

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